

TENNESSEE TITANS VS. CINNCINATI BENGALS
WEEK 4 POSTGAME QUOTES
Sunday October 1, 2023

CINNCINATI BENGALS OR JOE BURROW

How would you describe the identity of this offense right now?

We haven't got anything going. Obviously disappointed today. So, we have a lot to get fixed.

How did you feel physically coming in today?

I felt good.

When we talk to you guys, you have good weeks in practice. And through four games, it hasn't necessarily translated to gameday. Can you, as the leader of this team, pinpoint where there may be a disconnect, if there is one?

Just got to keep stacking days. Like we said, we haven't put it together a game. But it's a long season. We are going to keep working every day. Keep getting better. That's all you can do.

How frustrating was it after that first drive? Because it looked like you were in rhythm and you guys moved the ball downfield, to not be able to keep that going at all.

Yeah, good first drive. We weren't able to punch it in the end zone. That's kind of the rest of the day went.

What changed after that first drive?

We weren't able to complete balls down the field. We weren't able to really do anything. So there's a lot to get fixed.

Is there an attitude that needs to change inside the locker room that you sense?

I wouldn't say an attitude needs to change. I would just say we need to execute better.

Joe (Burrow), when you're down as big as you were in the fourth quarter and you're obviously not 100 percent, were you lobbying to stay in the game? What was the reward as opposed to the risk of you staying in there in the fourth quarter?

I always feel like we're in it. It was a three-score game mid-way through the third. We were still in it a quarter of the way through the fourth quarter.

Even then, were there any discussions about you sitting out?

No.

In those situations, is there a point of pride to say, "I want to finish this game?"

I would say so.

The ball where they ruled it a fumble first and turned it back to an incomplete, it looked like you got hit on your arm as you were throwing. Was there any discomfort in the elbow after that?

No.

Zach said nothing was good enough about today. Does it feel like the offense is close right now in any way, or do you feel like you're a long way from where you need to be?

Depends on the day. Today we weren't close. We weren't close to winning the game. We have been in the past. Like I said, we've got a lot of work to do.

Through 4 games, does this feel like a playoff team at this point?

Not if we keep playing the way we are. We know we have the capability of being a playoff team, but that's so far in the future. We got to just worry about tomorrow and get better tomorrow at this point.

Is that frustrating given how successful you all have been over the last couple of years, for that (playoffs) to be a question at this point?

Whenever you are 1-3 it's frustrating.

Did you get the sense that they were just going to blitz no matter what? No matter the situation, they were blitzing everybody.

Depending on the down they blitzed here and there. I wouldn't say they blitzed every play.

Have you been seeing more blitzes this year?

It's tough to say that. I think teams are blitzing the same amount.

What were they doing to make it so hard, so challenging?

They're really good up front. They got good players. They had a good scheme and a good plan.

Joe (Burrow) this group has been so reliable, this offense. You guys know each other so well. What is the most surprising to you about it? Just not working through four games this year?

We just haven't scored any points.

Do you feel like there's enough variety to your offense to help you in that you're not 100 percent right now? Like there's enough in the run game and schematically that you have enough to support what you're going through right now?

We just haven't executed the plays that have been called. Whatever play is called, as long as you execute it correctly, there's always a chance.

Coming off the first drive, were you looking to hold on to the ball for a tick longer or try to be more aggressive down the field?

I pick my spots. Take my spots like I always do. There are points where I tried to, but like I said nothing was really clicking today.

How challenging is it to fight your instincts when you're back there? Your instinct would naturally be to take off and run or to spin out of something. Are you fighting that and is that a hard part of what you're going through right now?

It's hard to say. I'm playing the way I'm playing. Got to do better in practice. Got to continue to stack days. Get better every day.

When you lose a guy like Tee Higgins and you are in a whole already, how much more challenging is that?

When Tee's (Higgins) not out there we aren't as good of a football team. But like I said, whatever circumstance presents itself, you got to adapt to it and make it work.

This group together isn't used to results like this. How do you, as one of the leaders on this team, help manage the emotions that can come with a 1-3 start?

We've had rough stretches in the past. We know how to come out of them. Just got to keep chucking away.

Do you ever sense that this shouldn't be happening and are there guys inside that are angry about it?

I would say whenever you're 1-3, you're going to be frustrated. You're going to be angry. You're going to be wanting to win games. And we haven't been. We're not going to let anything like that come between us. That's how you end up having a bad season. We've had a bad start. We've had a bad first quarter, so we got three more quarters of the year to get through and go from there.

There have been instances in past well-documented instances where you go down by two touchdowns or more in a game, you get back up off the mat, flip it around, you go on to win the football game. What's the difference in a day like that versus a day like today when you weren't able to do that?

We just didn't make any plays really in all three phases. We didn't make plays that were necessary to win the game.

I know you said that your career is going to be your whole window, but there were very high expectations for this team because of who you returned and having all the coordinators. Is it puzzling to you that this start has happened?

No, you watch the tape, and you see we didn't execute. I wouldn't say it's puzzling at all. We just haven't executed the way we needed to win these games. So as soon as we fix that, we're going to start winning games. Like I said, we just got to keep chucking away every day in practice and continue to get better. Come back next week.

The first series of the game, third down, time out, third down run. What happened on that stretch? It didn't look like it was the cleanest.

Yeah, we got something that I wasn't quite expecting. So, we called a timeout and then came back and had a wide box, so we ran. I thought we were going to be able to punch in.

HEAD COACH ZAC TAYLOR

Opening statement?

