



## BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

NOV. 12, 2023

HOUSTON AT CINCINNATI

### ZAC TAYLOR

#### Head coach

#### Initial comments ...

#### What are your overall thoughts on today's game?

"(I) give them a lot of credit. I thought that they played hard. They coached hard. They did a great job. Ultimately, they beat us fair and square."

#### The offense had a stretch where it couldn't get in rhythm. What happened?

"Yeah. (There was) no rhythm. Just (in finding) the first first-down. (Instead, we) had a lot of three-and-outs. That was really just the issue, getting that first first-down and trying to get in some sort of rhythm so we could get some things going, and we just weren't able to do that in the first half."

#### What do you think was behind your defense giving up so many explosive plays today?

"They did a good job. They've got explosive players. Their quarterback created (plays). A lot of those explosives were extended plays where he got outside the pocket and found open guys. So, again, credit (goes) to them. They made the plays and their guys did a great job."

#### What was the conversation like after Cam Taylor-Britt's interception? Was there anything you told the team in that moment; what was the energy like on the sideline as the offense prepared to go back onto the field?

"No. It was just get the play called and go out and score a touchdown."

#### The last drive on the second down draw by Joe Burrow. Was that a check at the line situation?

"Yeah. We called several plays and they emptied the box and had some good line movement."

#### On the third down play on that drive, did you like the call? Was it just a play that Tyler Boyd didn't make?

"Yeah, that's a play — it doesn't come down to that play. There were plenty of plays, of course, in the game that we could have got more points off of. We had some empty drives there, but you know, (we) had a good look at it there."

#### Boyd rarely drops passes. Did you say anything to him?

"No. Everybody knows. And again, he's going to put a lot (of responsibility) on himself because it's the end of the game, but there were so many opportunities we had over the course of the game (to score). Players and coaches — all of us — there's a lot of things all of us could have done better so we weren't in that position."

#### Did Ja'Marr Chase's back injury affect how he was used in the game today or was he pretty much good to go?

"There were some times I wanted to be mindful of that, but his message was just, 'Keep using me.'"

#### What's it like when you here that from one of your top players?

"That's good. I felt like he had a good mindset coming into the game. (He) had a good mindset (and) wanted to compete. He certainly did that today, so anytime you get a guy like Ja'Marr out there on the field, it certainly raises the entire team. (It) raises the whole stadium, and I was proud of him for fighting through that, coming out there today and making some big plays for us."

#### These last three years, you find yourself in a similar position as you were then at 5-4. What's your message to the team moving forward?

"Just we've got to focus on the big one this Thursday (against Baltimore)."

#### What enabled the offense to find some rhythm after being ineffective early?

"First downs. Just getting a first down. Just a lot second-and-eights — a lot of first-down, two-yard gains — a lot of second-and-eights (to) find ourselves in a lot of tough third downs. Just getting that first first down allowed us to open it up and keep going."

#### What makes their offense so tough to contain?

"They've got a lot of playmakers. They do a good job with the scheme and their quarterback is not playing like a rookie, so you've got to give credit to everybody involved in that. That's the coaching staff, all units of their players. You know, they play very disciplined and they play with a lot of confidence."

#### The interceptions late in the game by Burrow, it seemed like he was pushing the ball. Was the mindset there, "Let's be aggressive" with the time going down or was that just a learning experience moment there?

"That last one is hard. That's on one area of the field where I can't see what's going on there, so we'll have to watch the tape and see how it went there."

#### Other teams wideouts are typically not that open against your defense. What did you see that allowed for that today?

"I thought they did a good job with their calls, getting their guys in really good position and some of those were extended plays — when he's running to the left and coming back to the right and throwing across his body. (Those are) some things you don't see very often and it provided them with some open receivers."

#### How did Chase's limitations and no Tee Higgins make for a unique game plan this week?

"It's just the NFL, (being in) Week 9, or whatever week it is. That's just the way it goes. Some guys are going to be able to practice

(and) some guys aren't. I didn't think anything felt too unique. Our guys behind Ja'Marr were ready to go. Those guys welcomed the opportunity and we were ready to use them."

**Did you feel at any point the defense was trying to make too many "big" plays in stripping the ball other than just tackling?**

"I think that's kind of what Houston's done a good job of lately. They've been explosive and their guys are playing with a lot of confidence."

**Was Trey Hendrickson being able to walk off the field on his own power after going down late with an injury an encouraging sign?**

"I don't know yet. It was his last play out there, so it remains to be seen."

