



BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

OCT. 23, 2022

ATLANTA AT CINCINNATI

ZAC TAYLOR

Head coach

What did you think of Joe Burrow's performance today?

"What else can you do different? Got a lot of respect for them, but I thought our guys on offense really stepped. Offensive line gave outstanding protection, so that Joe was able to do what he was able to do with all the skill guys that we have. Those three sacks were some different looks — one of them was a cadence issue, one of them was one of the best bluffs I've ever seen in my life. Hats off to him for that one, we ain't winning on that one. Then there's a third one there. I thought the amount of times we threw the ball, the efficiency we had, how good our offensive line did today — hats off to them. There were a lot of drop-back passes — it wasn't under center, it wasn't play-action; it wasn't naked, it wasn't a lot of screens, it wasn't runs to take the pressure off. It was drop-back-and-protect, and our guys answered the bell today. And, of course, our skill guys stepped up as well."

How did it feel to get off to a good start and play well the entire game?

"It was going to be critical against this team. You saw they had a 10-minute drive in the second quarter. When they've been able to hang around or play with leads, they suck the air out of the clock like they did there, and you can feel how they play ball. They do a great job with it; they're really efficient doing it. They regained the momentum there. We had about the worst 30-second stretch we could have there in the second quarter. But, our guys took a deep breath at halftime, the defense came out and responded like they always do and got us a stop at the start of the half. (It was the) seventh consecutive game with no touchdowns allowed in the second half. It's just unbelievable to have that level of consistency. So, they got us started, and the offense was able to score some points there and put the game on ice."

How important was the defense's response to begin the second half?

"It's big, because there was a little bit of a momentum shift there. When you took a deep breath, it was really just a one-play strike and a clock issue, and that was really it. So, to get a chance to step back and really isolate it — 'We've played good football, let's not let them run away with the momentum here. Let's get back to what we've done well.' The defense had played well, and that's what they did."

This team has won four out of five games. How important has this bounce-back been?

"I hope you all listened to me when I got up here at 0-2 and said, 'Just be patient, this season is very young, we know what type of team we have, I know the faith that I have in these players and coaches.' And that's what they've done. This season is still in its infancy stages. Today gave us a chance to separate a little bit, and that's what we need, but we know what's on task next week: Monday Night Football at Cleveland — that's a big game for us. Guys will be amped up and ready to go. It gives us an extra day to get healthy, and our guys are ready for the challenge."

What made Tyler Boyd so effective at getting open?

"We've really gotten back to the basics in our passing game to be quite honest with you. Just cornbread and butter stuff that allows the ball to be split around, and just let T.B. (Tyler Boyd) — let us give it to Boyd there. They're trying to help on Ja'Marr (Chase) and Tee (Higgins) as well on the outsides, so it opens it up for guys like Hayden (Hurst) and T.B. T.B.'s a special player, he's a special locker room guy, and he makes the most of his opportunities. On cue, when the ball goes to T.B., he makes a play for us. I'm still mad at him for missing third-and-one and not getting us that first down on second down — he knows it. But he did a great job today. It was awesome to see him step up and play like we expected him to."

Did you choose to receive the kickoff due to the Falcons' ability to sustain long drives?

"Yeah. We wanted to put them away early, and that's why it was important. You can swing and miss there and it can play against you, because they can start the second half with the ball. We had a lot of confidence in what our offense was going to be able to do today, and they stepped up and did it."

Did you feel that the defense took over the game in the second half?

"Really, they played well. They gave up the long, 10-minute drive for the touchdown, and the one-strike play in the two-minute. Aside from that, I thought they did a great job in the first half. Like you said, in the second half, two three-and-outs to start. It really gave us the momentum, and gave the offense (the opportunity) to regain our footing, because we went there and had a turnover on downs there. The defense really stepped up and gave us great opportunities."

What went into the decision to bring La'el Collins back into the game after his injury?

"I didn't directly talk to him. I just knew it was a quick ankle, and felt that he could come back and be effective for us, so that's what we did."

As a play caller, what is it like when Joe Burrow plays as well as he did today?

"Got a lot of confidence that he's going to find the right answers to the coverages. We saw a lot of different coverage looks, especially kind of similar to what they did to Tampa. A lot of different coverage looks early in the game, so the quarterback's got to be on top and deliver the ball to the openings and hand the ball off when he needs to. It puts my mind at ease to know I can just quickly give him a call and let him operate — do what he does best. When he gets in a rhythm, watch out, because it's tough to stop."

