



## BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

JAN. 7, 2024

CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI

### ZAC TAYLOR

#### Head coach

##### Was that finishing the right way in your mind?

"It was. We challenged these guys to start the game the right way and to go into the half up 24-0 was great. I'm proud of the way our defense (played) through three quarters — held them to zero. I'm proud of the offense for finishing the last scoring drive with a 99-yard drive. Our special teams units played well all game and did a good job with coverage and kicking aspects. That last game of the season can be tricky, but I thought our guys handled it in the right and professional way, as we expect them to. Really proud of the way they finished. I'm also really proud of the fans for finishing it the right way too. The turnout today was really awesome, and the support we've gotten from them all year. It's a game where the playoffs are not on the line, it's cold, and every excuse not to be here. It was really appreciated by us and the team to see that. I looked out in the upper deck and saw people there. I don't know if that'd be me, but they showed up and supported us. I appreciate that and we look forward to rewarding them with championship-level football next year."

##### A win was the goal, but is it also nice to see milestones like Joe and Jamarr's hit?

"You're happy for those guys because of the work they've put in to get there. It's special because we're so team-based that everyone wants the team to do well, but when you get opportunities for guys to hit important personal milestones that are forever documented in the history of this team, I think that's cool for them to do that."

##### What was your message to the team afterwards?

"Just proud of the way they finished today. That's all we could control — how we came out, and playing with good energy. I thought in a lot of ways that's what we did. We wanted to win the turnover (and) penalty (battles). We went into this game first in the league in fewest penalties and third in turnover margin. We wanted to continue to play disciplined ball and finish high in those categories. We did a good job of that."

##### The game script meant a lot of opportunities for younger guys ...

"It was good for the game to take shape the way it did. They rested a bunch of guys, so for us to get some opportunities for guys who haven't had a lot of reps to A) be rewarded for their efforts this season, and B) (have) a launching pad into the future. There were a lot of guys that got opportunities and made the most of them."

##### Does it mean anything to not go winless in the division?

"Our goals are to win the division and win the Super Bowl. You have to fare well in the division to get to the best opportunity to do that. It's something we're always aware of and we have to do a better job of that going forward. It's a tough division, but going 1-5 in no way shape or form is acceptable for us. All we can do is control today and we found a way to get a win."

##### How surreal is it to have a winning record but finish last in the AFC North?

"It's a good division. We didn't do enough to give ourselves our best chance. That's really all I got."

##### With the season now complete, how would you assess the way Jake Browning took over for Joe Burrow?

"I was really proud of Jake. You don't get a lot of reps over the course of the season, and then you're thrown into the fire. We were playing really meaningful team football that kept us in the chase. I thought he performed very well and gave us a lot of confidence in the future for our backup job. That's one of those things; you never know what you have with someone until they go out and do it. We try to make it as best we can in the preseason, but you're not playing with or against starters. Jake had a great opportunity and he made the most of it. I'm really proud of how the guys rallied around him and I thought he handled his opportunities really well."

##### After the 99-yard drive, it looked like the two of you shared a laugh?

"I was biting him a little with the headset (smiles), so we had a good little communication there."

##### Was he upset with the call?

"No, we're all good."

##### Contract talk is far off, but do you get any sense when you're out there that this is one of the last games together with some of these guys?

"I don't put a lot of thought into that. Those conversations haven't even begun to take place. They do their job upstairs and I get up to speed as the spring goes. I'm not going to worry about that."

##### With that said, how much do you relish those moments where it may be "one last game?"

"Every group, every year, is that team. It's the way the rosters go, things take shape as the offseason goes and it's never the same. I do appreciate this group for fighting until the bitter end. Their character cannot be questioned. What they went through and what they gave us this year, I'm so proud of them for continuing to stay together. You never saw anyone point fingers, even if we lost two games in a row. We didn't turn on each other and point fingers, and I think that's the mark of a locker room that has a great chance going forward. I'm proud of our staff and players for maintaining that throughout the season."

##### You have been level-headed all season despite the ups and downs. Why is it so important to be even keel as a coach?

"I just try to be true to myself. I don't know if it's important for a head coach necessarily, it's my personality. It's my dad's, brother's personality. It's one thing my dad has instilled in us is to be true to yourself. People respond to that better than if you're trying to fake your way through it. It's just the only way I know how to be."

