



**HEAD COACH ZAC TAYLOR
POSTGAME MEDIA AVAILABILITY
MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2023**

Q. Start by giving us your thoughts on Jake Browning's performance.

ZAC TAYLOR: Awesome. Outstanding. He had a great week of practice. I thought Thursday was outstanding and that's really our big day, third down day. I felt really good coming out this week, getting ready for this game. He just lit the world on fire. Halftime, I wasn't sure if we had an incomplection, if the ball hit the ground yet. Thought he managed the game well. He was aggressive with some of his throws. Did a great job making plays with his feet. One of the naked throws he made must have been to Mitch I would imagine, it was an outstanding throw with 41 right in his face. So just really proud of Jake and the job he did, and the guys rallying around him making plays for him, protecting him, run game getting going. It all helped Jake. Really proud of the team win, but really proud of Jake. In his second career start to come out here on Monday Night Football to do what he did is pretty cool.

Q. How did your game plan grow as you realized he was having a night like that? Early was short stuff and then you were able to throw it down the field.

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, part of it is getting a feel for what they're going to do. You got to feel them out a little bit. They've shown different games to play different styles, so you had to sort through that early in the game. I mean, yeah, there is no lie. Once the game gets going and he's completing balls like he is, it gives you the confidence, let's just keep dialing this thing up. He probably found a lot of completions in the run game, too. I bet he had six or seven completions on runs where he just took the RPOs off that thing. So it was a good day for everybody on offense.

Q. Is that knowledge of the offense?

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, there were some tough throws in there. Third down throw to Ja'Marr (Chase) on a bench route. We had (Joe) Mixon coming out of the back and we were backed up. It was a key third down. I don't remember what point in the game it was. It was right in front of me. That's a big-time throw. He probably could have taken Mixon underneath for the first down but got a little more aggressive and took Ja'Marr over the top. The awareness to see Ja'Marr one on one on that third down for the touchdown was good stuff too. Great throw over the top. Ja'Marr, never breaks stride and keep going. Did a great job hitting Tee (Higgins) on some of the RPOs. Yeah, in a really good rhythm.

Q. The check on the Ja'Marr touchdown, is that like...

ZAC TAYLOR: No, no. It was a three by one and he took the alert there.

Q. You guys are up 21-14 and in the blink of an eye you're down 28-21.

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, it's an explosive team we're playing against. I thought our guys did a great job overcoming the sudden change. We had the turnover. That could have broken our back there and our

guys rallied around it and kept going and our offense had confidence, defense had confidence they could get them off the field. We just stuck with it and kept playing ball. There was a lot of game left to be played there, and our guys just stuck together like they have all year and made a game of it and found a way to win.

Q. What happened on that play?

ZAC TAYLOR: It's play -- we've had explosive plays on several times over the years. We had one at the Jets a couple years ago. One against the Browns at home couple years ago. We executed it well and practice it all season. Josh Allen, I have to see the clip. It's tough when a receiver is not used to throwing the ball. Took a little longer than we normally anticipate. That's part of making a call like that. You got to live with that. He doesn't practice quarterback. He doesn't go through every situation. Usually when we call that play in practice we give a vanilla look, an easy look to get the rep. It was a little tougher than anticipated and Josh made a good play.

Q. Two-part question on the run game. Heading into this game, Jacksonville had one the best run defenses coming into the game. Was it planned to have 31 rushing attempts? And if not, what do you think led to you being able to be so productive on the ground this week?

ZAC TAYLOR: I thought our linemen did a great job. I thought the backs were really explosive when they hit the hole. They did a great fighting for yardage. Hitting it when they were supposed to. Jake (Browning) did a really good job managing it. There was a lot of check plays that he had to manage there and distribute the ball in the perimeter. So I just thought it was a really good plan. Really well executed by the guys on offense, starting with the linemen, running backs, and then Jake did a nice job, too. It helped us get a really good rhythm on offense and I think keep them off balance. We had several naked and screens and I think just helped everybody.

Q. You talked about rallying behind Jake Browning. How important is it for the team in the locker room to see his performance.

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, you know, with however many games we have left, I think when you see that from a guy that's never had the opportunity to show it before outside of Pittsburgh game, it gives a boost of confidence. There is no question about it. We've seen it every day and coached quarterbacks our whole life. We can see the intangible stuff and the preparation he puts in. But when he goes out there and he leads the team like he did, I certainly think it raises the entire confidence level of the team.

