



## CINCINNATI BENGALS

APRIL 9, 2019

### NEWS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT

#### **ZAC TAYLOR**

##### **Head coach**

##### **Initial comments ...**

"It was exciting to get the first day underway. I know I speak on behalf of the coaches — we were excited. It felt like this day has been a long time in the making. I felt the energy and excitement from the players as well. So it's just Day 1 of establishing our culture, what our values are, and what we're all about. Certainly I felt the excitement around the building, so it was a good first day in the books. We'll be prepared and ready to go tomorrow. Whatever you guys have for me, go ahead."

##### **Your slogan, "It's about us," kind of sums it up, doesn't it?**

"It does. All that matters is what's inside these walls. There are so many distractions, so many different things going on outside these walls that can distract you and divert you away from what's really important. I just want to make sure that our players and coaches understand that as we take care of business inside these walls, we're going to be able to achieve the things we want to achieve."

##### **When you first dreamed about being an NFL head coach, how often did you think about the first time standing in front of your team? Was this one that you thought about for a long, long time?**

"You're absolutely right — you think about that a lot. In the grand scheme of things, it matters very little because we're trying to build each and every day. So tomorrow's team meeting is just as important as this team meeting. I'd be lying if I said you don't think about that first time in front of the players and what your message is going to be. What's important is that we keep stacking every single day and every single day that the players gain information we want to relay to them. Every team meeting is as good as the last one."

##### **What was the biggest thing, or the first impression, that you wanted the players to come away with from that first meeting?**

"It's not about the scheme, it's not about all of the Xs and Os we put behind us. It's about getting to know each other, connecting with each other and playing for each other. As I mentioned the last time I sat up here two months ago, those things have not changed. We feel like we're going to have great Xs and Os that'll put us in position to win, but the players have to bring it to life and they have to play for each other. Once they do that, we become a real team. We're not just a bunch of talented players, we're a real team. We'll be ready to achieve some really good things here."

##### **The players that just spoke to the media in the locker room seemed to unanimously agree that there was a lot of energy in that meeting. Mission accomplished?**

"(Laughs) Well, it was easy. This felt like game day to be quite honest with you. You're up early in the morning, you're ready to go and you're ready to get in front of the team. I was excited, and I know the coaching staff was excited, so I think the energy comes with that. But it was good. The players were focused and ready to go. They got good workouts in with the strength coaches, and had time well-spent in the meeting rooms with the position coaches and the coordinators. (It's been) an exciting first day."

##### **When you walked in, was there murmuring in the room and then just silence? Or was everyone silent, waiting for you to come in?**

"A little bit. The meeting started at 8, so I was glad to see everybody in their seats, ready to roll. As I was standing outside, I could feel the noise level decrease as time got closer because they knew the meeting was about to start. It was a good first start."

##### **Did you feel the way you carried yourself and the way you acted would be as important as what you said?**

"I just tried to be myself. I just went in there with the energy I was feeling, and said the things that were important to build this program the right way. That's what we tried to relay today."

##### **You mentioned that everyone was in their seat at 8 a.m. Is your idea of a perfect scenario one where the players self-police, so that all of that stuff is taken care of by the players and you don't have to mess with that headache?**

"Absolutely. When the players set the standards, then we're going to be heading in the right direction. If the coach is the one that has to set the standards, sometimes that's the way it has to start. We have to be clear communicators and set the expectations, but when the players are the ones who are consistent with their approach and hold each other to those highest standards, then like I said

earlier, that's when we know we're heading in the right direction."

**It seems like there have been a lot of changes in coaches' approaches lately, in terms of how they conduct meetings and things like that — shorter meetings, phone breaks, etc. Is that something you subscribe to?**

"I wouldn't say it's happened just recently. I think it's gotten more attention recently. That's been important to me in places I've been for years now. I don't have a long intention span. If I sit in a meeting with you all for more than 30 minutes, I lose my focus a little bit. I'll try to keep this brief (laughs). I look at my phone as much as anyone. Nowadays, after 30 minutes, minds start to wander. So if you want the information that you spent a lot of time trying to package to be effective, if you want it to really hit home, then you can't expect to keep anybody — adults, players, whatever — in one setting for a long time. You have to try to focus that in and give them breaks when necessary."

