



BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES 12-18-22

HEAD COACH ZAC TAYLOR

(On the turning point in today's game)

"Well, I think when we were down 17-0 we had no rhythm on either side of the ball and our guys really just at halftime took a deep breath and said that we can takeover this game. And the first half wasn't what we were about – they had some third and fourth down conversions on defense, offensively we got no rhythm – four straight three-and-outs before halftime and you could just tell we were going to have plenty of possessions in the second half to get things going the right way. I thought our special teams really, really kicked it up a notch – with the kickoff that they tackled inside the 10 [yard line], the punt downed at the two [yard line], the defense forcing four turnovers -- just making plays left and right, everyone stepping up and doing it, and then the offense finishing off those drives. Just an awesome team effort. It was probably one of those games we needed to be quite honest with you – you know, kind of smacked [us] in the mouth a little bit in the first half and then responded the right way. That's a good December win on the road versus a team leading their division. So [I am] really proud of our guys there."

(On his thoughts on the defense's effort despite the injuries)

"I just thought they did a great job stepping up in the second half – all the guys. I saw Jay Tufele in the backfield, Tre Flowers picking off passes, I saw AG (Akeem Davis-Gaither) making plays, Eli Apple – so really, guys just stepped up at every position and this is the type of year where you're going to lose some guys. So, guys need to step up and keep the team going, and I saw a lot of that across the board from a lot of our players through all three phases."

(On the injuries tonight)

"Sam [Hubbard has] got a calf [injury], Cam [Taylor-Britt has] got a shoulder [injury], so we'll just get more information as we go here. I think those were the only two that I know of."

(On the shift in the defense's performance throughout the game)

"There was moments they were playing well. It's just they were stringing some first downs together, they were converting some third downs in that first drive particularly – they had the fourth down conversion in the low red for the touchdown, so we just couldn't get any momentum. And then the offense wasn't helping matters by going three-and-out, so the defense was having to go right back out there. That was just poor team football there in the first half. The second half was the complete opposite and it was good to see from our guys."

(On if he changed anything in the defensive approach throughout the course of the game)

"No, we just settled down – everyone just settled down, found a better rhythm. Again, all the phases worked together and once we got into a better flow, it was the type of football we are used to playing."

(On if there was anything that got the offense going between the first and second halves)



“Just getting first downs. We haven’t had that in a while where we hit that lull. We just settled down and found ways to get first downs, and once you get that first down – now obviously the field position was great from what our defense was giving us, it was helpful, gave us momentum – but again, to just get that first, first down in the drive really gets us rolling and that’s kind of how we’ve been all year.”

(On if facing some adversity today was a good learning experience for the team)

“It is. You know, we’re going to play good teams from here on out and we always want to possess the lead and be able to play from out in front, but there’s going to be times that things just don’t go your way. And for this team to feel that again... because we haven’t had to feel that for a while, that there’s still plenty of time left on the clock, no need to panic just take a deep breath and step up. I saw that from everybody.”

(On his defense stepping up despite all the injuries)

“Well again, we’re going to count on every guy on this roster at this point, and they keep stepping up over and over. No one wants to be the weak link in the defense, and I haven’t found the weak link yet, which is a good thing. Guys are just playing good team football – 11 guys out there are on the same page, and it has been really fun to watch all those guys step up when their opportunity is called.”

(On if he’s ever seen five consecutive turnovers in a football game)

“I’m sure at some point in my life I have, not in recent memory, but it was just good. You know sometimes they come in bunches – we preach it like crazy. A lot of those were tough. Tre Flowers’ was not easy; Germaine Pratt’s was not easy. When the ball is on the ground, sometimes it doesn’t bounce your way and the other team recovers it – in this case our guys found a way to come up with it. We just needed that type of performance today and our guys delivered it.”