Q. Obviously this has been a tough month. How good does this feel?

ZAC TAYLOR: You know, yeah, you don't want to lose games like that, but sometimes -- and I think I've mentioned this before, there is a silver lining there. It puts a real spotlight on the character in the locker room. No one pointed fingers, and there is plenty of opportunity to. Offense to defense, defense to offense, whatever you wanted to do, it could've been done. Players coaches, those guys stuck together and kept believing. Just put in their best week of work. As a head coach that gets a chance to watch that firsthand it really made me proud, made me confident. The team did not have false confidence coming into this game. We have real players in this locker room. Even though we lost one of our best players, there is confidence other guys are going to step up and help us win a lot of games down the stretch. So, yeah three games stinks to lose. We told our team we had a chance to flip that narrative and we got to

be in the process of that. One game doesn't do that. But I'm excited to go back to work with the short week this week and get these guys ready for Indy.

Q. Jake Browning's performance probably overshadows Ja'Marr Chase's game today, but 149 yards. How do you think Ja'Marr was?

ZAC TAYLOR: Awesome. Awesome. And he had some key third and fourth down catches there. He is so hard to bring down, so any time you get the ball in his hands it's a challenge. Stressful for the defense. I know that. So I thought he played really well for us.

Q. How much did the success of the run game help the quarterback?

ZAC TAYLOR: It certainly helps him when you get into a rhythm like that, and we converted some third downs that kept us in a roll there. I thought Jake was outstanding on third down. Last week third down was really what got us. This week I thought he knocked it out of the park and got some really good checks. One of them hit big on a screen he got to; the other one didn't. That's life. I just thought that he managed that really well. The communication with him and Ted (Karras) and the linemen up front was really good. He did a great job on the road. It was loud. It was maybe louder than I anticipated, but he did a good job managing that noise and getting out the huddle quickly and being able to communicate the checks, and I thought it was really well done.

Q. On fourth and three, Ja'Marr Chase had just dropped it and it was third and three. Did you think about going for the field goal and what was going through your mind?

ZAC TAYLOR: No, really didn't think about that for one second. You know, we were down seven, correct? Yeah, down seven at that point. So, no it was time to go score a touchdown there and be aggressive and go get it, and our guys did a good job executing that fourth down call.

Q. Went right back to Ja'Marr Chase.

ZAC TAYLOR: It was a progression. It wasn't called for one person. That play actually took a while to develop and he found Ja'Marr with the ball, but there were multiple people involved.

Q. Is anything in particular about this performance? What aspect that bolsters your confidence to make a playoff push?

ZAC TAYLOR: You got to be able to win. The Texans' game was similar to this, right, where it came down to the end, two minute, getting stops. I don't really think we been in games like this that came down to the last minute, other than that Houston game. Maybe I'm wrong. You guys can correct me. You need this in December to see that we'll win this way because you're going to be in other game like this as the stretch comes. So you got to learn from things that we can improve on, things we did really well, managing the situations. I think that's good for our team to have endured that on the road.

Q. You bring up the Houston game. You guys learn anything from that that helped with tonight?

ZAC TAYLOR: No, I don't think necessarily that came to mind. Just good to be in those moments and reflect back on plays that ended up taking the game one direction or another. Man, I thought our guys made those plays tonight.

Q. Can we get your thoughts on Evan McPherson's kick there at the end? Been a while since you guys have needed to rely on him.

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, came through for us big time. He had the 55 yarder he drilled -- I think it was 55. He had the 48 at the end. That's a lot of pressure right there. They're going to get field position if you miss it and they just need a field goal to win it, so that's a high-pressure kick. And then the one earlier that came up short we were in a tough spot. We were right on the take-a-shot fringe field goal, but it was fourth and ten. You don't really want to go for the fourth and ten on the 39, don't want to punt on the 39, so we went for it. Came up, what, three inches short probably. I thought he kicked the ball really well. That one came up just a tick short. Those other two, man, he hit them when he need them.

Q. Great team walking off the field. Was that the best 20, 30 yards you had this season postgame?

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, just happy to get a win right now. I think that's good for this team, to get to 6-6 and keep ourselves right in the thick of it, because that's what you got to do right now. To be able to get this one on the road versus a really good -- I mean, I watch all their games. This is really good win for this team. We just got to continue to build on it.



**QUARTERBACK JAKE BROWNING
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Q. Are you feeling any better now that [you've had] your best performance of your professional career on prime time—getting your team right back in the playoff mix?

QB JAKE BROWNING: No. (Laughter) Yeah, big win, really needed that one. Fun to do it on Monday night against a really good Jacksonville team who will be in the playoff hunt going forward. Yeah, [it] felt good.

Q. Did you have a favorite moment in this game? I mean, you had a million great throws and so many big moments. Is there one that stands out to you among the rest?

JAKE BROWNING: Hmm, I think just the last drive, knowing that once they won the [coin] toss and got the ball, it was basically, 'All right, we need a field goal.' So, there were a couple third down throws I think were big there, but I don't know, you're just in the moment when it's all going on and I'm still in that mode. I don't totally even remember all the throws.