## **JOE BURROW**

### **Quarterback**

**What's going through your mind right now?**

"Tough loss. I thought we were going to be able to pull it out. [We] didn't make enough plays at the end of the day. They played really well. It's disappointing."

**It looked like the offense kind of got into a rhythm on that first drive and then struggled to find anything after that. What led to being inconsistent there?**

"I have to see the tape."

**On your interception in the end zone when you were trying to make a play, that's one you obviously want to have back. What did you see there?**

"[I was] just trying to make plays. Obviously, wasn't able to make that one."

**Does the mentality change when you're down 10 points that late to kind of push the ball down the field more?**

"Yes, absolutely. You have to try to make plays in that situation. We'll watch the tape."

**You've throw Tyler Boyd a lot of passes over the years. With his drop at the end of the game, do you approach that any differently because it's Tyler?**

"We wouldn't have even been down there if it wasn't for him. Obviously, you'd like to come down with it, but we were able to go down there and tie it up. [We would have] liked to punch it in, make them go down and score a touchdown in that situation, but we were able to tie it up."

**You're going to have to put this one behind you faster than normal given what's ahead on Thursday night in Baltimore.**

**What's your confidence in your team's ability to do that?**

"Yeah, we have to. We have to. So, we have to get our bodies right. That's the toughest part of these Thursday night games. It starts now."

**This is probably one of the more frustrating losses you've had since you've been here?**

"Yeah, I would say that."

**It seemed like you were having to run out of the pocket a lot, and more than you have in the last couple of weeks. What was Houston doing up front that made you be under duress so much today?**

"I knew going in that they had a really good defensive front. They have some juice up front. So, after that first half, I was going into the second half thinking that I was going to scramble a little bit more, try to make some plays with my legs, and [I] made some."

**Why is this loss so frustrating?**

"I mean, you watched the game."

**What did you see on the touchdown pass to Ja'Marr Chase? It looked like he kind of changed his route when he saw you scrambling ...**

"Yeah, he did a great job there. That's the scramble drill for us. That turns into big plays, big touchdowns in those situations. He does a great job of that every single time. That was a big play."

**On the final drive, what did you see on the first-down sack and the second-down draw?**

"I thought we had a good look at the draw. It didn't end up playing out; I'll have to watch the tape. I'm not sure if they stunted up front or not. That usually can mess those draws up. The one before that, I'm not quite sure."

**What did they do defensively after that first drive when you guys got off to another good start?**

"It was tough all day. They're a good defense. Veteran guys, veteran linebackers, some really good safeties that make it tough. Like I said, their defensive front has some juice and is able to get pressure on teams. They're a good defense, and they were able to slow us down in the first half. After that first drive — and that first drive definitely wasn't easy — we were able to make some plays on that one and get some points. Then after that, in the first half there wasn't much, but I like how we responded."

**This team has been in a familiar spot like this three years in a row with a 5-4 record. What's the mood, and the tone and the messaging coming out of a game like this?**

"We have to step it up. We have to be better. Today wasn't good enough; it's as simple as that."

**Even at points during the win streak, you guys have had times where the offense was choppy. Is that something that has been concerning, especially as it shows up again today?**

"Yeah, you always want to play a complete game. I thought we put ourselves in position to win that one. Obviously, you'd like to score every time; that's not the reality of the NFL. I thought we did some really good things. Obviously, there are some things that we could do better, too."

**What did you see out of Ja'Marr Chase today playing with a back issue? Like Zac Taylor said, you guys made a point of giving him the ball as much as you could. What does it say about him being able to play through that with Tee Higgins out?**

"He's grinding it out. That's football. If he feels like he's good enough to go, he's going to go. That's the kind of guy he is. Not much

else to say.”

**Does it feel different at this point this year with how close everything is in the division and AFC right now in terms of the margin for error?**

“Yeah, we would have liked to win this one, that’s for sure.”

**Back to Ja’Marr Chase, how much of a difference does it make when Ja’Marr is going through what he’s going through and there’s no Tee Higgins?**

“Obviously, we’re a much better team when Tee is out there. That’s no secret. Tee is one of the premier receivers in the league, but we had guys step up today. Guys made plays.”

**Were they throwing a lot at Ja’Marr Chase coverage wise?**

“Yeah, they were doubling most of the time.”

**Did you guys change anything after that first drive in the second half? You started moving; did you guys change anything?**

“Yeah. Like I said, I was planning on going out and making some more plays with my legs. I thought I was able to do that. Zac (Taylor) called a really good second half. We were able to mix up our play calls in that situation that was able to get us some explosives.”

