



CINCINNATI BENGALS

Postgame Transcript

December 24, 2022



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BENGALS HEAD COACH ZAC TAYLOR POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE December 24, 2022

ZT: It wasn't perfect at all times. There were some really good moments and some moments we've got to improve on. But at the end of the day, December 24, getting out of here with a win is a big deal. So we're going to find a way to correct the negatives and focus on the positives and get ready for Monday night against Buffalo.

Q: What was the difference offensively in the second half when you couldn't move the ball as well?

ZT: We had the two turnovers that hurt us. Again, they did a nice job mixing some things in there. They made some plays when they needed to. We had some opportunities. We just didn't capitalize on all of them. We had a big drop, lost seven points there, and had two turnovers as well. Just got to be better taking advantage of those opportunities.

Q: You seemed pretty irritated at the non-fumble. But just the defense being able to help you out in situations like that over and over again today, what did you think of the play of Vonn Bell down there?

ZT: I thought Vonn stepped up and made some big time – really our defense in the first half was exceptional. For them not to cross the 50-yard line, I think they had two first downs, was a great way to start the game, as we got up 22-0. There was a couple of really – just explosives in the second half is where they got us. I thought there were some good things our defense did and a couple of explosives that got us there. But at the end of the day, that huge turnover created by Vonn that B.J. [Hill] recovered really won us the game there. It was a tough situation. They had the ball down there on the 5-yard line, and for those guys to step up and make that play was critical to us winning the game.

Q: It was reminiscent of a couple wins you had last year. That Vegas game comes to mind. What is it about this team that's been consistent about, even when things aren't going well and they're knocking on the door, they're able to find a way?

ZT: Yeah, someone's got to step up, and today people did. We need to be able to knock people out up 22-0. We've usually done a pretty nice job of that. Today wasn't that case. Again, December and January, you've just got to find ways to win the game and end the game the way they do. Today our guys stepped up. In this case, Vonn made a big play down at the goal line.

Q: In a situation like that at the goal line, what do you tell them about balancing getting a stop versus getting a turnover? How impressive is Vonn's ability to get that turnover?

ZT: We'll take any of it. It was first and goal right there. They just got that third down, I believe. Again, yards were critical down there in that area. Certainly knocked them back, and to be able to punch that ball out was just a huge play.

Q: Given the ambitions that you all have for the end of the year, how concerning is it the fact that you've got two straight weeks where entire halves haven't went y'all's way?

ZT: We've played really good teams. These teams have a lot of talent, really well coached on the road. We've won a lot of different ways at this point. We get a chance now with nine days to get guys as healthy as possible and get ready for a big home game. That's big significance for us to win the division. This is a game we'll have to have, and our guys will be focused on it.

Q: What do you know about La'el Collins?

ZT: Just the knee. I don't know how severe it is.

Q: I don't know if satisfying with the right word, but is there anything to not being at your best and still finding a way to win?

ZT: Sure. I think guys feel that. No matter what the moment is, whether we're up or down, again, we've got to take advantage of every opportunity. Can't let any opportunity slip through our fingers like a couple did today. Credit to them. They put the pressure on us and forced us into situations where we didn't handle it as well as we could have. Hat's off to them in that regard for getting themselves back in the game. I think we're going to be happy with the win because they are so hard to come by, and seven in a row, our guys have that confidence that we're playing good football. Again, it's going to take all of our efforts to get ready for Buffalo here.

Q: Bad day at the office for Evan McPherson, or was there something else going on?

ZT: We'll have to watch him, but to leave five points on the board is tough for us. Every point important down the stretch.

Q: Did Tyler Boyd regravate his finger in warmups?

ZT: Yeah, he just hit it. It didn't further do anything. We were at the point there where we were trying to get Trenton [Irwin] in there to take some of that load off of T.B. There were stretches where Trent was in there to take that pressure off. It's cold. He hit it. It doesn't feel great to begin with. So just trying to be protective of him.