## **JAKE BROWNING**

### **Quarterback**

**After a game like that and a season like that, how does it set the tone for you in the offseason? What difference does it make to end the season like this?**

"It's better than ending with a loss, but I don't know. I think the second the game is over, you're glad you won and didn't play bad, but it's like, 'Man, we were so close to the playoffs.' It's a weird, bittersweet feeling where you won, and it was good to go out strong. Every team is going to be different every year, and that's part of the business side of it. But man, we were so close to the playoffs, and it just sucks that we are going home. It's mixed feelings."

**What was the prep like as you all got ready for this week, and why did you want to come out and make sure you finished on a good note?**

"I think for me, in my situation, starts don't grow on trees. So, every single one is important. I think our locker room — it starts with the type of guys you bring in the locker room, then the culture that (head coach) Zac (Taylor) has established. I don't even think there was really a thought that we were going to come out and not play hard, for a couple reasons. One, football is pretty physical, and the second you come out not prepared, that's when injuries happen. I think (No. 2), at least for me personally, no one really said anything about it, but I think one of the cooler stats -- there are all these stats that pop up on TV, and one of the cooler ones that I always saw ... I mean, I hate the Steelers as much as everybody else, but the fact that (Steelers head coach) Mike Tomlin has had that many winning seasons ... Hopefully however many years from now, Zac has that same thing. There will be a little bit of that, 'OK, in 2024 now, good thing we got that win.' So, the streak's at three. It's not even close to Mike Tomlin, but it's still alive and I think that's a pretty cool stat for a coach to have. Zac gave me my opportunity and has treated me really, really well and is the reason I'm still allowed to put on pads on a Sunday. So, I kind of wanted that for him. I think it's a cool stat to have as a coach."

**Was there any conversation among the players about Zac Taylor's winning seasons streak or that sort of thing?**

"No, just something I thought about. There are a lot of reasons to go play hard. You're in the NFL, and just because you're not in the playoffs, you always kind of remember how'd you play, prepare and what was your intensity like in games that don't matter. So, I wanted to go out strong."

**As you said, starts don't grow on trees. How do you think you did over your seven starts?**

"The goal was to make it into the playoffs, so that part — not well. I think as we get further away from the season, I'll remember the good hopefully, but I think I'm kind of wired to remember some losses where I could've played better. I think that I've established that I'm capable of being a starter in the NFL. So, obviously a weird situation where I feel like I'm one of the top 32 quarterbacks in the world, and I just so happen to be on a roster with a guy who's proven that he's a top five quarterback in the world. So, what that looks like going forward, I have no idea, nor do I have any control. So, I'm not going to think about it a ton. I think when I go watch all my film to try to figure out what I'm going to work on this offseason, I'll be proud of what I put on tape. But, the goal is to go to the playoffs, and we didn't, so that's pretty motivating going into the offseason too."

**Besides the obvious of making the playoffs, when you look back at your first starting opportunity in the NFL, is there anything over these last few weeks that you wish you did differently?**

"Find a way to win one of the last two games. All three of the losses, just find a way to get one of those. I don't think there was really any overarching theme to them, it's just you have to find a way to go win at Arrowhead (Stadium), you have to find a way to go win at the Steelers, or at home against the Steelers. So really, just really figure out how to play better against the Steelers would be kind of the main takeaway. I don't have any overarching theme. I think that I don't want to have opinions until I watch all my film together, and I think you start to get a feel for what the things you need to improve on are."

**Why was it important for you to reach out to Tyler Boyd in the middle of his press gathering in the locker room after the game and show him some love?**

"T.B. (Tyler Boyd) has been my locker mate throughout this whole year. I think Ja'Marr (Chase) and Tee (Higgins) get a lot of publicity — and rightfully so, they're unbelievable players — but I think T.B., at least in my experience over the past couple years here and watching this place — I wasn't here when it was bad — but watching it climb to the next level, I think T.B. is an unsung hero, or a guy that pulls a lot of weight in the locker room. Those two guys came here, and he was kind of the guy, and those two guys came and it's a zero-sum game. You can't throw the ball to three people every play. So, there were a lot of touches that went other people's ways, but he kind of set the tone that, 'This is not going to be a prima donna room.' It's just really about winning and going as hard as you can. I'll always have a lot of respect for T.B. and just how he carried himself. I threw three picks against Pittsburgh, his hometown, in front of his whole family basically. Coming into the locker room, he was like, 'Hey man, shake that off. Everybody has one of those games.' So, I'll always remember that. Like I said earlier, you remember what people were like when something bad just happened. So, I'll always think very highly of Tyler."