(On S Dax Hill’s performance today in the slot)

“We’ll watch it, but Dax has had the right stuff. He just continues to get better every week. He’s had to play a lot of different roles for us, none of them have been too big for him – that’s the value that he has right now is he can do a lot of different jobs. He can play safety, he can play in the slot, he can play outside, he’s done a nice job as a gunner on the punt team, he’s been on kickoffs. He’s starting to make more and more plays the more his number is called and that is good to see at this point of the year.”

(On if he saw the flag on the Joe Burrow loss of 23-yards in the second half)

“I didn’t see it. It was in my headset – someone saw it before. He may have seen it also – we didn’t sit there and talk about the play, but sometimes he’s got a better eye for that stuff. It’s in his vision, it happens and then he tries to extend it and get a bigger play out of the situation.”

(On what gave them the confidence after the tough first half)

“We were really only down two possessions, you know, 17-3. Sometimes these games where you’re kind of out of rhythm in the first half – you get plenty of opportunities in the second half and so it was just going to take one stop by our defense and one score by our offense and we were going to feel right back in it. Again, that’s just our team having experience in moments like that, that there’s plenty of time in the second half and you just man up and play good football and that’s what we did.”



(On WR Tyler Boyd's toughness after battling a finger injury all week)

"Yeah, incredibly tough – that's just 'TB' for you. That's a leader who really stepped up just with his presence being out there and letting other guys see that. He was just in surgery this time last week, [he] goes out there and again, he just creates an issue for the other team whether he's getting the ball or not because he's just a big weapon out there that they have to focus on. When the ball came his way, he made the play every single time I can think of it. There's a big touchdown play down there – I think they were double-double on Ja'Marr [Chase] and Tee [Higgins], and so the one-on-one was with 'TB' and so Joe [Burrow] found him and then he made a great play. 'TB' always rises to the challenge and that was a really physically and mentally tough game that he played today."

(On the tipped pass from QB Joe Burrow that was intercepted)

"That was a second-level tipped pass. I mean that was a safety basically at linebacker level – that wasn't at the line of scrimmage. That stuff is going to happen, it was just off a run play and they got a big, long safety that got his hand up and made a good play."

QUARTERBACK JOE BURROW

(On how big this win is and how he feels about it)

"Not one of my favorites. I mean it was an exciting game but an ugly one that we were able to pull out and that just goes to show you that teams, like we have, they just find ways to win games. We keep just talking about it and guys just keep stepping up and making big time plays for us."

(On what bothered him most about how the game started)

"Yeah, well the first drive was going great and then we had another tipped ball interception and then we just couldn't get going after that. They were doing a good job on defense, mixing up the looks and making it tough on us. In the second half, defense and special teams really, really stepped up and put us in great field position all day and we were able to take advantage during that second half."

(On how big the last drive of the first half was)

"Yeah, I think that really started the momentum. I think all year we've really been a good two-minute team. I feel really good about our calls in that situation and we were able to go right down the field and get some points right before the half that was much needed – cut it to a two score game instead of three. So that was a big point in the game."

(On if the tempo in the second half was the difference)

"Maybe a little bit. I'd have to watch the film and see but really at the end of the day it was just the defense and special teams putting us in great position to go and score."

(On if the field position was the difference in the second half)

"It was really the turning point of the game right there. Defense and special teams stepping up and getting us the ball, four straight possessions inside the 50."

(On if he has had that many short fields in one game)

"I don't think so. Very unique. No, I mean, I'll take touchdown opportunities all day."

(On WR Tyler Boyd playing with an injured finger during the game)



"I mean he was gritty all day. That shows his toughness, his leadership, his commitment to the team and organization. He played really well today for us and stepped up in some big spots."

(On what the win says about the team)

"We're never out of it. I mean we've been in these situations before and we always come back and make it a game. Today we were able to come back and really put them away there in the second half."

(On if there is a different level of belief compared to previous years)

"No, it's really been the same. We've felt really good about our coaches, our players and our scheme – really both years. So when we get in these situations, we never panic. We know somebody is going to make a play to put us right back in it."