## **TRENTON IRWIN**

### **Wide receiver**

**Does your heart goes out to him (Tyler Boyd)? He hasn't dropped many in his career in Cincinnati, but obviously he dropped one that could have been a game winner ...**

“Yeah, that’s my dog, man. We all got his back. That’s just what happens in the locker room. And at the end of day, it happens, and it’s one of those things you got to deal with.”

**What did the Texans defense show you? They looked fast and physical ...**

“They were making the plays. They were flying around, making plays on the ball. I felt like we just flipped in the second quarter. I don’t know what happened. That second quarter, just a couple three-and-outs, and we didn’t really get going. Once the second half came around, we got clicking again, but a little too late.”

**Is it a bit stunning considering that you had won four straight — everything seemed to be clicking — to have dropped one at home like this?**

“It was definitely stunning. It’s definitely a game where we wanted to come out there, put ourselves in a better place at the end of the game. And we got close enough to be able to make some plays to win (it). We all got to make some more plays, to help the team win.”

**You look like you were in cover-two there when you scored a touchdown. Can you run through that play?**

“They were playing what they call ‘palms.’ It’s when the corner tries to play both cover-two and quarters, and his eyes were on Ja’Marr (Ja’Marr Chase), and Joe threw a great ball. Good to get that thing started early.”

**Putting Chase in the slot, that's what he's looking at ...**

“Yeah, he was looking at Ja’Marr.”

**Chase came up big?**

“He can play well, and he fought through it (the back injury). He was hurting all during the week, and he really fought through it, so I’m proud of him. He came out, made some big plays, did his thing as normal. But at the back end of it, obviously extra impressive.”

**Did he talk to the bench at all? Did he say how his back was feeling during the game?**

“The man is a baller. He was just going out there, making plays. And we wouldn’t really talk a bunch about it. But he knew what he had to do to go out there and make plays.”

**Seeing Joe throw two late interceptions like that, how surprising was it to you guys as an offense?**

“We all made mistakes. There’s a lot of stuff on there in the film that I made mistakes on. There was a lot of stuff that I think, as an offense, we’ve got to get rid of those (type of mistakes). I think we all made mistakes late in the game, but we were still able to be right there. It’s just one of those things. There were a lot of people who made a lot of mistakes — it wasn’t our prettiest game — and almost got out of it with a win. That would have been a fun one to walk away with, but at the end of the day, we didn’t.”

## **TED KARRAS**

### **Center**

**What happened today?**

“Too much pressure on Joe. Uncomfortable. Didn’t get anything going in the run game, and really had no business even being in the game at the end. And that’s just the fight of this team to tie it up with a minute and twenty (seconds) left, inches away from taking the lead at that point. So, no margin for error in this league. And that’s a good Houston team. It’s probably a playoff team, and we need to beat those types of teams if we want to be who we think we are.”

**With the division game coming up, how do you feel? Does this make Thursday's game at Baltimore even bigger in your eyes?**

“I think Thursday’s game was already massive, but we don’t want to fall back to .500, playing arguably the top team in the conference, at their place. Thursday night, prime time. You know, I think they won today?”

**No, Cleveland won. And the Steelers won ...**

“Cleveland is tough. This is the best division in football. And we found ourselves losing a close game in a moment where we could really be rolling. We find ourselves with a chance to win at the end, which is quite unbelievable, based on how the game went up to that point.”

**If you had to boil it down into one thing, what do you guys have to do better as an offense to be more consistent?**

“Run the ball more. Make Joe comfortable. Joe was under duress quite a bit today. When he’s uncomfortable, that affects the whole offense. Obviously, this organization runs through No. 9, and we did not have his back good enough today.”

## **CAM TAYLOR-BRITT**

### **Cornerback**

**Your interception was huge and kept the Bengals alive. Talk about that play ...**

"I just got hit on the same play before and I think I was just playing off on the first one and he ran the underneath route, and I was kind of off and made the tackle on the other side of the field. This time I just pressed it, knowing who I was guarding — the speed guy. I just pressed him and as soon as (C.J. Stroud) threw it, I undercut like I should have done on the first one and made the play."

**What about your finger when you had to leave the game for a little bit? Did you dislocate it?**

"Yeah, I definitely dislocated it and popped it back in."

**Did it go back easy?**

"No, it didn't go easy. They just played around with it and we're all good with it."

**The Texans were able to get the running game going to complement the passing game, which makes it tough, right?**

"Oh yes, most definitely. When you're trying to crash and then they hit you with a nice play-action deep shot across the field, that's when you really have got to hone in on your craft with your eyes and everything. That's when everything kind of comes into play. They hit us with some of those, and that hurt us."