What went into the decision to substitute Eli Apple for Cam Taylor-Britt at cornerback? Any update on Trey Hendrickson's injury?

"The starting point was that we wanted to work Cam in there. He's a player who, when he's practiced for us, he's done a really good job, made a strong impression, and it's time to start working him in on special teams and some on defense as well. We'll watch

the tape to see how well he did there, but the plan was to get him in there, work in there a little bit. Trey Hendrickson's neck — we don't know yet. We'll get some more information on that one."

Did you say anything to Tyler Boyd with reference to when he came up short on the third-and-one?

"He knows, he knows. Let's get first-and-10s to stay out of those short-yardage situations. It's something I really harp on a lot. I didn't say anything — he came up and apologized to me. I say it lightheartedly, but we also know, when we can stay out of those situations, let's do it. Aim for that first down, don't lose yardage. He knows my feelings on that overall the last four years, and so he came up and we had a brief conversation."

When you brought in Cam Taylor-Britt, were you looking for a better option at that point in the game?

"No, we planned on playing him in the game. We'll talk through who got the ball over the course of the game, but the plan was to get him snaps in this game."

What does the stabilization of the offensive line open up offensively?

"I wouldn't look at it that way. I've had confidence in these guys since coming out of training camp, to be quite honest with you. Their communication, their professionalism, their talent level, and taking that talent and chemistry to develop the cohesiveness that these guys have together — I can't put words into it how confident it makes me. So that's a credit to Frank Pollack and Derek Frazier of keeping these guys on the same page and letting the chemistry take over. These guys go to dinner together, they're talking ball all the time, they're lifting together — it's exactly what you want from your O-line room. These guys have really taken that to heart, and it's fun to watch these guys."

What do you mean when you say that the 'passing game is back to basics'?

"That's a little bit overstated from what I said. I said that — I'm not saying you didn't quote me right. Just mixing in more bread and butter stuff that's really been efficient for us the last couple weeks, not overcomplicating it. Some good scheme stuff that we like that we've maybe dialed up against the pass. We're just saying, 'Let's get back to the things that are tried and true in our system.' It doesn't mean that we score on a scheme play on the fifth play of the game or whatever it was, but it's just things that guys know well and can operate with extreme confidence."

There were a lot of big plays. Which was the biggest for positive momentum moving forward?

"The shot early in the game. That was one we were locked in on early. Ted Karras last night was a guest in the quarterback meeting room and he picked that as the first touchdown of the game, so credit to him for having that foresight. That's just further what our offensive linemen understand about this offense. They hear us talk, they hear stuff in the pass game that really they have no concern about, but really they're just that aware about how the game is going to be played out, and it's pretty fun for me to see as a play caller."

What gave you so much confidence in that play?

"It's a chance to be aggressive. When we call those shots, (Joe) Burrow checks them down if it's not there. He's really good. We've called plenty of plays like that where if we don't get one of those coverages we want, Burrow just gives it to the tight end or the back which gets us to a second-and-five and lets us come back to the play maybe later. It just so happened that the shot was there."

How valuable has Sam Hubbard been?

"Incredibly valuable. He steps up and continues to make key plays. In the run game, he doesn't always get credit because he might not always get the tackles, but I promise that if you run to the right, you feel his presence. We do it all training camp, teams feel it in the preseason, and as you get to the regular season he's just been a force over there. And, he affects the quarterback and protections, with that big sack he had this game. Really cannot say enough about Sam Hubbard and the role he plays for me as the head coach, this team in the locker room and fan base. To be able to cheer on a hometown hero like him — just can't say enough good things about Sam Hubbard?"

How would you assess the play of the linebackers?

"I think they did a really good job of settling down in the second half. Really there was just the one (drive) in the second quarter, but other than that, I thought that they played really solid. So that's good for the linebackers all the way around. This team has driven the ball, they've won time of possession, they've driven the ball the length of the field, we gave up the one drive. Aside from that, I really thought the defense was excellent."

How important was the play of the defensive tackles today, given injuries on the defensive line?