**Are you going to give them cell phone breaks?**

"I wouldn't call it a cell phone break. But if they want leave the meeting and look at their cell phone, it's fine by me. To me, it's just a break."

**You're still in the early stages of your installation, but from a terminology standpoint there has been change from last year to this year. Have you thought about how to keep terminology similar, or is that something you haven't considered?**

"You take everything into the equation. I am familiar with how they communicated here in the past. I've communicated a certain way the last couple years. It's a (marriage) of everything. We are trying to make it our own, we really are. There are a lot of things I've been comfortable with and that the players are comfortable with that we want to marry together. We know we all are going to be ready on Day 1 of the season, so right know you work through some kinks of it that might be new to the players. But most important is that it all makes sense. Does the way we are calling something make sense, and is it easy for the players to process in the long term? So that has been our starting point."

**Is there a relief you can finally talk about football with these guys now?**

"The nature of a coach when you see a player is that you want to start talking scheme and how they fit, and you can't do that until today started. It is (a relief), you're right, but we only have them from 8 to noon. Then 12:01 hits and you have to let them go, and there are still some things you want to cover. But we have plenty of time. This day took so long to get here, and then it gets here and you want to cover all this information. We have so much time in the meetings to get a lot of information covered before we walk out on the field in two weeks, so it'll all work out and be just fine. We're on track."

**Do you feel good about your coaching staff learning what you are trying to present and then teach it to the players?**

"Absolutely. We have a lot of really smart coaches in here who are good communicators and work hard when you introduce something to them. When you're away dealing with other stuff, they're on their own and they've really owned it. I've been really appreciative of that. The staff that's been hired is what I expected when they were hired. I'm really proud of the work these guys have put in so far, whether it be free agency, the draft or getting ready for these players to walk in the building. I'm really impressed with all the people here on staff."

**How big of a challenge is it to wear different "hats" between being a coordinator, play-caller and head coach? How do you balance it?**

"It's all part of the job. You have to take it one task at a time and not try to do too many things at once. Be very focused. You guys have probably met Doug Rosfeld, the Director of Coaching Operations. Doug does a great job. He's a former head high school football coach. He does a great job of helping keep me focused on the right track. I'm appreciative that he helps me keep things in order as they need to be attended to."

**Has anything come up that you have not expected as a head coach yet?**

"I think it's important to be surprised by nothing. You hear things and you roll with it. You have to be a problem-solver, number one. There are plenty of times when problems are going to arise, so you have to find the most efficient way to solve it and move on to the next thing and to not let any problem become too big. I think we've done a good job of that."

**Was the decision to release HB Mark Walton a hard one for you?**

"It's hard anytime you deal with a player who's put a lot of work into their career. The unfortunate thing about these situations sometimes is that you don't really get a chance to know the player when you're a new head coach. There's a human element to this stuff, but we want things done a certain way, and we're appreciative of the players that are here in the building and doing things the right way. That's our expectation here at the Bengals."

**Did you talk to him at all before you let him go?**

"Yeah. I had made contact with almost all of our players beforehand. I had at least spoken to most of the guys here."

**You said this morning was kind of like a game day, but what was last night like?**

"The night before a game (laughs). I've had many 'nights before a game' here recently. The bottom line is that it's exciting, that's why I came here. You feel like you're competing already, even though you're just in meetings and there is really no opponent. We're all excited to get this process started. There's been a lot of work to do these last couple weeks, but now to finally get the players in the building, it's real. I walked out on the field yesterday really for one of the first times. You look around the stadium and get a sense that this is coming at us, and I'm excited about it."

**Did you get any sleep last night?**

"I get enough sleep, that's for sure. Enough sleep to get up and be ready to roll."

**You put out a statement regarding Mark Walton's release, saying that you didn't want to diminish the hard work the other guys are putting in. Does that come from being a former player yourself?**

"I just think it's important, because we do have a lot of guys that are doing things the right way, and that's the expectation here going forward. You don't want to make it too much about one person, you want to focus on the people who do it the way we want the Cincinnati Bengals to do it. I'd prefer to highlight those guys."