**You still had a chance to win the game but it doesn't happen. Tyler Boyd doesn't make the catch that would have been a go-ahead touchdown, but there are a million plays across the game and if any of them go differently, it's a different game and outcome, right?**

"Yeah, most definitely. You can't just pick that one moment in the game. We play as a whole as a team and very little situation matters. You can't just put it on one person. We have come out next time and have to put our little tiptoes on the ground and stand on business."

## **MIKE HILTON**

### **Cornerback**

**On that catch and run down to the seven-yard line, how much did you believe they were going to get the ball in the end zone?**

"We knew that was going to happen. We knew that was going to be the game-winner. That's football. You never know what can happen on that next play and we didn't close it out."

**What happened on that last drive?**

"The third down, I believe it was, we were in a fake zero and they hit (Dalton) Schultz over the middle, and kind of put it in position to finish a drive. It was a quick slant a play or two after that to 85 (Noah Brown) and got an extra 15 yards, and that put them in position to win the game."

**What was Noah Brown doing today that was difficult to cover?**

"(C.J.) Stroud was getting out of the pocket and he was just running and finding the open space. They just had a connection today. Shout out to them, they played well. We definitely didn't play our best."

**Was there something during the four-game winning streak that maybe the Texans saw today that allowed their receivers to get open like that today?**

"It really was just (us) not making plays. (C.J. Stroud) got outside the pocket a lot, and he wasn't even looking around. He was looking downfield for the deep ball and they connected on three, four of them for 30-plus yards. You give those types of plays up and it will be hard to come back from, and we didn't."

**Was C.J. Stroud's ability to run once he got outside the pocket creating issues?**

"I know he wasn't looking to run. He was looking to throw once he got outside the pocket to buy some more time for his wideouts."

**Knowing how competitive it is in this division, how tough is it to drop a game like this?**

"It's tough, but we've got a big one coming Thursday. We're going into Baltimore Thursday night and looking to come out with a win. It's definitely not going to be easy — tough environment. Our backs against the wall, so what are we going to do? Are we going to fold or go up there and show who we are? It's up to us."

**Do you think that margin for error has shrunk now with the loss today?**

"For sure, especially with how tight the AFC conference is. Every game counts, especially now in November. We've got to find ways to close things out when we've got the opportunity."

## **JOE MIXON**

### **Running back**

**After a loss like you suffered today, what is your message for the team going forward?**

"Watch the tape, quick turnaround, and turn the page."

**You're having multiple games where you're scoring touchdowns and being consistent, so how frustrating is it for you to put in all that work and see a loss at the end?**

"Sometimes the dice rolls the other way. It came down to it, unfortunately, that it was like that for us today. When it comes down to it, we've just got to whatever we can to turn the page and get ready for a big divisional game come Thursday."

**The Texans defensive line seems to have been a bit underrated going in. Can you describe how relentless they were today?**

"They've got a great coach over there in DeMeco (Ryans). He had those boys ready to play and you can't ever underestimate a team like that, especially full of underdogs. They came ready, and won."

**How eager will you be to get this sour taste out of your mouth and go on the road to play on Thursday?**

"I think the best thing about it is that we get to play on Thursday. We get to turn the page real quick and get ready for a big divisional game. We all know what's at stake here, so just got to be ready."



## TEXANS POSTGAME QUOTES

NOV. 12, 2023

HOUSTON AT CINCINNATI

### DeMECO RYANS

#### Head coach

##### Initial comments ...

"First off, credit to Cincinnati, who is a really good football team — can't say enough about how good those guys play — but (I'm) so proud of our guys for finding a way to win. We talked about this on Saturday night, just doing whatever it takes, finish every snap. I told the guys it comes down to the last snap. We still found a way to finish, so I'm really proud of the way our guys fought. I'm proud of the plays that they made to help us win that game. We have to play cleaner, and there were a lot of mistakes that we made to make the game close. There are things we can clean up, and it's better to clean them up after a win."

##### What are your feelings after such a back-and-forth game?

"I'm excited about the way our team battled. I'm so proud of our team and excited for them to be in a tight football game vs. a playoff football team and come up with a win. That's where we're headed as a team. We're showing that we're a good team, and we're showing that we can win tight games, so I'm really proud of the way our guys battled."

