

Bengals Postgame Quotes (Week Three)

Head Coach Zac Taylor

On starting quickly...

I thought we started real fast. We started the right way with seven points. The defense came out firing in the second half and got us the turnover. Like you said, I can finally get up here and say we started fast. We started clean, that's most importantly. We got the ball in the endzone three times on that first drive. The third time counted, which was good to see. I'm just proud of the way the guys hung in. It's never easy playing on the road. That's a good football team. We've all watched the tape. They just beat a good football team last week. They came from behind when things looked bleak, so they're used to that situation. I thought our guys did a good job hammering the four-minute runs and they got the turnover at the end. Jessie (Bates) did a great job executing that down time. So just overall, I thought our defense played really well (and) held them to four field goals. Two of them, I think they got the ball on our side of the 50 and held them to points there and so I thought the defense was solid. The offense made a lot of plays. I thought there were some drives we could have finished to get more points on the board when we were down there and we just didn't get it done.

On DJ Reader injury...

I just know it's a knee injury. Hopefully, it's better than not, but we'll get more information on that.

On when he decides to take the ball at the start of the game...

That's something sorted early in the week and we solidified that in our situational meeting on Saturday mornings and talk through all that stuff with the coordinators. That was something we were leaning to all week and committed to it yesterday.

On if it was a one-time thing...

That's something we talk about every week. We talk about the coin toss and what we're going to do every week. This week we just felt like we needed the ball to start and get us going and get some momentum.

On why they started the game with such aggressive play calling...

Well, that's just the point. You go into every defense, and we know that they had a really solid defense. They're difficult to run against. They do a really good job. We knew that last year. We have a lot of respect for those guys and it just felt like we need to be aggressive coming out. We want to have an aggressive mindset. We've got great players. We wanted to get them involved early and let the other team feel that pressure from us. So, that was part of our process today.

On Joe Burrow making plays while under duress...

Yeah, that's just what he does. He manages this team as well as anybody possibly could. He did a great job. I can think of the touchdown to Ja'Marr (Chase). It was a tough one. It's kind of off balance, he gets hit and throws that slant in there. I thought that he did a really nice job executing our offense, giving us some explosive plays. He had a great throw to Tee (Higgins) where he gave Tee a shot. He was aggressive with his mindset, which I wanted, but also knew when to be patient and just take the underneath throws, spit it out to (Joe) Mixon. I want those guys to make plays. I thought he managed the game really well.

On why the offense was more productive than in previous games...

I think we played well in the second half of those games, we just didn't start very clean. Again, it's a small sample size. That's all there was to talk about, but we felt like we're a good team. We weren't changing anything about us internally. We just know that this season is going to balance out and we're going to start to grow and that's what we did today.

On Sauce Gardner...

He's a good player. We've watched the tape on him. You have to go back and watch the tape on this, but he's got a lot of upside. He's a really good young player. He plays the game the right way. He's well coached. He uses his length really well and he's going to have a really good career.

On if Mixon was injured in the fourth quarter...

His ankle was a little sore, so as we were grinding out there and Samaje (Perine) was having success, we felt like we were controlling the clock pretty well. We just didn't make that switch, but I feel good about him.

On running the ball when the defense knew they would be running...

That's what happens though. When you have a lead and you start to wear a defense out, that's where the runs can start coming. So, again, we don't look at the stats at halftime to see what the yardage is and overreact to that because oftentimes you check other games' box scores and oh, they rushed for however many yards. You didn't see how dirty the first half was and you didn't see the two score lead in the fourth quarter where they really started to punish the other team. That's just the way it works. You know, last year a lot of our big rushing games came in the fourth quarter because we had a lead. The defense was doing great getting us the ball back. Other teams defenses started to wear out and our guys were really starting to gain momentum up front. They were starting to feel themselves a little bit up front. That's good to see. That's what you want to see as a playcaller. I thought our guys up front did a really nice job.

On if La'el Collins was a decision this morning...