**How much do those people contribute to building a winning culture in the locker room?**

"I can only speak to my experience, but I mean, our franchise quarterback goes down and he breaks his wrist — I can't remember exactly what it is ... he gets hurt, and the first play I come out, we call a naked. It's not like we were, 'Hey, let's roll out to your left and be aggressive.' So, that kind of set the tone. Then, you fast forward a couple days, and Joe (Burrow) is out, he sits up here and has to tell everybody, 'Hey, I'm out.' There are obviously a lot of emotions involved in that. But, he immediately said, 'Jake's going to play great, and I have a lot of confidence in him.' That was just echoed by him, (head coach) Zac (Taylor), teammates. So, it's an objectively difficult position to just step into, but it becomes much easier when you have the franchise guy saying, 'I think you're going to tear it up,' and 'Great job,' and sending me texts after games and being very supportive. I felt like there was a lot of confidence in me, whether people were faking that or not, it was appreciated and I think it was a big reason why we were able to string some wins together. Obviously, it was not enough, but I think it's been a special year for me, and I'll always kind of remember different interactions this year, maybe more so than years going forward or years in the past just because this was my first time getting some action."

**Did Joe Burrow say anything to you after today's game?**

"I'll keep those conversations private, but yes, Joe (Burrow) has been great, which is probably the least surprising thing of this whole year."

**There are teams around the league where their starting quarterback gets hurt, and the wheels fall off for their season. From a culture perspective here, what led to some stability down the stretch even though you guys did come up short?**

"All the things that I just said were big, but I think a big part of that too was I had been preparing for that for a long time. I had a lot of support after the Ravens game, after the Steelers game. There were flashes there that earned that support too. Then, we kind of got hot there for a little while for three games. There's a lot that goes into it, and I'll give credit to the culture and stuff like that, but there's a

big part of too where I was prepared and I was playing well. So, maybe if there were some people who didn't think it was going to go well, they didn't have a choice but to kind of believe after that."

**What advice would you give to people who are in the position that you were in before getting your opportunity, whether it be them on the practice squad and wondering what their future is going to be? What advice do you have for them for making the most of their opportunity?**

"I think for guys on practice squad, there are three buckets that you can fall into and you don't want to fall into any of them. You don't want to be the guy that gets cut a few times and loses his confidence. The second you do that, you're screwed, but those guys work really hard because they're trying to build themselves up. The second one is the guys who think that they're getting screwed. There's usually a half-truth there, but those guys never lose their confidence, but they probably don't work as hard as they need to. Then, there are the guys who are just, 'I'm just happy to be here.' You want to have that in the right situations, like on Sunday when you're in a hoodie, or Wednesday when Joe (Burrow) is going through whatever. You still have to remember that you're in the NFL, but you also don't want to be the guy who isn't working hard enough to (take advantage) when your opportunity does come, if it comes. There are plenty of people where it does not ever come. You want to be prepared. So, I think navigating those three buckets you can kind of fall into. Take the good with the bad of each one of those buckets. Avoiding the bad and taking the good is kind of the way to navigate it."

**For a practice squad guy or a backup guy, how do you keep that confidence in yourself that you are one of the top 32 quarterbacks in the NFL?**

"It's a little bit easier now, but I think before it was pretty difficult. Like I said, I've always been confident in myself. It's not just some delusional confidence. I've done very well in practices, I can throw very well, I've always been really accurate and I've always been more athletic than people think. The hardest part was keeping it for the four years where you're being told you're not good enough to be on the 53, but we'll still keep you around. So, I think for me now, I felt like 2022 preseason, I got to play and I got to watch myself play and I gained a lot of value out of that, and I had a great offseason because of that. So now, with more tape, I think navigating the balance of, 'I played really well, but there is always something you can get better at.' So, that's kind of going to be my focus in the offseason."

