



**Kansas City Chiefs vs. Cincinnati Bengals**  
**Sunday, December 31, 2023**  
**Week 17**  
**Bengals Head Coach Zac Taylor**



**OPENING STATEMENT:** “I just feel for our guys. You ask them to fight all week and come in here and play together in a tough road environment. That is what they did today. Every guy left it on the field. It was an emotional game, a physical game. Things we knew were going to happen happened, and we came up short. You have to give Kansas City credit. They got it done there in the second half down the stretch. Our guys left it on the field, and we came up short today.”

**Q:** On defense covering big plays from Kansas City...

**TAYLOR:** “Big plays are always a big factor.”

**Q:** On second half offense...

**TAYLOR:** “You know we got stopped on the 4<sup>th</sup>-and-1 there on the goal line. We just struggled to get some rhythm. I don’t know how many series we had after that. You have to give them credit. It was 4<sup>th</sup>-and-1. You are just trying to get some points there. I just feel like at 4<sup>th</sup>-and-1 we need to go for it there. They played a goal line front. It was a little further situation than we expected. It was a good play by them. They did good making the play off the front.”

**Q:** Did you consider calling a timeout or getting out of the play?

**TAYLOR:** “We didn’t know what was going to happen until after the fact. We knew the personnel was in the game, but the way they played it, after you see it, it is tough.”

**Q:** Was the strategy coming in based off ball control and time of possession?

**TAYLOR:** “That is really how their defense is set up. People have not really scored points on them. I think they are second in defense with points scored. They don’t give up a lot of big plays. They do a good job rushing the passer. We try to be mindful of all of that. We moved it efficiently obviously in the first half. In the second half, we just wanted to maintain that rhythm.”

**Q:** Were they doing anything to take away your receivers?

**TAYLOR:** “I just didn’t think we did a good job finding rhythm in the second half.”

**Q:** How was the blitz a factor in those last two drives?

**TAYLOR:** “I will have to see if it was blitzes or one-on-ones. When it happens, you just try to move on to the next play and the next call. I can’t give you a great answer on exactly what happened there.”

**Q:** On giving up big plays over weeks and the plan to stop them

**TAYLOR:** "Something we have to do better at."

**Q:** How frustrating is it to be knocked out of playoff contention?

**TAYLOR:** "That was not our goal to be out of contention."

**Q:** On losing Joe Burrow for the season

**TAYLOR:** "He is one of the best players on planet Earth. That is just a part of life. You have to be able to deal with it and move on. We are not the only team that deals with losing good players. I am proud of the way this team is able to fight and the way Jake (Browning) has stepped in to take the lead. This team has not laid down for anybody. It has not gone our way the last two weeks, but that doesn't mean I am not proud of what these guys have done for us."

**Q:** How do you feel about the team's future?

**TAYLOR:** "Extremely bright. I just got done telling these guys that not every locker room is like this in this league. Guys that play for each other and work every day since July 25<sup>th</sup> out there practicing. We just came up a little bit short. Unfortunately, not every year is your year. We still have one more game to play. It is big game for us at home against a divisional team. We are not sitting here like our season is over because we still have one big game left. We are looking forward to playing in front of our fans and our guys will give their best effort."

**Q:** On the high emotions in today's game

**TAYLOR:** "It is an emotional game. It is just the way it goes. These guys are doing everything they can, fighting everything. Sometimes it gets emotional."

**Q:** On Ja'Marr Chase's workload after injury

**TAYLOR:** "He certainly isn't 100% healthy."

**Q:** On Tee Higgins' injury

**TAYLOR:** "He pulled his hamstring early on, but again, it was another guy that wanted to help us. Not 100 percent when he goes back in there, but he was doing everything he can because he knew what this game meant for us as a team. We have plenty of guys like that in no way shape or form looking for a way out. They are looking for a way in. That is just what this team is all about."

**Q:** Why was Isiah Pacheco so successful today?

**TAYLOR:** "We will have to watch the tape."



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***Bengals QB Jake Browning***



**Q:** How frustrating was it on that first drive in the second half to go all the way down the field and come up with no points?

**BROWNING:** “Very. We’ve got to do better in the red zone and find ways to convert in short yardage. I think the best way to avoid having to convert short yardage is to just get first downs. It’s an obvious statement to come away with no points is brutal.”

**Q:** Can you explain what happened on those last few plays with the sacks?

**BROWNING:** “I think in that situation we’re hanging on, we’re behind the sticks and you’re hanging on for some longer developing routes because you have to. I don’t know what exactly happened. My eyes were down field trying to throw the ball to somebody to convert. That’s that.”

**Q:** On that fourth down play, you looked pretty angry. Were you angry at the result?

**BROWNING:** “Angry at the result.”

**Q:** How impressive was Ja’Marr [Chase] and Tee [Higgins] playing how they did even though they weren’t 100%?

**BROWNING:** “I think you get to this part of the season and everybody is banged up. I think it’s impressive. We need them out there. They’re a big part of our offense. At this point in the season, everybody is dealing with something and obviously, they were dealing with something significant, so to keep battling is good. The standard is you’re going to play through some stuff and we really needed that win, so it’s impressive but it’s kind of the expectation, too.”

**Q:** How tough is it to have a loss like this in such a meaningful time in the season?

**BROWNING:** “I think it sucks to lose when you’re still in the race. There’s no real crazy insightful comment there, it just sucks to lose anytime, especially when you needed that win to keep battling. Like I said with the standard of the locker room of guys playing through injuries. I don’t know what the playoff picture looks like, but I think the standard that was established even before I got here was to just keep battling and so that’s what we’re going to do.”

**Q:** What did you see on that 4<sup>th</sup>-and-1 play?

**BROWNING:** “The D-Line out charged and the linebacker ran through the middle. It’s a tough thing to deal with. They called the play, I got my rules, I followed my rules, ran the play but my rules tell me to run and unfortunately, it didn’t work.”

**Q:** You ran a lot of plays with your feet. Did you think that was possible coming into the game or was that reactionary to what you were seeing?

**BROWNING:** “I think it was possible. They do a lot of doubling people. When they do that, they don’t necessarily have someone for me. I was able to do that in the first half. I think they made adjustments and started spying in the second half. Props to them for that.”

**Q:** What have you learned about the locker room while being the leader of this team for the last six weeks?

**BROWNING:** “I think the locker room is what I thought it was. People are going to keep battling. I’m still processing the loss and it sucks, so I don’t have anything super insightful there. It’s a great locker room. It starts with who you bring in the locker room, people who are going to keep battling. I felt a lot of support throughout the last couple of weeks, especially coming off a poor performance with the Steelers game. I didn’t feel like anybody was pointing fingers. We were just focused on what everybody needs to do to get better. That’s kind of my comments on that.”

**Q:** You put up 17 points in the first half but nothing in the second half. What happened there? They started spying on you but did they make any other big adjustments that you noticed?

**BROWNING:** “They made some good adjustments at halftime. They started doubling guys, spying as well. It was tough. It was tough to tell who was getting doubled, they mixed it up. It was a good scheme, good players. We didn’t do enough to get it done.”

**Q:** You have a small sample size as a starter but a lot of your teammates talked about emotions being heightened for this game. How did you feel that the emotions of this game compared to your other starts of the season?

**BROWNING:** “I kind of detach from all of that. I have to in order to play well. I didn’t really feel any crazy difference in emotions or anything like that, but I kind of intentionally ignore all of it and just try to do my job.”