"They've taken advantage of the opportunities they're given. Jay Tufele is a guy who was just acquired at the cut-down, has been in-and-out of being inactive, never knows when his opportunity is coming. And he finds himself in a role and takes advantage of it. Same with Zach Carter. Zach was used in different roles early in the season, and now with Josh (Tupou) and D.J. (Reader) being down, he's had to step up as well. Just very pleased with the job that Marion (Hobby) has done with those guys and how they've stepped up to the plate."

Who received game balls?

"A lot of game balls. The defense for what they've done over the last seven weeks, not allowing a second-half touchdown. The skill guys on offense led by our quarterback. It's a big no-no to give them to the offensive line — they don't want that. The three skill receivers. Hayden Hurst has been a big burst of energy for us every time he's touched the ball going against his former team, he made the most of his opportunities. And then Burrow, obviously."

JOE BURROW

Quarterback

How do you feel about this performance?

"It felt good. We were rolling in that first half, most of the second half, too. We didn't score on two of the drives. It was a pretty complete game, good to see. You'd like to score on every possession, I thought we could have. So we left something out there but overall it was a complete effort."

Would you say you're playing your best ball of the season?

"Yes I would say that. I'm feeling comfortable. We're getting our timing down. We're finding a rhythm and the defense will keep doing what it does. We're finding our stride."

How comfortable were you with the offensive line today?

"It was again unbelievable. They made us throw the whole game so we had a lot of third down looks. We stoned a lot of their pressures. They had some good blitzes in the scheme, but for the most part we were lights out."

What's it like when the line is playing with this much confidence?

"It all starts up front. It's the same with every single offense across the league, and our guys have been lights out the last four or five weeks."

At what point did you figure this was going to be a game where you threw it a lot?

"We saw a lot of spots on film that we could take advantage of. We jumped out early on them. They ended up putting in an extra defensive lineman in there to get some pressure. The line did a great job handling that, so we spread them out and let our guys go make plays."

We heard there was a special guest in the quarterback room, and he called the 60-yarder?

"Teddy (Karras)? Yes. We always try to guess the first touchdown. He called it."

What worked on that play?

"It all started with the running game. From last week, the gun runs. They play two Tampa and we held the Tampa Mike with the play fake. So it all started with the run game."

How nice is it knowing you have Ja'Marr Chase in one-on-one situations?

"If we get man, I think everyone knows where the ball is going."

Is there a reason the explosive plays have been hitting lately?

"We jumped out early today, made them play more aggressive. Last week we moved the ball up and down the field, taking what the defense gave us. When you take those check downs and turn them into eight yards up and down, defenses get impatient. Then they get more aggressive so we have more opportunities."

Are there any thoughts on the start of the season, now that the team has won four of the last five?

"No, it's still a long season. We have a big one this week, Monday night. We're excited to get our first divisional win and keep this momentum going."

Are there any other reasons the offensive line is clicking?

"We have great coaches that put together great plans. The offensive line is playing great, the receivers do what they do, and we've been able to move the ball. We've had three really great weeks of practice, so we have to continue that this week."

You're the first quarterback in NFL history to have five 400-yard games in your first three years—any thoughts?

"Nope, I have great players around me, and great coaches."

How do the free agency acquisitions improve the interior of the offensive line?

"At the end of the day, it's tougher to make guys miss coming from the inside than the outside. Alex Cappa and Ted Karras are big pickups for us. Cordell Volson has been playing lights out for us as a rookie from an FCS school. You have to give credit to those guys. Cordell has worked so hard all year; he's become Ted's little minion, trying to soak up all his energy and knowledge. That guy will keep getting better and we're excited about where he's at."

Did you try to get to 525 yards today at the end?

"I thought we might throw it there in the end, but we decided against it."

Why has shotgun been working so well?

"I think we have really good players on the outside that teams are concerned about. It's where we've made our money the last few weeks. We'll see how it is going forward; maybe we start to see some tighter boxes since we've been running it so well out of the gun. Maybe we get back under center and it opens up those play actions and under-center runs. We'll see what happens; it depends on the game plan."

Did you get a good look of Tyler Boyd's one-handed grab?

"I didn't see it, I was on the ground. I always expect Tyler to make those plays. That's why I gave him a chance. He was lights out for us."

What's the next step for this offense?

"Consistency is the next step. Every single game we've had spots where we're really good, and it's about sustaining it over a whole game. We have to string together games like that. We've done that for two weeks and we have to keep doing it."

Do you enjoy all these rushing touchdowns you've had more than passing it?