Q: How did you approach things with Trey Hendrickson? Snap count or play by feel?

ZT: It's never really been a snap count for us. Just certain packages and certain situations we want him in there.

Q: On Burrow's two picks, was that just miscommunication?

ZT: We'll have to watch it and figure out what the full issue is.

**BENGALS QUARTERBACK JOE BURROW
POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE
December 24, 2022**

JB: It was up and down to say the least. I'm never going to apologize for winning. Obviously a lot of room to improve. First half was about as good as it gets, and then after that we kind of shot ourselves in the foot over and over and over again. But found a way to do it.

Q: Kind of what happened on those two interceptions? Was it just miscommunication?

JB: We'll have to watch the film and see. I'll have a better answer for you on Wednesday.

Q: When La'el Collins went down, how did that kind of affect things? How did Hakeem Adeniji step up in that spot?

JB: Yeah, Hakeem stepped up big for us, played well. L.C. has been playing out of this world for us, and we love to have him. Hopefully we'll see him back before the year is out.

Q: There's been like decades of precedent that New England would find a way to win games like this. What does it maybe say about you all that maybe you didn't play as well as you'd like in the second half that you were able to find a way to come out with a win?

JB: Defense found a way to win, they forced a turnover to win us the game. They continue to make plays like that at the ends of games. We've got to do a better job on offense of putting teams away. Like I said, I'm never going to apologize for a win. Just got to keep finding ways to do it.

Q: You guys clinched the playoffs on Thursday. It seemed like you guys it was business as usual, didn't seem to cause much of a ripple. Guess you expected to be there, right?

JB: That was never the goal. It's always nice to clinch it this early, but bigger and better things ahead.

Q: What does it say about this team's ability, your team's ability to play complementary football? When the offense isn't generating what it needs to generate, the defense the second time since the Kansas City game creates a big turnover at the end.

JB: They've been unreal all year and one of the best defenses in the league and make it hard on opposing offenses. You're a quarterback of a team like this with a defense like we have makes my job easy.

Q: Is that a miscommunication on the two picks to Boyd and to Chase?

JB: We'll just have to watch the film and see.

Q: Sorry if you talked about Trenton Irwin already, but the job that he continues to do in big moments.

JB: Yeah, he's been stepping up big for us. So happy for him. He continues to make big time plays, big time catches, does exactly what he's supposed to do. He's a guy who I hope is here for a long time.

Q: Does it ever get this cold in Athens?

JB: I'm sure it's just about as cold right now.

Q: Do you think that's the coldest you've played in?

JB: Yeah, for sure.

Q: You looked at home. You looked like – you didn't have gloves.

JB: I was happy with the way we threw the ball. Obviously we had close to 400 yards. We were on point in the first half. Obviously could do a lot better in the second.

Q: Why no gloves?

JB: Never have. I wear them on the sideline to keep my hands warm, but out there I don't like to.

Q: You've won games different ways. Is there a way winning a game in different types of ways can help you guys out?

JB: Any win you get, you learn from. Same as with a loss. We're going to watch the film, get back to practice. And make our corrections.

Q: What stood out to you about their defense overall? In the second half, what adjustments did they make?

JB: They make it tough on you. They're well coached. They have a good scheme. They've got good players. I've got to give them credit.

Q: Does it mean something to come in here on a cold day and beat a Bill Belichick defense?

JB: Whenever you get a win in December coming down the stretch, it means something. We're playing for a lot every single game. We're going to go out there and fight our tails off to get Ws, and we got one today.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk to him after the game, Belichick?

JB: I did not. I saw Coach Patricia. It was good to see him.

Q: They're down two starting cornerbacks coming in. What kind of went into exploiting those matchups and everything?

JB: I feel really confident in our guys down the field. I'm going to give those shots to just about anybody. I wouldn't say it really matters who they have out there. If they're down the field in one-on-one situations, I'm going to give them a shot.