**Now that the season is over, you can focus on college football. You have your Washington jacket on. Do you have a plan formulated to dunk on the Michigan guys if Washington wins?**

"To dunk on them, no. I don't know. Like I said before, I refuse to be some negative alum, so whatever happens Monday, I'm proud to be a Husky alum. It's been awesome watching them. I love watching Michael Penix. I feel like it doesn't seem like the moment is ever too bright. Some quarterbacks you see, you get into some of these big games and you shell up not to lose the game. He does not have that, so it's awesome to watch. I think he's one of the best quarterbacks in college football. You can say what you want about the draft or potential. He's unbelievable, and it's been fun to watch."

**No friendly bet with Dax Hill or DJ Turner II or anything?**

"No, I don't want to take their money."

**Did you have the milestones for Joe Mixon and Ja'Marr Chase in the back of your mind, or were you just playing?**

"I was just playing, but I knew. I told Mixon if I threw him two touchdowns, I better get a good present. (I threw him) only one, so no present. I think any time you're in a game like that where you know you're not going to the playoffs, it's good to give them a little extra cash."

**What are your plans to watch Washington in the national championship?**

"I'll be there."

**You got to watch them, and then you had Tyler Boyd, Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins at your disposal. What type of impact did those three together on the field at the same time have on the entire league?**

"I think it's much easier to take away one than it is to take away two or three. So, if all of your pass game goes through one person, then it can be pretty easy — especially on third down is where it shows up the most. So, just having three guys like that. Then another name I'd throw in there is Tanner Hudson. He's kind of been in a similar situation as me where he's up and down off practice squads, and he's kind of been at the bottom of rosters. He's a huge part of what we were able to do. Third down, even first and second down, the red zone— he's really good. I don't know if he's as big as (Kansas City TE Travis) Kelce, and I'm probably going to get a bunch of crap for the comparison, but his ability to be able to feel where he's open and adjust routes to make himself open, you can't really coach that. He's a really good player. I don't even know his contract situation — I don't know my own, I don't know his — but hopefully he's still here. I think he's an unbelievable player."

**Have you ever had a 99-yard touchdown drive?**

"Probably at some point, but I don't know."

**Was there a little spat between you and Zac Taylor during that drive?**

"No. I lost my cool for a second, and luckily Zac is a very forgiving person and not a jerk. If I were him, I would have screamed at me in the helmet."

**Do you care to share what exactly it was about?**

"No. It's not bad, I just lost my cool in the moment and he was great as always. He's always here (hand held low) and he just stayed right there as I was through the roof pissed off (hand held high). I can't be doing that to the guy who gave me a shot, and it was bad."

**Is that part of what makes guys really like playing for Zac Taylor?**

"Yes, I think that one of the things that is most impressive about being in this building is that Zac encourages you to be who you are. I've never felt the pressure to get in front of the team and be the rah-rah guy because I'm the quarterback for these last couple games. He's, 'Hey, be yourself,' whether that's how you act, how you conduct yourself in interviews or how you are outside of the facility. He says, 'Be yourself. Protect the team, but be yourself.' That's not the case everywhere. There is a ton of effort and thought to intentionally create a culture where people can be themselves."

**Did you think you had Tyler Boyd open for six on the play where Cleveland jumped?**

"Yeah. It's one of those where they jump, so I knew what the coverage was. The guy that's supposed to take (the route) away is

the corner overlapping because it's 22-double invert. So, you can lead him hoping to get the 70-yarder, or you can drive it on him because I didn't know where the corner was, just trying to make sure he gets the ball. So, then it got caught in the mind. I probably should have led him and he probably would have scored, but should have, could have, would have."

### **Zac Taylor is always harping on culture. Was today a culture day?**

"I'm not going to make it out to be more than it was. Everybody showed up, worked hard, did what they were supposed to do. They obviously were not playing all their guys, so I'm not going to sit up here and harp too much on the win. It felt good to win, but I think the culture is much more than that."

### **TYLER BOYD**

#### **Wide receiver**

#### **How do you feel following today's victory?**

"It feels pretty amazing I'm still doing this. For this to be my last game (for) my year kind of sucks because we have a great team, but it is what it is. I'll be around next year."

#### **You'll be here next year?**

"I mean, I'll be (playing) ball next year."

#### **How much did you think about this being your potential last game as a Bengal?**

"I embraced it. I (thought) about it, but it is what it is. I've just got to wait and figure out what the scenario is going to be. I'm just going to take it day by day and (be) appreciative of these guys I've been playing with my whole career, so I just embrace it."