"I like passing touchdowns better."

Tyler Boyd said he knew he'd have this type of game. What's it like to have any receiver that can break out?

"That's what's so great about those guys. They're just as excited to see Tee (Higgins) score as they are Ja'Marr (Chase) or Tyler as much as Tee. They celebrate each other's success. That's what makes us so unique; we have three number one receivers without any ego. They trust me to do my job and throw the ball where it's supposed to go. They're really a pleasure to be around every week."

How balanced is the receiving attack? Tee Higgins was close to 100 yards ...

"We were trying to get it to Tee but couldn't make it happen in the end. Hopefully we can get one with all three of them over 100."

How did it feel to be back in front of the home crowd for a regular Sunday game?

"It was definitely weird in practice not going on the silent count. We were trying to figure out what our cadences were again this week. It was good to be back, the energy was great."

What did you see on the first touchdown?

“We were able to hold the Tampa Mike with the play fake and hit a big one down the middle. It was a big play for us.”

Did you feel you'd have a big day after that?

“Yes, whenever you go down and score on the first drive with a play like that, you think it could be one of those days. It ended up being one of those days, but it really because of the execution the whole game. We still had some mental mistakes in spots we need to clear up, but overall it was a team effort.”

HAYDEN HURST

Tight end

This has to feel like a dream come true for you with how much you've been involved in the offense in some big wins like today's, no?

“Absolutely. This is all I've ever wanted in the NFL — an opportunity, a chance and (Bengals Head Coach) Zac (Taylor) is giving it to me. It's incredible. This is all I've ever asked for, and I'm going to keep going 100 miles per hour, keep playing how I'm playing and just enjoy it.”

What's it like playing with Joe Burrow? He's a special talent, right?

“It's pretty incredible. He's an elite quarterback, and he's one of the best to do it. He's going to be here for a long time and I love it. Being in an offense with him as his quote-unquote 'security blanket' and check-down guy, it's awesome.”

He can pull off that “Joe Cool” nickname, too, right?

“Absolutely. He's level-headed at all times, and I love it. It's a great vibe, and like I said, it's really, really cool to be a part of all this.”

This experience so far is a lot different than what you've had previously in your career. Does it feel like a breath of fresh air for you?

“Certainly. Like I said, I just wanted a staff to believe in me. I know my abilities can help a team win. It's never been a conceited (thing) where I think I deserve so many catches and so many yards. I just wanted an opportunity. They're giving it to me here, and I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing.”

TYLER BOYD

Wide receiver

What did this game feel like out there today — magic?

“No, it wasn't magic. We just had a great plan and went out and executed it. Everything we thought that was going to work throughout the week, it happened to work in our favor, and we just took advantage of it.”

We've asked you about it a lot of times, but what's it like playing with Joe Burrow? He's a special talent, right?

“Yeah. First of all, it's an honor based off what he's done in his career. (He's a) Heisman (Trophy) winner, came here and led us in his second year to the Super Bowl. The guy is very special. Anytime you've got a guy like him on your team — any time we line up, I expect to win.”

That “Joe Cool” nickname really does fit him in your view?

“Yeah, he's got so many nicknames. He's just a swagger guy that's going to keep this train going.”

How does a guy like him from southeast Ohio have swagger?

“Just be yourself. Don't be a cocky guy, don't be a guy trying to do too much or (consume) yourself with the hype. He's (just) a real cool guy, once you get to know him. All the outside stuff never gets into his head. He just plays level-headed.”

Does it feel like you guys are back on course to where you expected to be following the rough start to the season?

“Yeah. We always knew we had to stay the course — it's the NFL. We're going to lose some tight ones, and we're going to start to win and get back to our true identity, and that's what we're starting to do. We never doubted ourselves. Not one time.”

MIKE HILTON

Cornerback

How important do you think the first series in the second half was to stabilize things for the defense following Atlanta getting a little bit of momentum with some quick scores towards the end of the second half?

“It was big. Giving up 10 points in probably a minute and some change was big. It gave them some confidence, but we knew if we would just go out there and get a three-and-out or some type of stop, the way our offense was rolling, it was going to work hand-in-hand.”

How much did you guys feel like “We're OK” going into halftime, and just take a deep breath collectively as a defense?

“We were fine. No one was in here stressing at halftime. We knew we blew a coverage, and it happens every once in a while, but no one overreacted. We settled down, played our game, and shut them out in the second half.”