(On how much the team needed this type of game before the playoffs)

"It's really felt like the last four weeks have all been tough wins. Playing some really good teams and some really good defenses. We've risen to the challenge just about every week. Continued to play well in big spots. Guys making plays in big spots. So that's exciting."

(On his touchdown to WR Tyler Boyd)

"They were doubling Ja'Marr [Chase] and TB [Tyler Boyd] had a one-on-one so there were three guys over there but I knew two of them were going cover Ja'Marr. So I knew I had TB on a route that we liked, that we practiced."

(On if he had any problems with his pinky finger injury)

"Nothing bad. Nothing serious."

(On what his touchdown to TE Mitchell Wilcox meant to him and the team)

"It was an exciting moment – him being from the area. We knew that call was going to come up in a situation like that and so we had practiced it. We were kind of making fun of him, talking about what he was going to do when he scored. We had talked about it all week, how that was going to come up in a big-time spot and it was an exciting moment."

(On made the difference in the second half)

"Really, special teams really started it off strong. We got two kickoffs inside the 10 [-yard line] – great. Pushed them back. Defense played great and got us the ball inside the 50. A lot of turnovers. That really sparked our momentum."

(On how important the last drive was before halftime)

"That was big. Gave us a lot of momentum. We felt good about where we were at halftime. We had a bunch of three-and-outs but we felt really good about the calls that were coming up. We just had to go in and execute them and we did in the second half."

(On if anyone talked about or referenced the Minnesota Vikings comeback win)

"No, nobody talked about that. We were focused on what we were going to do."

(On if he talked to Tom Brady)

"Yeah, we said good game after the game."



(On if he heard QB Tom Brady's comment about Bengals defense)
"No. What are you talking about? I don't know what you're talking about."

(On Tom Brady saying the Bengals are a fairly tough defense)
"Oh I'm sure he didn't mean any disrespect by that. Our defense is very tough and I'm sure that's all he was trying to get across."

(On hearing the Who Dey chant at an away game)
"Yeah, our fans have really been traveling well all year. That gives us a lot of confidence and excitement that the fans care that much about what we're trying to do as a team."

(On if he watched the Baltimore Ravens game yesterday)
"Yeah we were watching it. I always try to watch those division games. Especially teams that you have to play coming up."

(On if the mentality changes protecting a division lead)
"Still gotta win all the games. It's going to come down to that last one. Still gotta take care of business here in the next couple of weeks. We've got a short week this week. Gotta go to New England on a Saturday so we gotta get our bodies right and get the work in [that] we need in a short amount of time."

CORNERBACK ELI APPLE

(On the defense enjoying having to prove themselves)
"Every week you have to prove yourself. Everybody is going to think we're sweet because we basically put up numbers on offense like crazy. But nobody wants to acknowledge what we are doing on defense during this six-game stretch. We know what the difference has been, so we just have to keep it going."

(On why they are such a resilient team)
"We are battle-tested. We are battle-tested."

(On how the team becomes battle-tested)
"We've been here before. We've been here before, last year. We had to come back a couple times, so we were battle-tested. Nobody flinched. Nobody was pointing fingers; it was all encouragement at half time."

(On what was said at halftime)
"Step up. Let's get attached. Man coverage. Challenge them more. Especially me, I was playing a little too soft on the in-breakers. So, I just wanted to take that away in the second half and we did that."

(On doing more stunting and blitzing in the second half scheme-wise)
"We tried to get that old man [Tom Brady] tap dancing. We had to get him out of that pocket and had to get him more uncomfortable. So, that is what we had to do."

(On Tom Brady doing well in the first half when in the pocket)
"He was fairly okay, but not good enough to win."

(On what it feels like to shutdown Tom Brady)



"It is amazing. He is a Michigan guy, so it's good, always, to go against somebody like that. He is the G.O.A.T., obviously, everybody knows that, but today he wasn't."