#### **Will you be reflective of that in time or do you just live in the moment?**

"It's a little bit of everything. Enjoy the moment, but you've also got to look at the next chapter if there is one. Right now, I'm just going to live in the moment. Whatever comes for me next, I'll be ready."

#### **What happened on your dropped ball?**

"We caught them offsides. It was a free play. I was expecting the throw to have a little more air (under it) and I was just going to go run it down, go catch it and go score. But it kind of threw me because the corner would have overlapped it and made the play over the top, so I tried to stop, come back and catch it and run underneath the (linebacker) that was chasing me down. I ended up taking my eye off the ball and dropping it."

#### **If this is the last game you play here, what was the most defining moment of your career as a Bengal?**

"(The) Super Bowl, for sure. It's hard to play in such an achievement like that and I'm not sure if I'll ever get back there. That was just one of those special moments for me. It really made me embrace my life and how hard I've worked to get to this point. Hopefully I'll have another opportunity and win it."

### **TED KARRAS**

#### **Center**

#### **How do you feel following today's win?**

"It's the only thing we're here to do. We did a good enough job today. That was a fun game. The end of the season (is) obviously not what we wanted when we were starting the vision of 2023, but now it's 2024 and we've started with a win. (It's) very exciting. I'm very proud of all these guys. I think we got out relatively clean (injury-wise today) and we've got a very big year ahead. Obviously, everyone will take their break and stuff, but we've got to come back. Hopefully, this motivates us all to never let this happen again."

#### **How much did Jake Browning answer the question of whether he could be a backup quarterback in this league and lead teams to wins?**

"I think he answered if he could be a starting quarterback in this league and (I'm) very proud of him. He did a great job all season, even when he wasn't in. But to answer the bell, obviously, when our number one guy in the franchise goes down, (those are) big shoes to fill. (He) came in and went 4-3. We probably could have helped him out a little bit more. We're leaving the season — obviously, there are some regrets — but to go out here and not get blanked in the division is a really big deal."

#### **A running back gaining 1,000 in a season may not mean what it used to, but what was it like to be part of an offensive line that helped Joe Mixon achieve that?**

"That's a big landmark. I don't know how many 1,000-yard rushers I've been a part of. I've had a lot of 'running back by committee' type of teams, but obviously, he's a huge feature of our offense. That's so cool for him. I think it's what, his fourth time doing it? That's a big deal and he's been a premier running back for a long time. He really did exactly what we needed him to do for our offense this year."

### **CHARLIE JONES**

#### **Wide receiver**

#### **How hard was playing through your injury all year long? What was your pain level out there?**

"It's something that kind of lingered all the time. I had to tape it up every game, every practice, so I'm excited to get some time off to let it really heal properly and then next year not have to worry about it."

#### **Is it just a time and rest thing or is surgery an option?**

"I had the surgery on it. It's just a matter of healing."

#### **The jet sweeps — is that something you did a lot of in college or is that something new for you as part of this offense?**

"Not really too many in college. Every year, I'd have probably a handful. But it's something I've done before for sure."

#### **What's the key to making that play work?**

"Just securing the handoff. We say 'Go get five yards.' Anything after that is a bonus. You just want to get to the perimeter as much as you can."

### **ANDREI IOSIVAS**

#### **Wide receiver**

#### **You had your first multi-touchdown game of your career. How gratifying was that?**

"I was super gratifying. Everything I worked for — I'm not even close to being done yet as to where I am as a receiver. It's always nice to take a step in the right direction. I still have things to work on as well. I have a list of things I'm going to work on as the offseason hits. I'm excited for that."

**Can you share any of those things?**

"There are things after every practice every day. Today I had a drop in the middle of the field where I turned before the ball was tucked. That's something I can work on every day."

**What does it mean ending your rookie season with a strong performance to go into the offseason?**

"It always helps with the confidence. I think regardless of how I played, I would have known what I needed to work on anyway. This past week, obviously, I was focused on the game plan but I was really focused on how I'm going to maximize my training to be the best I can be next year."

**You finished the season with a record of 9-8. Does a winning record matter?**

"Definitely. The NFL is the best league in the world. To get a winning record in the NFL in itself is an accomplishment. We're blessed to be on a squad that has expectations to reach the Super Bowl, but having a winning record is not something to look down at either."