##### A tight game on the road, and you guys were really able to settle in at the end. How did you not let that waiver?

"No one waived on our sideline, and that's what I love. I love the resolve of our team. Everyone believed that we were going to win, everyone put in the work and made the plays to help us win this game. It starts with the confidence that you have to have to win these tight games. Also, knowing that we got guys. We have CJ (Stroud), receivers, Noah (Brown) stepped up and had a big game. Guys stepped up and made big plays. The way Motor (Devin Singletary) ran the football today is our best rushing game this year. Credit to the O-line and Motor for the way he ran the football. It was impressive to see, and I love the way he finished all of his runs."

##### Speaking of confidence, when CJ Stroud makes a mistake, it seems like he learns from it, and as the game goes on, he gets better ...

"It's impressive to see a young kid make mistakes and grow from it in the same game. For us to be able to come out with a win after the mistakes that he made and still be able to win the game and learn from it, it's much better to correct that after a win rather than a loss. I'm really proud of CJ, and he let me know that he got me after the interception, and we're going to make a play to help us win this game."

##### During training camp, players mentioned that they felt this year they can shock the world. What is it about this team that made them believe that this year they could shock the world?

"It's not about shocking the world, it's just about the guys in our locker room believing in each other. That's all that matters. We really don't care what the outside world says. It's just about the men in his locker room believing in each other and going to prove it, one step at a time."

##### Matt Ammendola has been the next man up all season. For him to come in and replace Ka'imi Fairbairn and win the game, how impressive is that?

"Matt stepped in and did an unbelievable job for us. He's a veteran kicker who's been there before and done it before. We're happy to have him. The confidence that we had in him and his range. He nailed it. Three field goals, and the game winner after only being with us for a week. Credit to Matt, proud of him for stepping in after losing Ka'imi."

##### You mentioned the confidence that the team has. How much of that starts with you and the confidence that you exude?

"It's about them, not me. It's all about these guys in the locker room and the work that they put in day after day that no one sees. They put in the work. They came out here today and they were the best team for three hours on Sunday, and that's all that matters."

##### The confidence it takes to win games like this, did that take time to build?

"It takes time and confidence comes from the men. Starting with the quarterback position. The confidence that CJ has given to our team and organization. If you want to win tight games, you got to have a quarterback who can make those big time plays to put you in position to win games. It starts there with him."

##### In crunch time in the final couple of minutes, how was Stroud able to rally through that?

"The thing about CJ is it's the calm in the chaos. He doesn't waver. He's confident that he's going to make plays, and the moment isn't too big for him."

##### How rare is that when you talk about being "calm in the chaos" for a rookie quarterback?

"The calmness starts for him in that he's played in a lot of big games at Ohio State. He's been under the big lights before. They're bright lights, and he's made big plays. He doesn't get wide-eyed when the moment comes. He understands that, 'I believe in my teammates, I believe in myself, and I believe in the O-line that is protecting me and I know I'm going to make plays.'"

##### Can we talk about Sheldon Rankins performance, getting three sacks?

"It was awesome having Rankins back and to see what Rankins can do for us. The pressure that he got today was consistent pressure on the pocket. And for him to get three sacks, that's a huge game for us. I'm happy to have him back."

##### A long time this organization has been on the losing end. What is it like for you to see results now?

"Whatever has happened in the past is in the past. Were the 2023 Texans, and we're moving forward."

##### What is the thought process for that last drive?

"Being able to get into field goal range there. Give us time. The offense operated really well. The clock management piece was really well and everybody did an excellent job."

##### What went into rotating Dare Ogunbowale and Steven Nelson?

"It was Dare's first game back. I think he is getting back into it and I did not want to put him back out there his first game back and have him play 60 plus snaps. It would not be fair to Dare. For Steven, he was dealing with issues all week but he battled through. I think we had a healthy balance of mixing both of the guys in."

##### Can you talk about the job the O-line did today?

"Our O-line has been playing well for the past couple of weeks. It's even more evident today and how they were moving the defense off the line of scrimmage and we were able to create lanes for Singletary to hit. O line has done a great job protecting, especially in these last drives the two minute moments. CJ is able to be comfortable in the pocket because of the protection by our O-line. All those guys have done a great job. Got to

make sure to highlight the big guys. They definitely deserve it.”

**You mentioned that you want to see your team handle success better. What about today showed how they handled success?**

“This week, it shows how we prepared in practice. No one was feeling themselves, no one got a big head. Throughout the week, everybody worked in silence as we should work. I want the guys to have that same desperation after a loss. How do you feel after a win? We had that preparation. We had the right mindset throughout the week and it showed off today.”