How do you think Cam Taylor-Britt played today?

“He did well. He was communicating. He was tight in man coverage when he had opportunities. We're excited to just see him keep growing, and today was just the first big step for him.”

Starting 0-2, how much did you guys still believe you could and would be where you are right now?

“We were fine. We knew the guys and coaches we have in this locker room, we just had to settle down, play our game and just stack wins. That's what we've been doing as of late, so (now) we've just got to carry (that) on.”

JONAH WILLIAMS

Offensive tackle

You've won four of your last five games. How good do you feel about where you are as a team right now?

“I feel good. Obviously, you're looking at one game at a time, and it's not going to mean anything if we don't keep winning and stacking these chips down the stretch, but I feel good. I feel we're starting to play a little bit closer to what we're capable of doing, and we're going to have to carry that forward next week against Cleveland.”

Last week it seemed like things began to click for the offense — is it starting to feel like what you expected things to be?

“Yeah. This is what we’re about. This is what we have to do — put up a lot of points. We have a great defense that’s going to shut guys down and if we combine that with us putting up a lot of points, we’re going to win a lot of games. That’s what we’re starting to do and we’ve just got to keep climbing.”

The offense isn’t going to sneak up on anyone this year. Is this group starting to show how dangerous it can be with today’s win?

“Absolutely. The guys we have on the edges — any play can be a touchdown. They hit Ja’Marr (Chase) and there’s three people around him, and it’s (still) a touchdown. That poses a problem and a lot of issues for a defense. You’re out there for 60 plays, and any of them could be a big touchdown.”

TEE HIGGINS

Wide receiver

Everything seemed to click today. How much fun were you guys having out there?

“It was a lot of fun. It started with Tyler’s big play, and after that, we were like, ‘Oh yeah, we rolling. Let’s get it going.’ And we were able to do that today.”

You’ve won four of your last five games after an 0-2 start. What is the confidence now, versus the start of the season?

“It’s definitely at an all-time high right now. We’re playing good football, and we’re looking to continue to do that.”

How badly did you want those last seven yards on your near score?

“I wanted them bad, man. I’m not going to lie. We ran some play, and I was butt-naked (open), and I’m looking at Joe like, ‘Throw me the ball!’ But it’s all right. My guys went off today, and I’m so proud of them, especially (Boyd) with a career high. We’re looking to build off that.”

JA’MARR CHASE

Wide receiver

The touchdown you caught on your back shoulder reminded me of the Kansas City game (last year). Did you feel that, or was it more of a “Keep giving me space and it will be like this” type of play?

“We just kept taking advantage of the one-on-one matchups. They kept cheating on my side. The corner was just playing over the top of me and Joe saw that. I just made a play with the ball in my hand.”

Do you feel like today was the first time this season the offense really showed what it can do?

“The way we dominated today in all three phases, that was our game plan. We did a hell of a job today.”

What was the difference today versus the previous games?

“We haven’t been getting man (coverage). They tried man on us, and a little inverted covered-2, but we made them get out of it once Boyd scored the deep route down the middle of the field, and then (Atlanta) starting playing man.”

You guys have talked about having fun in this offense — how much fun is it to win like you did today?

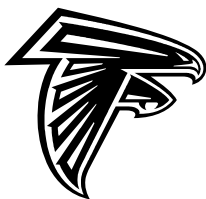
“It’s fun, man. Just coming out there, having a good game, dominating in all three phases, the defense giving us the ball back so we can score more points. That’s what we want and what we’re looking for.”

How aware were you guys as a receiving unit that you, Boyd and Higgins almost all had 100 yards each?

“Oh we’re super aware. Tee went out of bounds — good job, Tee! — it was all Tee’s fault (laughs).”

When everyone’s getting numbers, does it make a difference in the receiver room? How good did today feel?

“That’s what we’ve been preaching and trying to do since last year. We finally had the opportunity to take advantage of it, and I think we did a good job today.”



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OCT. 23, 2022

ATLANTA AT CINCINNATI

ARTHUR SMITH

Head coach

The pass defense today ...

"Yeah, we're not going to make excuses — credit to Cincy. They out-executed us, and we can all do better — starting with me. Credit to Cincy. We've got to find a way against good teams on the road like that to start better."

Do you think, the way that this offense is built, that you can sustain being down three scores?

