

Cincinnati Bengals Head Coach Zac Taylor
Postgame Quotes – October 29, 2023
San Francisco 49ers vs. Cincinnati Bengals

What was your impression of your team this game coming off your bye week?

“I know it's not even Halloween yet, but this is November football for us. When you go on the road and play the 49ers, a team that's had a ton of success over the last couple years in this league that we have a ton of respect for. So proud of the way that our guys fought, proud of the way they controlled the game in the second half and were able to get us this win.”

What can you say about QB Joe Burrow today?

“19 consecutive completions is pretty good. That typically means that everybody else is doing their job as well. This was a big challenge for our offensive line and a big challenge for our backs and our tight ends as well. They rose to that challenge. They were where they needed to be. They did a great job giving him a pocket he could work with. It was a great job by our receivers playing on time and being where they needed to be so he could find them. That extension on the first third-and-10 that [WR] Tee [Higgins] made himself available and got that big first down. That really catapulted us into the game. We sit here and talk about these games that we've lost, and it was those plays that we didn't make early in the game. That's a play that jumpstarts you and you end up scoring a touchdown. That's really what it comes down to.”

What do you think about the way he moved?

“I don't use that word unbelievable anymore really, to be honest with you. But that first one, I mean, I'm joking because that's just kind of what you come to expect and it's just a great job. I'm sure he's feeling pretty good. I'm sure he is going to be pretty sore, but just a good job with him never quitting on a play, keeping it alive. Again, I've learned just to keep my mouth shut, not say anything, and not think anything negative while he's back there in the pocket moving around. You've just learned a lesson year four here. But again, that was a big play and he did a good job with his feet. He did a good job. There's two men running through. That's the best play you can get. [He] did a good job checking to a quarterback draw on a big third down. He's stepping up and recognizing coverages and knowing how to attack them with his feet when he needs to.”

What do you think of the way your linebackers Logan Wilson and Germaine Pratt played?

“We wouldn't trade them out for anybody. There's a lot of good linebacker duos in this league. We wouldn't trade that pair for anybody and for both those guys to step up and get takeaways. Germaine's was down in the low red [zone] first and goal from the eight yard line – an unbelievable pick. I didn't see Logan's [interception]; I was over there talking to Burrow, but I'm sure that was great too. I saw the stat in my post game that he's got the most picks by a linebacker since 2020. That's just great ball skills. That's the receiver/safety that he's gotten his skill set over there from Wyoming in high school. Really, really proud of the way that those two guys played.”

The 49ers hadn't lost a home game this season coming into this game. What does it mean getting this win on the road today?

"They'd won 11 in a row and that's something we feed our players because this is the type of team that responds to that. They want to hear that. They want to hear that Buffalo had one home loss in the playoffs in their history. They want to hear that this team's won 11 in a row at home because someone's got to beat them and it's going to be us, you know? So I think that's just kind of the edge that these guys play with. They want that information to fuel them and they responded how I assumed that they would."

What did going under the center maybe unlock for the offense today?

"Yeah, there's just some things that we felt like we could do to attack them and felt like our guys did a great job executing. We kind of had a plethora, that's a fun word I haven't used yet up here, a variation of things that we could do there. I thought our guys did a great job and finished really with the same run a couple plays in a row. Our guys were just doing a great job blocking that [RB Joe] Mixon scored on. Really proud of those guys, I mean, that's tough. That's tough to block the same play three times in a row. Our guys responded the right way and Mixon made a great cut and scored a big touchdown there."

Was that a play that you were saving for a big moment right after the interception right there in scoring range?

"No, it almost came up that the play we hit [WR Ja'Marr] Chase with at the end of the two minute drive that got us down inside the 10 yard line. It was kind of toggling between those two and we chose the one that was a big gain for us. And just came back at the right moment. You know, that play was a suggestion by somebody on the headset. I don't know who to give credit to, but that's a good spot for it. That was [Offensive Coordinator] Brian [Callahan] and [Wide Receiver Coach] Troy [Walters] early in the week putting that play in based on something they saw. It was a good job by our coaching staff finding the right moment to get to that play. [QB] Joe [Burrow] and Ja'Marr and [WR] Tee [Higgins] did a great job selling it and getting to it."