**C.J. STROUD  
Quarterback**

**To win that game the way you guys did, how much is that a confidence builder? I know you already have confidence but to do it again to win in this fashion ...**

“Yeah, man, all glory and prayers to my lord and savior Jesus Christ. This was a great opportunity and a hard-fought game. These types of games come down to the last minute. It’s hard to win in the NFL. It’s a great Bengals team over there and they prove it week in and week out. We came in with the mindset that we won’t be denied and that was huge for us. We fought until the end, it wasn’t easy, and it wasn’t how we would draw it out but that’s what this league is about, those tough wins. All glory goes to God and I’m super blessed to be on this Texans team and play with my teammates. No doubt that everything was in our favor going into that last drive. We knew that we could go down and get a field goal or score, so it was a blessing to pull out the dub.”

**DeMeco (Ryans) said at some point you said to him, ‘We got you; we have this.’ When did you say that to him and where does that level of belief come from, because like you said, it’s hard to do this in the NFL ...**

“It was after I threw the interception and they had scored. I let him know, ‘Man, I got your back.’ I know I made a mistake but that one play doesn’t define me, and I’m going to go prove myself again. We had a great day offensively, ran the ball really well and threw the ball really well. Those last four-minute drills, I have to be better. I can’t turn the ball over there. It’s all about toughness in this league, how tough you are. I took a lot of big hits this game, but my O-line, they fought their tail off. I think that’s where we won the game was our O-Line. We handled 91 (Trey Hendrickson), that was on our keys to victory. He’s a heck of a player. LT (Laremy Tunsil) was sitting on that guy and had a great game. Then our receivers ran great routes. The rest of my O-Line blocked their tail off and (Devin Singletary) and (Noah Brown), they were the focus point of this game. We needed them big time and they’ve been in tough games like this, (Singletary) being with the Bills and (Brown) being with the Cowboys. They know how hard it is to win in an environment like that, so we lean on them and they make big plays.”

**Coach talked about you having calm in the chaos. How did you find that or how did you come up with that?**

“For me, it’s just a lot of prayer and knowing that God wouldn’t put anything on me that I can’t handle. I don’t deserve his grace and his mercy, but he still gives it to me, and I love him for that. It’s not about me, it’s about him and his glory. I think that’s where it comes from. I think God made me like that. I been through a lot not only in football, but things that made me kind of chill when things get crazy. I thank God for putting that in me because that’s something you need when you play this position in this league. That defense over there didn’t blink even though they were giving up big plays. They knew it would come down to the wire and we knew too. I went to DeMeco (Ryans) and let him know, ‘I got you, we are going to win this game,’ and he looked me right in the eyes and said, ‘I trust you.’ It’s amazing to have trust in your head coach as a rookie. And my (offensive coordinator) Bobby (Slowik) — I think Bobby, we need to give him his flowers. He called a great game again. He leaned on his players and took risks and I appreciate him for even doing that.”

**What happened on the interception, and how long did it take you to snap back into it and say we still have a game to win?**

“Cam (Taylor-Britt) made a hell of a play. I’ve been playing against him since college and have a lot of respect for that guy. He’s really smart. We ran that play the drive before for a big completion. He told me too, ‘I knew it was coming.’ He undercut it, the defensive end played up field so I had to step up in the pocket. I didn’t want to take a sack. I tried to lay it over (Taylor-Britt), and he looked up right when I threw it and he picked it. It was a heck of a play, and Tank (Dell) almost saved the day there giving our defense a blade of grass to stand on. It’s something I can’t do in the future but it’s a great learning experience, especially to come out with a (win) like that.”

**Did you immediately move past the interception?**

“I was a little upset but at the end of the day, what is that going to do? It’s not going to do anything for me. I have to move on to the next play. I had such a great game at that point. A lot of great plays, I can’t just harp on that negative play and go back to what I was doing. The next drive, they put the ball in my hands and we made plays.”

**You told us that you enjoy road games. To win a game against a contender like this in the state you used to play in, how satisfying is this one?**

“It’s a blessing man, you couldn’t draw it any better. I know it wasn’t easy but that’s what you want in the NFL. You want those hard wins because you want to be playing your best ball at this point and I think we’re doing that. We’re on the upscale, and to be back in Ohio, I got a lot of Buckeye love. I appreciate everyone who was in support. A lot of Texans out here too. We’re showing up. I really hope next week when we play the Cardinals you pull up and you pack that thing out. I really want to see a sold-out stadium. I think at this point, that’s what we’re ready for, and I think that juice that you bring, we play with 100 percent energy and even in the negative light, coming to the away game you want to be the villain. You put on your mask, you ride with your brothers, and you make plays. It was a big win for us, and we have to build on this momentum.”