"I mean, we scored right before the half in a spread-11, so there's a lot of ways we can do things. Credit to them in the third quarter on first down — there were a lot of things. But you can go drop back and go hit a — what was it? a 75 yarder to (Damiere) Byrd?. But the problem in the third quarter was early downs — first downs — and too many negative plays, or one-yard (plays). We didn't do a good enough job executing. And credit to Cincy."

A.J. Terrell went out pretty quickly with that hamstring injury. What's the level of concern with him?

"We'll just have to see — imaging tomorrow. We'll let the doctors handle it and see where it goes."

What was Joe Burrow doing well today?

"We threw a lot of different looks at him, and he just knows where to go with it. He had time, but we had times we got to him. But even when they were off track on some of the get-back-on-track downs, he hurt us. He found the soft spots in the zone. We threw different looks at him through simulated pressures, but they got open, and we didn't do a good enough job executing."

What was your message to the team after this game?

"Back to work. Obviously, credit to Cincy. We didn't do a good enough job — none of us did — being ready against a good team on the road. Thankfully it only counts as one. It's a long season, and we have to get back to work and get these corrections, and get ready for a divisional game at home."

How'd you feel about your running game today?

"Kind of the way I felt about our passing game — pretty average. We didn't do enough to sustain drives, whether it was run or pass."

Did they do something to keep you away from Kyle Pitts and Drake London, or was that more situational?

"We went after Kyle — the safety drives on it — that's how you get the 75-yard touchdown. He caught one at the goal line, and I thought he had a chance, but he didn't have control of it until afterward. Those guys are going to continue to be a big part of our offense, like they are every week."

When you were down three scores, was there a consideration at all to bring in Desmond Ridder?

"No, no. There was plenty of time left in the fourth quarter. If we would have gotten a stop late, we probably would have put him in there to hand off the ball. You could have gotten excited about that, but there's plenty of possessions, no different than L.A.. We had three possessions left, they got us off the field on third down, and we never got the ball back."

You mentioned about starting slow against good teams on the road. Is there any sort of common thread there?

"Sure, that's a good question. We'll have to go back and look at it, but we had a different plan than we had against the Rams. They came out similar no huddle, different personnel packages, and obviously they hit the one on the cover-2 — we fell down and couldn't get enough depth on the middle read. They had a huge play to start the game. They went with their 11-personnel no huddle — which we figured they would do — but we've got to do a better job of executing to stop it. Get down in a hole, we come back down, and what were we down, 21-0? We had the long drive 21-7, they score, we come back out two minute, get the look we wanted, they drive on Kyle (Pitts), we hit (Damiere) Byrd, and Avery (Williams) had the punt return, so we had some momentum going into half. But then we came out in the third quarter and got one yard. We tried the play pass to Drake (London), got off the spot, and then didn't execute on third down. Got the ball back, and that's kind of how it went in the third quarter."

Did those first two three-and-outs put you off track at the start of the third quarter?

"They boxed us in there on the first one, but like I said, I've got to look at the film to see exactly what happened. But obviously we didn't get enough on some of the early downs — whether it was run or pass. We had a keeper, I believe, for a first down. It was something different pretty much every play. Like I've been saying, credit to Cincy, because if I'm going to sit here and keep rationalizing a way, we've got to give credit to Cincy. They did a better job than we did."

MARCUS MARIOTA

Quarterback

This is the third time on the road where you guys have started slow, are there any similarities in those games?

"It starts on first and second down. If you get behind the chains, especially against a good team, and you're in known passing situations on third and long, you're not converting and you're just giving the ball right back. We put our defense in tough spots today. We've just got to be better offensively on first and second down and convert those third downs in the drive."

Were you looking for more chances to take deep shots down the field?

"No doubt. They did a good job of covering and creating situations where I held on to the ball. It is what it is. Sometimes you have that. I've got to do a better job of getting us out of some of these negative plays, whether it's throwing the ball away, getting the ball out

of my hands and not taking sacks.”

What were your thoughts on the contrasting styles between your offense and the Bengals’ offense?

“It is what it is. Joe (Burrow) had a great game. You’ve got to tip your cap off to that. They did a good job defensively to get us off the field and give the ball back to their offense. They sustained drives. Although they were throwing it around, they were able to keep the ball and create time of possession. When you’re behind 14 or 21 points and they’re holding the ball on you, it’s tough. You’re going to have a limited amount of possessions. It is what it is. We’ll find ways to get better and we’ll improve from today.”