**JOE MIXON**

**Halfback**

**How important was it to get a win today?**

"It was very important I feel like for this program and for the fans, and obviously for my teammates. All the work that we put in throughout the year, we finished it off the right way. I'm glad we were able to do that."

**You were able to hit a few milestones in this game, including a couple touchdowns and cracking 100 yards. Personally, what do those numbers mean to you?**

"It's cool I was able to reach that and achieve that. I definitely never going to end up taking that for granted. I'm just glad that I'm blessed to be able to play this sport at the high level that I do. It's more about my teammates. I'm just thankful and grateful that I was able to share that moment with them and most importantly get the 'dub.'"

**Does it say something about the locker room that with nothing really to play for, you went out and played like this?**

"It's definitely something that I felt like we needed to do. Our coaches prepared us to go out there and go out with a bang. We're out there to play, so we might as well do everything we can to get the 'dub,' and I feel that's how we approached the week. Obviously, we were able to reap the benefits of that. I'm just happy for the guys to leave the season on a great note."

**Did you leave the field and look around and wonder if this was going to be your last game with the Bengals?**

"No. I was just really taking it in with my teammates and doing whatever I can to really enjoy that moment with them, live in the moment with them and go celebrate with them."

**Does reaching 1,000 rushing yards mean anything?**

"It's a great feeling, but like I said, ultimately it's about getting the 'dub'. We ended this on the right note and It's a blessing to be here, to be able to share this last moment playing 60 minutes with my teammates. I'm going to embrace that tonight and obviously it's going to carry on into the offseason."



## BROWNS POSTGAME QUOTES

JAN. 7, 2024

CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI

### KEVIN STEFANSKI

#### Head coach

##### Initial comments ...

"To start with injuries, Cedric Tillman is in concussion protocol, Pierre (Strong Jr.) got hit on his low back — we'll have more on that tomorrow. Obviously, you come down here and you want to go get a win. Disappointed in the results, but I thought those guys played really hard. I thought that was a great learning experience for a bunch of young guys. They will get better because of that. Now we'll get on an airplane, and we'll get ready for Houston."

##### What do you think about going back to Houston?

"We're excited about the opportunity. Obviously, there is uncertainty going into this week, but we've just got to get to work."

##### How do you feel about facing C.J. Stroud considering how well he has been playing?

"I think we'll have plenty of time to talk about them this week. I have a ton of respect for their team and their coaches. They do a great job, but we'll talk about them this week."

##### Are you concerned about momentum being stopped?

"I think when you look at these games, what's important is doing what's best for your football team. We knew what this game was. We knew it was a great opportunity for young guys to get some reps. I think they did a nice job."

##### How do you handle not knowing exactly what day of the week you're going to play?

"We have a plan for all three outcomes. We will bring the players in tomorrow regardless, then we'll update them tomorrow."

##### Besides winning, your objective today was to get out of here as healthy as possible. How do you feel leaving with certain injuries?

"Yeah, we'll see how it goes. You can't predict these injuries and you can't predict how a guy is going to respond. I'm disappointed for Cedric (Tillman)."

##### Is there any clarity about who your backup quarterback will be?

"We'll handle that next week."

##### How is Shelby Harris?

"I think he'll be okay."

##### How did you feel about the offensive line?

"We moved guys around. We were rotating tackles. We got (Luke) Wypler in at center and at guard. There are moving parts there. I think it's a valuable teaching experience for those guys."

##### How did you feel about David Bell?

"It was good to see Bell come down with those two balls. Jeff (Driskel) trusted him in those moments, and he came down with them."

##### How did it feel to see Elijah Moore and Ogbo Okoronkwo get back out there after their injuries?

"Elijah, with what he went through and then to come back, and Marquise (Goodwin) wasn't able to go so Elijah took a few reps today so that was great. Ogbo, we're excited about getting him back. He's such a big part of our success, so excited to see 54 back."

##### What do you think of Jeff Driskel?

"I thought he operated well. There are things in every game for every quarterback (that) I know he would like to get back. But all things considered, I think he operated well."

##### Finishing the season at 11-6 and a playoff berth, how do you feel about what you have accomplished at this point?

"I know the (regular) season ends, but I don't think that it's time yet for reflection. Our focus goes on to that second season. We have to get back to work, (which) is where our focus is."