Not really. It was just to work him out. He hadn't done a lot this week, as you guys have seen. It was more to just get him out there and get him loosened up, but we felt good about him.

On the final drive of the first half...

I wouldn't even say we were trying to be aggressive. We were incomplete on a screen to start it. We were incomplete on a check-down to start it and then we took a sack that kept the clock running, unfortunately. That's not how we wanted it to go. I wouldn't say that we came out trying to be aggressive, we just didn't find the completions there early on and unfortunately put our defense in a tough spot and that's a situation I have to do a better job managing.

On Trey Hendrickson...

He was really good, awesome. (He had) three sacks, three forced fumbles. He, again, wears out those tackles over time. He's just relentless. Him and Sam (Hubbard) on those edges. Then you've got to give credit to those guys internally, too. They create that push that allows him to come off the edge. We know how special Trey is and I think today just really proved that.

On the touchdown to Tyler Boyd...

I thought our protection at points today was really, really good. I know we gave up two sacks, but there were times, particularly early in the game where the protection was really good and it allowed us to be aggressive and start that way because of how they protected and how they kept those guys off of Joe. I thought on this one, it was a blitz we talked a lot about. They brought it from the other side with the safety. I thought we did a great job managing the protection call. TB (Tyler Boyd) did a great job with the route, the protection was really good for us, Joe did a great job. That's a tough throw. TB kind of caught the same pass against them last year going in the other direction. Same thing, they tried to undercut it and TB caught it. Last year he got tackled by the safety, this year he did not, he outran everybody, so credit to TB for making those improvements and having a big play. That really sparked us at that moment.

On Tee Higgins' toughness...

Our receivers are as tough as they come. They really are. That's their mentality. Tee went up going to get the ball knowing there's a post-side safety that can come to deliver a hit. It doesn't matter, he comes down with the ball. He was available a couple of plays later, we were just down in the red and weren't calling a play to him, so we kept him out the rest of that drive.

On Logan Wilson's interception...

That's the safety, or receiver, however you want to look at him, letting his instincts take over and making a play down the field. For a backer to be that far down the field and to have that torque and those ball skills to catch that clean, that wasn't a guy fighting the ball, that was a guy naturally having those abilities. Not only is he fast and physical and instinctive, but just the fact that he played all of those other positions in high school and college, that helps add to his value. He does a great job utilizing that. If the ball comes to him, he manages to come down with it. It was great. It was 95% a really good run. We just have to finish that off.

On if they needed a win to reinforce their good feelings...

We just needed to get the first win. I didn't really care what it looked like. I didn't care if it was 3-0 or if it was 49-3. We just needed to rip that band aid off and get that first win. We've been a confident team all along. I really felt this team's confidence over the course of the last week and last night. That's the only validation I need is to see the look in their eyes. They go out to practice and they get ready for the game. We knew we were going to get a good performance from our guys and they delivered.

On what this performance does for them...

Just the win itself is all we needed. I think our guys know what we're capable of. They don't need the validation. We just needed to get into the win column and start to create that positive momentum, not only with our team but with the fans. We want them to have something to be excited (about) coming off a win going into Thursday night at home. We

saw what the Jacksonville game was like last year. It was one of the best scenes I've ever been around. We expect the same thing with a red hot Miami team, 3-0. They've beat some really good football teams, so it's going to be a tough test for us. I know our fans are going to be there to help us do everything we can to pull out a win.

On Akeem Davis-Gaither...

That's something to watch, but Akeem is fast and playing physical right now. He's a guy we've got a lot of confidence in when he gets his number called. We feel like we have a lot of guys that can start at linebacker for us. We just know that we have two top notch ones with Logan and Germaine (Pratt). Those other guys, when their number is called, we don't expect there to be much of a drop-off at all. Those guys are well-coached and they do a really good job playing in our system.

Joe Burrow

On if he wanted to keep the ball to start off the game and if there was a discussion around it...

Yeah, I thought that was a good call. Obviously, we put seven on the board on that first drive but if you go three-and-out it's a different conversation. We came out aggressive and it paid off for us.