Were the two three and outs in the third quarter the turning point of the game?

“Yeah. It wasn’t good. We can’t go three and out like that. Especially when you have momentum on your side and make some plays at the end of the half to get us back into the game. We weren’t good enough on offense to be able to sustain it.”

ERIK HARRIS

Safety

As a secondary, do you think it’s something systematically?

“No. What you do is you get on the plane, the video guy will come around and ask if you want to download the game, and we download the game on our iPads and we watch it as a player. We will come in tomorrow and we’ll just see what our corrections are, see where we missed out on the small details. Sometimes you just feel like ‘Golly, they just have our number,’ and then you go back and you’re like ‘Dang.,’ if we had just set there this would have guarded his zone better, man-to-man or leverage, whatever it may be. But you go back and you see those little things that start adding up. When you’re out there, you just feel like they’ve got your number but then you watch the film and it’s like they didn’t have our number. We made it a lot worse than what it was.”

Tampa Bay lost today so you’re still tied with them in the division after today ...

“We don’t get caught up too much in where we are in the division and stuff like that. Obviously, we hear that but we’ve just got to play each game and win one game at a time.”

How important is it to have veteran depth to bring in off the bench and practice squad?

“It scratches everything, right? That’s why you bring in veteran guys to help out the young guys, that you bring in veteran guys that have seen it. That’s why you see a lot of veteran guys that get signed off the couch and just get thrown in there. They might not be in shape but the coaches have confidence because they’ve played in the system before or know situational football. We preach that a lot, just knowing situational football.”

KYLE PITTS

Tight end

Do you guys feel like you got depressed a bit when you got down by 21 and can’t play the way you want to play?

“We just play our style of football and keep turning it up.”

What’s been behind with the slow starts in road games and how do you fix that?

“Just try to fix some of the smaller details. We’ll look at the tape tomorrow and try to move past it.”

On the 16-play drive, what was that like?

“It was just playing fundamental ball and getting back to basics as a team.”

Down 21-17, what was the mindset like?

“Just keep punching. Just never think about giving up and playing all four quarters.”

Did you think you were there across the goal line and they were going to overturn the catch?

“I did think my body was in. It shook the way it did and we still scored.”

JAKE MATTHEWS

Tackle

What are your thoughts on what happened out there today?

“We just didn’t capitalize in the second half. We’ve got a lot of improvements to make.”

The offense revolves around the run game. Do you feel you have to play differently when you get down?

“We were in that game at halftime. If we play better in the second half or start better in the first quarter, no telling how that game would have ended differently. We’ve just got to find a way to get it done.”

When you see a guy on the other side like Joe Burrow that’s hot, do you feel like you’ve got to match that, feeling more pressure?

“It’s a game. We’ve got to score more points than them. At the end of the day we can only control what we can. We didn’t do a good enough job on offense. If we come out better in the second half and finish the game better, it would be a different game. We didn’t give ourselves a chance to get back in it.”

RASHAAN EVANS

Linebacker

You’re at 3-4 and still tied for first place in the division. Have you ever been in this situation like this before?

“I’ve never really been in a situation like this, but I have started out worse. It’s one of those situations where we’re really close to winning, get beat really bad and then get another chance to win — it’s up and down like a roller coaster. We want to be in a situation where we’re more persistent, where we stay steady. We’re trying to find that rhythm. You’ve got to give props to Cincinnati. They’re a good team at the end of the day. They’re not a team a team that you’re going to just come out and just beat because you’re there. We know at the end of the day it’s a long season and we’ve got another opportunity to get this thing rolling next weekend. The biggest thing is making sure we take control of our opportunities.

When you see the division, do thoughts of past games begin to creep in already of what could have been?

“Most definitely. You think about the different situations you’ve been in, you think about the opportunities you had, you know, chances you know you should have won and didn’t win. They go through your head but at the same time, you can prepare for games each and every week and you’ve got to have a short memory. You try to do as much as you can as you’re preparing each and every

week and try to keep those things from happening, but like every game, you might get something different. You've got to prepare for everything."

A lot of track left to run. Is that how you look at it?

"Most definitely. I feel positive. I still feel positive. I don't feel bad at all. As you get close to this point in the season, you can't have any type of negativity in the locker room."