**One thing DeMeco Ryans says is ‘We don’t care about the outside noise.’ But this game felt like a statement win for a young team that has believed in itself from the jump regardless of what everyone else thought ...**

“You can tune in to what everyone else is saying, but they’re not in our shoes. We’re the men in the arena. We’re the ones lacing it up, taking the hits, doing what we have to do to win. It’s a process throughout the week. Shout-out to our families. We put in a lot of work and our families do a great job supporting us in that way. I love my family. I know the rest of my teammates can say the same. It’s not just us, man, it’s the city of Houston behind us, our families behind us. The guys’ kids, their wives, my family, my parents. A lot of people are behind us in this thing and we’re proving a lot of people right who are behind us and that’s all that matters. We’re not trying to prove anyone wrong.”

**Two weeks in a row, you had a game-winning drive. Can you take us through what your offensive linemen are doing in those situations?**

“They look me in the eye and they’re like, ‘We trust you with this moment.’ And that means a lot to me from left to right. A lot of meaningful ball has been played on different teams and this team. I think they were saying last year there were eight or nine games that came down to the wire like that, so the hope that we have in two-minute drill, that really goes to our coaching and our playmakers. We do two-minute drills every Wednesday and just trying to get that down, because a lot of these games are won in two-minute. My linemen, we don’t move at all like I told you last week because it’s a focus point of our team. My linemen had a great game.”

**You mentioned before training camp that you guys were going to shock the world, that you really believed in your roster. What were you seeing from the team that made you really believed that you guys could be something great this year?**

“I’d say the confidence off rip. It wasn’t built overnight, this thing took a minute, a lot of moving parts. We’ve been injured too, which hasn’t been helpful. These last couple games, we’ve actually been able to play (as a) whole. We’re still missing some pieces, missed Nico (Collins) today, can’t wait to get him back. I think you can see no matter who is up, we’re next-player mentality. That’s what you have to do in this league. I think Michael Deiter stepped in and did an amazing job. I appreciate him just being not only a ball player but being really vocal, because coming into that point when (Jarrett Patterson) was playing really well, its hard to come in. I think this team, from when OTAs started, we built confidence.”

**How important was it to get the running game going and how did that open up things for you?**

“(Devin Singletary) ran the ball really well. Like I said before, it starts up front. Those guys are moving a really good D-Line. Their backers fill the gaps really well. (Singletary) was making people miss on top of that. We were getting to our second-level defenders and moving them around. I think once we get the running game going, you can see the play action starts working, the drop back pass. It makes my job a lot easier, so shout-out to the running game and we’ve got to keep that going.”

## **TANK DELL**

### **Wide Receiver**

**How did you feel after taking that big hit?**

"I'm good. I just had to get my wind back. After that I was good."

**What was the conversation between C.J. Stroud and the offense after that interception late before you drove down the field for a field goal?**

"Same thing, man — just stay calm, don't panic. We did what we had to do. I dropped a pass that I should never drop. I don't know how that happened, but move on to the next play. C.J. kept the team motivated, and we got the victory so that's all that matters."

**When you beat a team like this that's expected to make a Super Bowl run, what does that say about you guys and how does that make you feel going forward?**

"Man, we've got some dogs in this locker room. Any given Sunday, it doesn't matter who we face, we're going to go out there and play all four quarters. We've got some playmakers in this room, so we're just going to go out there and fight every game."

**How much fun was that?**

"It was fun. It came down to the wire, but win it with a kick, and shouts out to (Matt Ammendola)."

## **Blake Cashman**

### **Linebacker**

**The defense was pretty lights out most of the game, forcing five straight punts. Talk about the defense today ...**

"Yeah, we were rolling there for a little bit. I know we'll go look at the game and review the tape, and we'll be a little bit disappointed with how we finished, but we just kept fighting and it's always great to go out and win. We felt really good about the game plan, and for most of the game we were executing at a really high level. We were demanding them to throw the ball in certain spots of the field, and relying on our back end to make plays."

**The play that DeAndre Houston-Carson made to chase down Tyler Boyd and forced them to kick a field goal and that stand you guys made, talk about how big that was for you guys ...**

"It was a huge stand. They were controlling the game right there, and they already had the field goal on lock, and trying to chew up some time, but we've still got to defend against the touchdown. A touchdown wins, so it was a great defensive effort there to force a field goal and to give us the ball back and let our offense go to work."

**What does it say about you guys to beat a team that's considered a Super Bowl contender at their place?**

"It's a great win against a great team, and a team that has a lot of great players over there. We felt good about going into this week, and whether people from the outside want to believe or not, we know how special this team can be and the direction we're going to go. We're going to keep our foot on the gas and take it week-by-week and game-by-game, and as the season continues to progress we'll fight through."