On if there was a risk with deciding to not defer to having the ball to start off the second half...

Yeah, it's always a risk when you take the ball. You can't get those two possessions at the end of the half, but it paid off for us. Put seven on the board and then game right back and scored again, so that was a big start to the game for us.

On the overall toughness of the Bengals' offense...

I thought it really showed on that last series with just running the ball. Everyone knows we're running the ball, we're getting in our big 13-personnel and running outside zone, everybody knew what was happening but we were able to do it. (FB) Samaje (Perine) did a great job, offensive line played great, and that last series was the epitome of what we want to be for the rest of the year.

On how important it was to score a touchdown after the defense created a turnover in the third quarter...

Defense played awesome, put us in position to get points multiple, multiple, times. They just keep playing great.

On how mentally tough it is on a drive when you get in the end zone multiple times and keep getting called back...

Yeah, it's really tough. Probably not a lot of drives that end in touchdowns when you keep getting called back and called back, but we were able to find the end zone and it was great start to the game for us.

On if Burrow thought WR Tee Higgins scored...

Yeah, I thought – obviously, they had a better look at it then I did, but I thought he scored.

On how important it is to score on third-and-longs...

When you're in the red zone you have to put seven on the board and we need to be better than we were today. Second half and first half, we left points on the board so we have to improve in that area but just like every game, we go back and look at where we can get better and make those corrections.

On if he made a concerted effort to throw deep and what he saw that caused him to make those decisions...

I just thought our play calling was awesome today. We got those guys on the outside and I needed to do my job of just giving them a chance and they're going to make plays for me, and we got to call them as well, so that was great today. Just, at least once a quarter, give those guys a chance down the field.

On what was his impressions of Sauce Gardner...

I thought he played well. He's going to be a really good player. Big, long, fast, he's fun to watch.

On if the game rhythm felt good...

First half for sure. Second half we would have liked to have finished it off better than we did but that last series was exciting and the first quarter, first quarter-and-a-half of the game was often.

On if the Jets blitzed on all three touchdowns...

The first one I don't think they did, second one they did, I can't remember the third one.

On the third touchdown...

Oh yeah, they did (blitz) on that one as well. So, two of the three, yes.

On different it makes it to be playing with a lead...

That's ideal right. That way you can run the ball, you can play action, you can run your nakers, you're not just dropping back every play so that's critical going forward for the rest of the year. Coming out fast, putting points on the board, staying close, now you're not in two-minute the whole game and that puts the offensive line in better positions, it makes it easier to call plays, so that was critical.

On how he thought the offensive line played...

I thought they did awesome. The interior of the pocket was really firm and when that happens it allows me to step up into the pocket and make throws. I told those guys I thought they were awesome today.

On having T La'el Collins play after not practicing all week...

He pushed through it, that's the kind of guy he is. He's tough, he's going to just keep getting better and better for us.

On what Burrow saw from Higgins today...

Tee was awesome. It was great to see him have a game like that because that's what he's capable of doing. He's a big strong guy that we need to get the ball to more and I'm going to say that every single time someone has a big game. TB (WR Tyler Boyd) has a big game, Tee has a big game, (WR) Ja'marr (Chase), just because we have so many guys, I'm not focused in on one guy. We can do a better job of getting everybody the ball. I thought we did great today, just going to keep going like that.

On a classic Boyd game...

Well, he finally broke a tackle (laughter). It's a great job.

On what Boyd means to Burrow and how Boyd had the same touchdown as during last year's matchup...

Yeah, same exact play and last year he ran directly into the safety and got tackled, this year he broke two tackles and scored a touchdown, so that shows improvement.

On Offensive Coordinator Brian Callahan and the game plan....

He did a great job mixing it up. Throwing the ball deep, checking the ball down, running it, gun runs and it's all predicated on the fact that we're not getting down by 14 points in the first quarter, that just opens up the whole playbook for us.

On why Burrow thinks the offensive line played so well today...