Was the idea at the start of the season that the offense would always kind of look like it did today?

This is what we know we're capable of and we left some stuff on the field. It was tough. The field goal that we missed, we put [Kicker] Evan [McPherson] in a tough spot that we knew in warmups that it was the tough direction. That was a tough distance. I think we had a sack that kind of took us out of rhythm there. That was a tough one. Then he drained the 56-yarder going the other way. I don't remember what your question was now. Like oh, what the offense looked like."

Yeah – like specifically from an under center perspective?

"I think it just gives us more variation, more things for teams to work on. I thought that the team executed really well versus the team that you're going to have to execute well to beat. You're not just going to get free plays against them, they're going to make you earn everything. I thought they did a really good job adjusting, coming in at halftime and making things challenging for us. So again, our guys found a way to respond and found a way to make some plays. I was proud of the response that we had there."

You get a game back here, you run for 134 yards and you only give up three sacks. Was it extra special to get Offensive Line coach Frank Pollack this win?

“Say that one more time for Coach.”

What does it mean for him to come back here and to run it like this and to protect like that?

“That is special for a guy that played for the 49ers. I'm sure it brings back a lot of memories for him and it's cool that the guys played hard for him. They always play hard for him, but that's a cool moment that I'm sure Frank has. I'm sure he got a chance to see a lot of people. [Wide Receivers Coach] Troy Walters played at Stanford, a Biletnikoff winner, so we've got a lot of guys with ties. Six players with Northern California ties as well, seven really, [WR] Mike Thomas. This is a meaningful stop for a lot of our coaches and players here.”

You like the form that that kind of led you all to a deep playoff runs the last couple of years?

I think we played a good game. There's going to be things that we have to clean up. We're not just going to gloss over those. But again, I like how our team responded in different moments and you look at the second half, offense starting the half with three points, defense creating turnovers in the second half and getting big stops. Then, the offense responding up seven when we need a touchdown, we don't need a field goal, we need a touchdown, and they find a way to finish it off. Evan coming through on some big kicks on special team stepping up big on coverage so really proud of our team. It wasn't perfect, but really proud of the way that they came together and took control of the game.”

Did DL Trey Hendrickson talk himself back into the game, what was going on?

“We had a couple injuries where guys just got stepped on. Coincidentally guys got stepped on. I'm sure he's really sore. I'm sure it wasn't easy for him. There's probably some limitations he dealt with there in the second half, but I can think of a few times where guys maybe got hit on the side or stepped on, so nothing hopefully significant there.”

What was the kind of the message after the fumble at the end of the first half? Were you worried that that could be a difference maker in the game to take points off the board?

“It's bothersome obviously in hindsight, yeah. Here's what you got to look at. What's your process? You're falling. I like the play call from a process standpoint. Obviously the coverage they played, it's not a great look for, it doesn't give Joe a lot of good answers there. He's got three different options. He chose the third that he should have. It doesn't give us a lot of good options there. Then we just got to hang on to the football. So the process that got us there taking a shot on a run there, probably calling time out and then taking some shots in the end zone, throwing the ball. It didn't work out for us. Of course anytime something like that happens, you're regretful of the call, but you just got to get back to the process that got us there and led to that call and that's what I felt comfortable with. It didn't turn out our way coming out at halftime.”

After a situation like that to at least put points on the board, how significant was that?

“It was significant. That's why you defer, that's why you get the ball to start the second half. We were hoping for the double whammy there, scoring at the end of the half and then getting the ball back and putting points on the board before they touched it like they did to us in 2019. It didn't work out that way, but I thought that was a good start by the offense setting the tone and the defense responding.”

You didn't think twice about putting McPherson back out there after he missed the 50 yard field go?

“No, but I guess it's because of the wind, the direction of the wind. No, and we would've obviously played the situation smart going the other way, but full trust that he can rise to the moment and even in tough conditions he stepped up and got it done. He's done it before. It was windy, so I guess that was, it was windy. Yeah, it was probably a little windier in the first half I think than the second half. He did a good job responding how we knew he would.”

Impressed with the efficiency and the power in the run game against a good defense?