Nothing was good enough for us today, really. We got beat in every phase and that's up to every player, that's on every coach that we've got. This was unacceptable today and I have all the confidence that we got everything in this locker room to get right, to get back on track next week. But, disappointing. This is not the expectation we had going into this game. Tennessee controlled the game really from start to finish. They executed and beat us in every situation. Hats off to them, they out played us today. More discipline, more physical. We have got to step up this week and have our best week if we are to get back on track.

Why has it been so hard to get Joe Burrow going?

A lot of different reasons. We have had to go the length of the field with how teams have played us. You've got to capitalize on some opportunities when they do try to give it to you. But today those opportunities really weren't there, and we just didn't play well enough.

Exactly what happened after the first drive when it looked like you had some rhythm on them and then the rest of the game you didn't?

Yeah, it really, you know, you look at our efficiency on third down was not where it needs to be. Two of nine, I think it was. We really didn't put ourselves in a bad position. We were in third-and-manageable and just didn't come out on top. They did a good job mixing up some of their looks, bringing some pressures. But that's really when you're talking about consistency on offense. It really starts and ends with executing on those third downs.

What lead to Joe Burrow finishing the game?

Trying to get back into the game.

Was there conversation about putting Jake Browning in the game?

I mean, how much time did we get the ball back with in the fourth quarter?

Like 9 minutes or something, 10 minutes? We were trying to get down and score, get the two-point, and make it a two-score game and try to find a way to get a win.

What was the decision to settle for the field goal on fourth-and-3 on the first drive of the game?

They got really good low red zone on defense. So, we're going to try to get points on board to start fast that way. And so that was a decision we made.

Can you put your finger on today, I think obviously there is going to be a tough matchup any time you face Derrick Henry, on the run defense?

We do a better job tackling than we did today. I think and again, you look at the flip side, third down, I know we have three penalties on third down and times where we may be able to get them off where they got a chance to extend the drive because of penalties. And so, you know, you look at those, those can be the difference. Offense executing one or two more third downs in the first half and keeping our defense off the field, putting points on the board, getting some rhythm, wearing them out. Defensively, it's tough when you get a stop and then the flag's out because we got a penalty. That can be a defeating moment. I don't think our guys act defeated when it happens. But you know, it's a time when you get off the field then all of a sudden, they get to extend the drive.

What do you trust or feel like you can believe in with this team right now?

The people. Truthfully, the people. Today, whether we lost 27 to 26 or 27 to 3, we are 1-3. It doesn't matter which way you slice it. So again, we have got to find a way to get ourselves back on track. We got our first win. It felt good. Maybe it felt too good, who knows? But we got to find a way next week at Arizona to get ourselves back on track and be 2-3.

Are you surprised at how few answers it seems like you guys have for stuff right now? I mean, it just seems so uncharacteristic to have a day like that.

It just comes back to third down because every time you execute on third down on offense you feel like it unleashes a whole new set of plays you can run. It extends the drive, gets more touches, gets your O-line more rhythm, and we just didn't do that. Two of nine, you are not extending any drives. So, everything has got to be perfect on first or second down and that's hard right now. Especially against that front, that's number one in the league against the rush and all the things they've done. It makes it challenging for you. So defensively, conversely some of those penalties hurt us as well.

What are you seeing or not seeing from Joe Burrow?

Yeah, I mean, it really started with their front. Their front is really good, tough to block and, you know, we just didn't do a good enough job for that.

I think as a unit, we've just got to play better. Play calls have got to be better. We got to put ourselves in a better position. That starts with me. And when our number's called, guys got to step up and make some plays.

What can you tell us about Tee Higgins injury?

Ribs. We have got to sort through it. I am not sure. I'm not sure more than that.

What was your message to the team at halftime?

That we've still got an opportunity here. If you remember, we were down 17 to nothing to Jacksonville a couple of years ago and we came back and won the game. So, there's still opportunity there. A blow you take is when they take when their first drive is 10 and a half minutes to start the third quarter. That's the downside of taking the ball first is they get an opportunity to start the half with the ball. And really, we had them off the field. We had the unnecessary roughness penalty, I think on third-and-17. The ball was incomplete; we get the penalty, and it extends the drive. You had an opportunity right there to set the

tone the way we wanted to do it. Get the ball back and potentially go score some points but instead it extended the drive and probably took another 8 minutes off the clock and lead to points for them.

Next time you step foot in the facility the first day this week, where do you start?

It starts with the first meeting and the first practice. And again, I've got so much confidence in this team that we're going to respond to this the right way. I said this in here many years before, It's a long season. We have to continue to improve. Every single month that passes, you've got to see improvement from this team. And so that's what we've got to see as we move into October and we go the road in Arizona, we need to see improvement on all phases of this team. I really got the confidence that we will because I believe in the players, I believe in the coaches. Again, one of the things you just said there, we're not missing anything from outside this locker room. We've got it all in there. Just got to have a great week of practice and be dialed in and start this game faster when we go to Arizona next week.

Why are you having problems against the blitz this season?

I don't know. We have just have to be better in all phases.

Questions will keep coming about Joe Burrow's calf, but from your vantage point today, how much more comfortable did you feel he looked this week?

Yeah, he's doing everything he can. He's playing through it, but there's still limitations he's got certainly and that's probably very difficult for him. But again, he's getting hit. He's having to move and he's doing a great job getting up on the next play and responding. Sometimes quarterbacks will get rattled by that stuff. But you don't feel that from him at all. You feel that the next play is going to be successful even if he does take a hit. Again, he's fighting through it and I'm proud of him for that.

Did you get the sense that they just said we're going to blitz?

Second down they were blitzing and third down too. On first-and-10, they were sitting back playing a little softer. They brought pressure and did a good job executing and we didn't.