**What's it like for you on the sidelines two weeks in a row now to watch C.J. Stroud do what he does on the last drive?**

"That boy is special. To have a quarterback to be able to do the things he's doing, it's awesome to see, especially as a rookie. It's incredible. In order to get where we want to be, we need him to keep playing, and playing at a high level. The offense is rolling, so when you have an offense that's playing well, that frees up the defense to be able to play more aggressive, which as a defensive player you're biting your chops to get those opportunities, and now it's all about not messing it up."

## **MATT AMMENDOLA**

### **Kicker**

**How did you feel about being thrown right into the action out there today?**

"Honestly, the Texans just took a chance on me, and I'm just trying to make the most of every opportunity I have and go out there and make the best of it. That's what I did out there today, and all glory to God, and my long-snapper Jon Weeks, and my holder Cameron Johnson. Obviously, the guys out there to block — couldn't have done it without them. And it's honestly just a blessing to be out here with these guys and just have fun with it."

**Did you know it was good as soon as you kicked it?**

"Yeah, absolutely. It's one of those things where you let go and let God, and whatever happens, happens. I just went out there confident, and I've got a great team around me, and just got it done."

**With as poised as C.J. Stroud has been, did you know watching the final drive that you'd have a chance to ice the game?**

"Honestly, no. I kind of just go in there with the mindset just staying positive, and if it comes down to me then it comes down to me. And at the end of the day, like I told C.J., if you put me out there I'm going to make the kick. Huge blessing again, and thank you to the Texans organization for having me here. I'm just looking forward to the opportunity to come."

**How happy are you to do this in your first game back in the NFL?**

"Yeah, it feels great. I talked to Evan McPherson after the game, and again, he asked me how it felt, and I told him, obviously it could've ended on a better note, but honestly, it feels good to be back with a team, and just trying to make the most of every kick."

**Does that make you feel more grateful?**

"Yeah, absolutely. Again, just give glory to God, and I'm just so blessed for the opportunity, and thank you to the Texans organization. I'm excited to be here, and I couldn't have done it without these guys."

**You looked calm and confident. How did you feel?**

"Exactly what you just said — calm and confident. Sometimes you've just got to be free out there. Whatever happens, happens, but it felt good to get it done."

## **SHELDON RANKINS**

### **Defensive tackle**

**How were you able to get Joe Burrow on the ground three times today?**

"Just executing my plan I put together throughout the week. I watched a ton of tape. I played them the last couple years when I was with the Jets, so I was kind of familiar with the offense, kind of familiar with the guys they have up front. Just worked on my plan throughout the week, came out here and executed it, and boy what a day it was. It was a nice day."

**You sort of looked like you did out there when you were with the Saints, calling plays and moving throughout the formation on different plays ...**

"Yeah, I've always been a guy who's kind of seen the big picture, understand what's coming, understand what teams are trying to do, and always trying to get my guys on the same page so we can play fast, understand how they're trying to attack us, and go out there and try and make as many plays as possible."

**Joe Burrow said in his press conference that his goal was to come out in the second half and use his legs more because your front was just getting after him too much. Did you sense that whatever adjustments you were making would get to him?**

"Yeah, anytime you're collapsing the pocket as we were, and getting as many hits on him as we were, there's going to be some adjustments

made. One thing that's underrated about him is his ability to run, and his ability to use his speed. We knew coming out that it was going to be on us to continue our gap integrity, because if you give him a lane to slip out — you saw on that one run he had. Even on the touchdown where he gets out, and is able to make the throw downfield. He's able to do some great things with his legs, so we knew it was going to be on us to come up with some big plays, continue our gap integrity, and continue to collapse everything around him."

**What does it say for you to come into the place of a team that's considered a Super Bowl contender and get the win?**

"We're just playing our style of football, and showing the whole league who we are. No matter who the opposition is, we don't bat an eye. As the young kids say, we don't duck no smoke. It doesn't matter who we line up against, who the opposition is, we like us 100 times out of 100."

**Does it make that a lot easier when you're on the sideline watching C.J. Stroud do his thing?**

"Yeah, it's a blessing to have a young man like C.J. leading this offense. He's never rattled, never out of sorts. No matter what happens, no matter what comes his way, all he sees is himself making plays. He doesn't shy away from the moment, no matter what it is. That's two weeks back-to-back just marching us down the field as a rookie. That's not something you see very often. It's just a blessing to have him as a quarterback, and I just look forward to watching him do that to many more teams."