“It's a good job, I thought starting with [Offensive Line Coach] Frank [Pollack], there was a lot of good run variations to start the week. I liked the plan that he had in place. I thought Frank and [Offensive Assistant] Derek Frazier did a great job. These guys executed it. They believed in it, they executed it, and they ran hard. We hit them at the right moment sometimes and so really proud of the execution of the run game today.”

The cameras caught Defensive Coordinator Lou Anarumo when everybody kind jumped him right after Trey Hendricks sack to end the game. What did you think of his plan today?

“A lot of times I don't want the camera on Lou, so I'm glad to hear that was good.”

What did you think of his defensive game plan?

“Awesome the way it worked out. I mean, he's the best, right? He puts these guys in position that's half the battle. The other half is the guys having confidence and believing that he's going to put them in the right position and they do. You get that extra little bit out of your guys when they believe in what you're telling them to do. He pushes the right buttons at the right times. He does a great job being emotional and then being composed like great defensive coordinators do. Love him to death. We're very happy to have him. We've been through thick and thin here together, obviously, and we always liked what we saw and what he was capable of. He's gotten them to play their potential. We're very fortunate with him and the entire defense of staff.”

**Cincinnati Bengals QB Joe Burrow
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Coming out of a Bye week, how does a road win like that feel?

“Yeah, it felt good. We were able to execute well enough to win. We still have some points out on the field, so just like every win and every loss, you're going to learn from it and watch the tape, but it was a good day.”

What does it say to beat a team like this given how you all started the year and where you want to end up?

“Yeah, we needed this one. So, big win, but it was just one. We get a lot of football left to be played, so we're going to enjoy this one for a day and get right back to it.”

Can you break down the 3rd & 10 in the first quarter when it looks like you were going to be sacked twice and you managed to scramble and make a completion to Cincinnati Bengals WR Tee Higgins?

“Yeah, it's tough to break those down. They just kind of happen. Really, that was athleticism, acceleration, explosiveness, and those were really a big focus of mine in the offseason. I just haven't really been able to show that too much, so it was nice to have that hard work pay off.”

So, how much does it feel like after the Bye week that it's go time for you guys? Because this is now three straight years where right out the bye, you get a huge road win.

“Yeah, it was great week of prep. That's really where it starts. The urgency was really high all week. Great days of practice, and it wasn't perfect, but you learn from every rep that you get and you were able to correct it very quickly. So, it was a great week. We're going to learn from this one and move on.”

You throw the touchdown to Cincinnati Bengals WR Ja'Marr Chase and then find Cincinnati Bengals LB Logan Wilson and Cincinnati Bengals LB Germaine Pratt on the sideline. What'd you say to those guys?

“Man, Germaine's play in the red zone was unbelievable. I told him that was one of the best defensive plays I've ever seen. That was big time. He just needs to stay in bounds and go score next time, too.”

What did you think about going under center did? Did that help loosen things?

“Yeah, we were able to get some big play-action shots off of that. We got some great production out of that, so that's going to continue to be part of what we do.”

Can you take me through the wild scramble on the first drive? You held it for almost 10 seconds. Did you think you were going down? What did you see on that one?

“Well, I never think I'm going down. I'm going to fight to the end on those. When plays break down like that, I've always prided myself on being able to get out of those situations and make plays. Like I said, that's something that I worked really hard on in the offseason. I just haven't really been able to show that. So, it was nice to see that hard work pay off.”

One trademark you guys have shown is overcoming adversity, like at the end of the first half. You turned it over there, Cincinnati Bengals TE Irv Smith fumbles, and

then you come out and put points on the board. How important a stretch of that game was that?

“Yeah, like I said, it wasn't perfect. That's for sure. We left points out there and we had some mental mistakes that we have to clean up, but overall it was a well-executed game. But it was a great team win. Complementary football. Defense stepped up in big spots, offense stepped up in big spots, and special teams stepped up in big spots.”

What did you see from Cincinnati Bengals WR Andrei Iosivas in his growth, because he has had touchdowns in back-to-back weeks?

“Yeah, he's not getting a ton of opportunities, but the opportunities that he's getting, he's making the most of. He's really savvy in scramble drill situations. Both of his touchdowns have come that way, so that's exciting to see and we're going to see more of it going forward.”