Q: What were you thinking when you were watching that final drive by the Patriots? Just how important is Vonn Bell to this team and the plays he makes?

JB: That was a stressful situation. Obviously I feel like we shouldn't have been in that situation if we took care of business, but we made the play when it counts. Vonn has continued to do that his entire career really. He's a guy I feel like should have made the Pro Bowl with all the plays that he's made this year.

Q: Is this the kind of game that championship teams should be able to win if you are going to accomplish what you want to accomplish?

JB: Yes, you could say that. I would also say teams that want to win a Super Bowl put them away a little earlier.

Q. What – referring to Irwin, what made them play that for the touchdown?

JB: Well, they were subbing late, so we tried to get on the ball and go quickly to catch him at the 12, and they did a good job with getting their guys off. I feel like they were a little out of position. So we went ahead and snapped it, and Trenton made a great read and a great play down the field.

Q: Why did that first drive, when you guys came out no problems, five plays, right down the field? Was it something you saw or took advantage of?

JB: Zac [Taylor] did a great job of calling plays really all day. We always feel good about our opening script. So I think we've been pretty good on our first possessions most of the year.

Q: It's okay Teddy Karras lost the toss?

JB: Last year we won all of our tosses, and this year we're losing all of our tosses. So the luck has reversed.

Q: Do you let Teddy go up by himself a lot?

JB: I don't really like going up there. I like to warm up on the side and get my mind right rather than go out and do the coin toss.

Q: Zac talked about that knockout blow, something you just referenced. What's the key to making sure you all are able to do that, since you've got a couple of opponents, you're going to be facing really good teams the rest of the way?

JB: We've just got to execute the way we need to, like we did in the first half like we know we're capable of doing and have proved we can. The game just got away from us a little bit.

Q: Are you able to process the game – obviously you're happy you won, but does how it ended up in the second half kind of take away from the joy you feel?

JB: You try hard to not let it. I've only been in the league three years, but I've played enough football to know that it's hard to win in this league. So I'm fighting being upset when we go out and get a win and we have almost 500 yards of offense. So you balance those. Obviously you're upset when you don't feel like you did everything you could on offense to score as many points as possible to make it easier on the team. But we also came out with a win. We've got a long weekend, so I'm not going to let it weigh me down. I'm going to enjoy it. We're going to watch the film and make corrections.

Q: Higgins just seems to me in these matchups today, he's just so big. The two biggest throws up the middle, probably the first one to him and the second one to him.

JB: Yeah, he's been awesome. He's a guy that I got a lot of reps with. He came into the league three years ago and really had a great connection. I'm lucky to have all of our receivers that we have.

Q: Joe, you talk about your mindset to kind of dictate as opposed to react. How important is that in the success you've had to not worry about the defense and find your guys?

JB: Yeah, you always have that balance because when you play defenses and defensive coaches with really good schemes, you want to get a feel for what they're doing early, but you also don't want to come out and not be aggressive and play slowly and try to take what the defense gives you. I think we did that early. We took some shots and the team made some big plays for us early, and we went down and scored a touchdown. It's always tough when you play a good scheme like that, and you've got to stay aggressive.

Q: On the touchdown return, are you aware of trying to stay away from guys knowing they might try to take a free shot at you?

JB: Say that again?

Q: The guy is trying to return the interception for the touchdown. You're trying to make a tackle, but are you worried about guys taking free shots at that point? How do you weigh those things when it's happening in the moment?

JB: I'm trying to get the guy down unfortunately. I hit somebody. I'm not sure who it was. It obviously wasn't the ball carrier. Tried to get him down, but it didn't work.

Q: You guys were so good with that play, you and Ja'Marr Chase, that back shoulder has been so good. Was it shocking it turned out the way it did?

JB: That wasn't that route on that play. We'll just watch the film and make corrections.

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