(On how they got Tom Brady out of his comfort zone with injuries on defense)

"Next man up. We are tough. Everybody in this locker room can get it done. Everybody. So, we just rely on each other and get it done."

WIDE RECEIVER TYLER BOYD

(On blocking with a finger injury)

"I mean, at the end of the day I have to do whatever it takes to help this team win. So, that's the last thing I'm thinking about. The pain would have been temporary and on to the next."

(On what led to the offense starting slow in the first half)

"I couldn't tell you. We started slow because we got that pick early on, and I couldn't really tell you, but at the end of the day the defense just rallied for us and put us back where we needed to be. They created turnovers for us and executed and once we got back on top, we knew we were good on offense."

(On if the field goal heading into halftime changed the momentum)

"Absolutely – every point matters. Just going in the half with points it means a lot. We could have had none and could have still lost momentum coming out. At the end of the day, our defense came out hungry. They [are] just playing their best ball each and every week. Every week I feel like it's their best performance and then the next week they come back through. If they continue to play like that, and we keep picking and scoring, I mean, it will be tough to beat us."

(On taking advantage of short field opportunities after defense creates takeaways)

"It feels good. I think it kind of eases both of our minds because when they get stops that short, they count on us to score because that's going to help get that lead down the stretch. If we keep getting the ball back and taking three points, I mean, what is that? We're a team [and] we want to get 6 or 7 [points] every time we're down there and that's what we pride ourselves to do. I think we took the pressure off their shoulders as well."

WIDE RECEIVER JA'MARR CHASE

(On what turned the game around after a slow start)

"Defense. Honestly, I can say that right there. The defense lifted us up, man. They gave us some opportunities to get the ball back and, right before the half, we found our momentum going fast. So, you know, that's when we opened up a little bit."

(On winning after being down by 17 points on the road)



“I mean, we’re fighting. (We’re) a great team, we have a great defense, we have a great, great – everything, honestly. We do a good job of fighting and not giving up.”

(On what it means to him having six straight wins and being in first in the AFC North)

“I mean we’re in the right direction – we’re not done yet. Like Zac [Taylor] said, we don’t have a shirt and hat at the end of this game, so we still have room to go and improve, so it’s just a matter of time.”

DEFENSIVE TACKLE DJ READER

(On the ability to call aggressive defensive plays with players out of the lineup)

“There are a lot of smart guys in this locker room, a lot of guys who care about football, who are gritty. They love the game, they love what goes into the game, and they want to be great. That’s the biggest thing I can say about this team. There are a lot of guys who want to be great. They want to search for knowledge, and search for everything. So, it is a blessing to be around a bunch of guys like that.”

(On what the sideline atmosphere was like after all the turnovers in a row)

“I felt like we were getting hot. That’s what happened. We start getting hot, guys started making some good plays, and get the ball back to our offense which is our main goal every time, so it worked out.”

(On whether there was pressure on the defensive line to put pressure on Tom Brady)

“It was tough at the beginning of the game; he was getting the ball out quick. When we started scoring some points and went up on them, we knew he had to make true plays. That is when it is a little bit easier to get some pressure on him, move him off that hash, move him off that spot. If you let Tom [Brady] sit on that spot, he is going to kill you, he is going to dice it up all night.”

(On the defensive scheme, momentum change and Lou Anarumo’s play calling)

“I think we just got more aggressive as a team. We got more comfortable, [and] as players you start to feel that, you feel momentum shifts. If you are a true player, a true dog, and you really love this game, [then] you know when to go and try to kill. It is not always going to happen, but you know when to start attacking, attacking, attacking, and really trying to force the issue on what you want, [on] how you want the game to go. That is what guys did. We started to build momentum, we got a turnover - it just takes one, [our] offense got some points, [we] got another turnover and just kept it rolling. It’s just who we are, we are battle-tested as a team, a bunch of individuals who are battle-tested and a lot of guys are hungry.”