For the first three years of your career, there was a lot of talk about the offensive line and when things weren't going well, it was always comments on the offensive line. How'd you feel like they played today and specifically Cincinnati Bengals LT Orlando Brown going up against one of the best edge rushers in the NFL?

“They were awesome. Not just in the pass pro, but also in the run game. That was a big part of the game today. We were super efficient in the run game. I think we ended up with over a hundred yards rushing. So, that's going to be a big part of what we do going forward. That was a complete game on offense. We have to stack more of those together.”

You got a chance to see Joe Montana before the game. Did you notice that they were honoring past 49ers teams and that stuff?

“No, I did not, but me and Joe are good friends. He's a great guy. We've done some marketing things together, so it's always nice to see him. I always enjoy spending time with him.”

Why are you guys as an offense so able to evolve and just change who you are over the course of the season?

“You have to if you want to be good. We have great coaches that know what it takes and we got players that are able to take great coaching and really apply it very quickly. Coming out of the bye, we had a lot of things that we wanted to work on, and you saw it on the field today.”

After the first drive, putting some of that stuff in to place for the first time, did it feel like a big moment for the offense's growth?

“It was a great start for us. Offense, defense, special teams. When you get off to hot starts like that, it puts the defense in a much better position than if you're playing from behind.”

The touchdown to Cincinnati Bengals WR Ja'Marr Chase, head coach Zac Taylor had said you guys had been thinking about that. Can you run through it? Did you know when you got the ball you were going to go right there? It looked like kind of a fake screen or whatever.

“Well, it's no secret that we like to get the ball in Ja'Marr hands quick on, you know, little perimeter screens like that, and so you have to have stuff to compliment that. And that was a great call by Zac.”

How fired up are you after scrambling for first downs, because a couple times today you slapped your helmet and looked pretty fired up?

“Like I said, I worked really hard on that all offseason. And for four to five weeks, I haven't been able to really show that, and so when you see hard work pay off, it's exciting.”

Obviously you guys have perspective, have made runs after starting slow. How significant of a win does this feel like?

“It was a big win, but like I said, it was just one. There's still a lot of football left to be played. This is Week 7, we got 10 more, so this one means nothing if we come out and lay an egg next week and the week after that. So, we just have to keep stacking them together.”

Did you know how many consecutive completions you had? Did you know that that number was getting up there?

“I did not know.”

Did you know what it ended up at?

“I think Zac said 19 or something like that.”

To be 28 of 32 passing, it's kind of an almost an absurd number. What does that mean to you? I know you value completions and all that, so what does that mean to you?

“I was able to put the ball -- for the most part all day -- in the right spot, and spot that I was trying to. That's what I expect out of myself. My footwork, I think a lot about and my mechanics. And so when I'm not that, it's disappointing. And so this is my standard.”

Your completion percentage has shot through the roof the last few weeks. Is that more indicative of where you are with the calf than maybe anything else? It's just the completion percentage?

“I think there's a lot of layers to that. I think my mechanics have cleaned up over the last couple weeks, and then also, with my calf feeling better, I feel more comfortable extending plays instead of maybe throwing the ball away in those same situations that I had in the first couple weeks. And so I think it's a combination of a couple things.”

I have to ask, because the last time you were wearing a compression sleeve on a certain part of your body, it alerted a lot of people and you have a compression sleeve on your arm. Is your arm alright?

“My arm's fine. It's just a little swollen. That's what happens when you play football. You have to get the swelling out. Everybody's got something.”

Did those throws that you didn't like from Seattle eat at you over the Bye week? You would've liked to have completed more passes against Seattle, obviously. To

come out here and be this accurate, was that a product of those kind of sitting in your head for two weeks?

“Yeah, I think so. It was a combination of a lot of things a couple weeks ago. When you have the Bye, you're able to sit back and really deeply think about mechanics, routes, timing, footwork, all that. So, that was really what I did on my Bye and it was nice to see that work pay off.”

When you look at what the team did or has done over the last couple years and what the expectations are, is the performance today kind of what you expect this team to look like when you all started training camp at the beginning of the year?

“Yeah, this is the standard. Like I said, it wasn't perfect. There's still a lot to get better at, and we're going to, so we just have to keep stacking days together. It was a great day. Then, Wednesday's has to be a great practice, Thursday, and so on. Thanks guys.”