They're just improving. Working hard in practice, understanding the protections and the corrections they had to make from the first two weeks, and I played better, we called a better game, and we weren't behind in the first half. Like I said last week, you get behind in the first half over and over again, you put those guys in bad positions. When they're just getting pass rushed every single snap if you're behind by 14 points so we were able to jump out on a lead and then we could run it, we could play action, makes it easier on those guys.

On if they made a good case for when winning the coin toss to not defer...

We'll see, we'll see if we keep doing it. It worked out for us this time, we'll see.

Tyler Boyd

On the Bengals receiving core...

What's understood doesn't need to be explained. I think the whole world knows that. We're the number one receiving core. I don't have to preach that. We take pride in our job. We all want to make plays, we all want to do what we have to do to help the team win.

On how much the team feeds off each other's toughness...

Very much, because we're all going to ride for each other no matter what. If we do something that wasn't good, we're going to pick each other up and vice versa. Anytime we call runs, we pride ourselves on going down there and not letting our guy make the tackle on the running back. So our overall game, we want it to be at an all time high and we push each other for it to be that.

On Tee Higgins bouncing back from the physical hit...

I feel like he would have been good in the Steelers game, too. Tee is a very tough guy. He's big and physical and can take hits like that. That's

why we don't get too worried. He popped up. Glad he wasn't concussed, glad he was able to continue to come out there and help us. That just shows us that he's not going to lay down or give up on us.

Ja'Marr Chase

On Sauce Gardner...

He's a good player overall. Overall, a good player. He can play a little scrappy, that's kind of cool of him. I don't know about the nickname though, if that's what people call him. I don't even know his first name because you call him Sauce.

On feelings going into this game 0-2...

No, it's only the third game of the season. We don't know for sure if the season is on the line, it's the third game of the season. So, we still got to play hard like it's our last game.

On the contested play with Sauce Gardner...

Oh I had it. He came down, he had a good play. He had his hand inside my arms on the catch, so when I fell to the ground, he ripped it out. It was a good play by him.

Tee Higgins

On the Bengals electing to receive the opening kickoff and letting the offense start with the ball...

Yeah, we just wanted to attack, start off aggressive, and just attack the day. We were able to do that today.

On setting the tone by scoring on the first drive...

It's a confidence booster. The past two games we weren't able to score on the first drive. We were able to do that today. That got our offense

going and got the defense hyped for when they got on the field, so it all worked out how we wanted it.

On whether they changed anything in the game plan to have more success today...

No, we just had to be us. The past two weeks we were just not being us, making mistakes, false starts, all that. This week, we locked in. Just started in practice, just going out there, running on the field, the little things.

Mike Hilton

On the Bengals' defensive effort...

We take pride in not giving points up. And if they do, they have to take three. We got put in some tough situations on our side of the field, but we know with the 11 on our defense, we can make some stops and we did that today.

On the Jets not getting a redzone snap until near the end of the game...

We take pride. Like I said, we know what we have on defense and we know when it comes down to it, if we need to get off the field, whether a turnover or holding them to three, we take pride in what we do.

On his tackling...

Yeah, I just try to grab and hold on. Obviously, I feel like that's one of my strengths, is my tackling ability, and I showed that today.

Trey Hendrickson

On winning the coin toss and receiving...

I think that's what the offense set out to do and that's their job, to get up and get up quick. It put us in a position where we were able to continue to rush and get after them.

On having three strip sacks...

There is always an emphasis in our defensive line room to break the ball out. More opportunities on the ball the better it can be. That's what I'm coached to do, and it comes down to execution.

On his performance...

I think it was just a good game plan combined with execution, like I said before. Our coaches put us in a lot of great opportunities. Sacks are a complete defensive stat. Great coverage, great rush, combined with the scheme of the football. From top down, I can't do it by myself, so I'm really honored to be in those positions.

On the team's first win...

It's the National Football League. Winning should never be taken for granted. It's a special feeling whether you're on the road or at home. The comradery in the locker room, the guys, the energy, its special.