### JEFF DRISKEL

#### Quarterback

##### They improved as they went on ...

"Like you said, we had a slow start. Couldn't get much going. The first throw of the game was picked like that's obviously a terrible start. I've got to give Ced (Cedric Tillman) a chance on that ball and I didn't, and I put our team in a tough position. But we came out and got a turnover which was huge to get the ball back. And it was just it was tough sledding early, but it was good to see those guys and myself battle back in the second half and put some good stuff on tape. But ultimately, we came here to win, and we didn't get it done."

##### How tough is it coming in after nine days with a bunch of new guys and having to go out there and face their starters like that?

"The NFL's hard. It is what it is. This is a hard league. But there's no excuses. You just have to go out there and figure out a way to get it done. And we didn't get it done today."

##### Do you feel like you got at least a little more comfortable in the game as it went along and did what Kevin Stefanski wanted to do?

"Yeah, I think so. The more reps, the more comfortable you're going to get. Getting in the flow of the game was good. Getting, some things started just builds confidence in everybody, myself and everybody around me. So, once we got some stuff going, you could see us clicking a little bit. But the more opportunities you get out there, the more comfortable you're going to get."

##### A bit of shuffling on the offensive line. Did you practice behind the guys in practice this week, the same ones who plays pretty much? Or not?

"Yeah, it was the same crew throughout the week. We had good reps in preparation for this game."

##### You had two passes to David Bell. How did you feel about that?

"Yeah, that was cool. And that was cool for me to get a couple of touchdowns there. And he's a guy that I found out pretty quickly in the week of practice that, you give him a chance, he's probably going to come down with it."

**Did the Bengals defense show anything different that you didn't see throughout the week?**

"They played a lot of man coverage. Typically, they're rolling through a little bit more on types of coverages, but they came out and played man defense. Yeah, it ultimately was execution on our end, and whatever look they give us. We have to go out and execute. We didn't do it early, and did it a little bit more late."

**DAVID BELL**  
**Wide receiver**

**You had a career game in a losing effort. Take us through the plays you made ...**

"Just a breakdown in the defense and getting behind them, and just the preparation I had put me in position."

**Did you get extra work with Jeff Driskel this week?**

"Yeah, he was taking the majority of the reps this week so we were able to build a good rapport. We didn't get the (win), but toward the end of the game we got the offense going."

**Now you can turn your full attention to the playoffs, where you play Houston in the Wild Card ...**

"The whole year we've been striving to get to the playoffs. Like I said, we lost, and we wanted to end this season on a good note. But we know we have a second season in front of us, and not a lot of teams get that opportunity. So by us finishing the season, and transferring over to the postseason, our main focus is Houston now."

**It wasn't that long ago that you played Houston. There were some personnel changes due to injuries, but does that help in terms of getting ready for what's ahead?**

"I think it does, but also it doesn't because they can come out in a whole different scheme than they did before. We've just got to go study real deep on how their defense may play us, and just go out and play football."

**How does this game you had today help you with your confidence moving forward?**

"It felt good. I've been waiting for the opportunity to come, and unfortunately we lost, but I ended up having a pretty decent game."

**Did you have a big smile on your face when you caught the first one?**

"Yeah I did — I'm always smiling. A lot of my family was here, so they had an opportunity to see what was happening today also."

**OGBO OKORONKWO**

**Defensive end**

**Did you feel limited out there at all with the harness?**

"No, I didn't. I mean, a harness is a harness, but I felt good."

**What do you think about going back to Houston for the playoffs?**

"I'm going home. Let's get it. Let's get a win in my city."

**You missed a game a couple weeks ago. Was it good to get back out there?**

"I read the script, so I knew I was going to miss that game. The writers are doing a fantastic job (laughs)."

**How different is Houston with C.J. Stroud?**

"C.J. is a dynamic player. He's a really good quarterback. But we're going to watch the tape, we're going to respect them, and just go out and do our due diligence and our homework."

**You've been talking about one game at a time all season, but this next game is the postseason. The fact that it's finally here, how do you feel going into it?**

"We're super excited. This is what you work for all the way back in camp. You go 1-0 each week, and it feels good to put in the work and put ourselves in position to win the big one."