Q. There was a scene during the review, towards the end, that caught you kind of laughing a little bit in the huddle as you were pretty close into field goal range. Did it feel like that kind of relief or where you felt like you were enjoying yourself out there, finally letting yourself enjoy it?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I was joking with [WR] Ja'Marr [Chase], can you get the first down there? I don't know, just a little sarcasm back and forth. Yeah, it just felt like we were in rhythm. I think the stats kind of show that, and just overall top-to-bottom good offensive performance. So, a lot goes into that, establish the run, get aligned. The tight ends did a great job, [RB] Joe Mixon went really hard, [RB] Chase Brown came in and provided some spark, some explosive runs. And so, I just feel like I'm still kind of in that mode where I'm in the moment and not very reflective. But I definitely think it was a big difference.

Q. How big was it when the ball left your hand and the touchdown to WR Ja'Marr Chase? Did you know as soon as the ball leaves your hand, Ja'Marr, one-on-one coverage, is this going to be good?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I think part of the reason we had that one-on-one coverage is because we ran the ball so well. I think if you don't establish the run early like that, we're not going to have one-on-ones with guys like Ja'Marr [Chase] and Tee [Higgins] on the outside. So, I did not see any of the throw. I threw it, got hit, and kind of just watched him run, and then I saw him turn around near the goal line and I was thinking, 'Why is he turning around?' He said it was because he was getting disrespectful. (Laughter)

Q. Two things: Head Coach Zac Taylor said you were much better on third down this week than last week. That last one to Tee Higgins, it looked like they blitzed you, could you walk us through that and maybe talk about how you handled the blitz differently?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, against the Steelers, we were in a lot of the five-minute protection, trying to help on the edges. Which makes a lot of sense with the two guys that Pittsburgh has. This week, a little bit more six- and seven-man protection and mixed it up a little bit. So, the difference between five- and six-man protection for a quarterback is huge, because you just send it one way. I know where my issues are. I feel like I played with better eyes because of that. I think that was my main take away from the Pittsburgh game, is I'm peeking over here to make sure I'm not hot and then I am trying to go through a read and deliver it on time, and my eyes were all over the place. So, that was kind of a big thing coming into this week it was just eye discipline.

Q. Jake, was today emotional for you?

JAKE BROWNING: Surprisingly, no. (Laughter) I don't know why, but not really.

Q. Is that a result of the confidence you've been talking about all year?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I mean, I don't really know why. I think partially because it came down to the wire and I feel like I play my best football when I'm just calm and not really thinking about anything outside of what is in my control—which is just operating on offense and staying calm and delivering the ball to our playmakers.

Q. The 8-yard completion to TB [Tyler Boyd] at the end of regulation that led to the field goal to put you guys up how important was to get something positive yards-wise and how much was that the thought process?

JAKE BROWNING: When are you referring to?

Q. TB [Tyler Boyd] on an 8-yard out route, got it down to about the 36 that allowed...

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I think it was like third and really long? So, any time you're in that situation you're kind of starting to think about the field goal and just trying to get it in range. Evan [McPherson] made some huge kicks, which was awesome. Yeah, that is kind of just – the coaches handle that a little bit more with the play call. Once they call a play that maybe we wouldn't normally run on third and 15, whatever it was, for me it's just the same read.

Q. How much did you want to show that this offense was still good enough to be able to put up points, put up yards even without QB Joe [Burrow] on the field?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I think after you put up ten points in your first start, you're kind of excited to get another crack at it. Feel like I had a better week. I kind of knew. I was able to reflect on going through a week of it. I can watch Joe [Burrow] or whoever I've been behind do it a million times, but it's different once it's you. I was able to reflect on what was my week like and what do I need to improve. It was the first time in a live pocket for a little while and first time in a regular season game for my whole career, so I learned a lot from the Pittsburgh game and was able to focus on some of those things throughout the week of practice. Yeah, I think the main thing is just having those reps and having another week of it. We were able to put up points.

Q. When do you think what you did tonight will hit you, or will it?

JAKE BROWNING: I don't know if it will. Maybe that's a post-season thing. But I mean, we've got I think two games in 12 days, so we've got to get moving quickly. You know, I haven't played a lot of football but it's not like I'm not used to winning. I've won a lot of games in my career. None of them have been in the NFL until today, which is obviously noteworthy, but I'm used to winning. I've won a lot of football games in my life.

Q. How important was it to get the ground game going and how valuable was that for you?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, it's huge. I think any time, you know, like the long one to Ja'Marr [Chase]. I think part of reason they're playing single high – I think this busted the coverage, but part of the reason they're playing single high is we're running the ball so well. So much opens up off that and makes my life so much easier when we're able to run the ball like that.

Q. On top of the run game, WR Tee Higgins' presences out there, although he on had three catches, did you notice a difference on how you were seeing the defense because Tee was out there?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, Tee [Higgins] is one of the best receivers in the NFL. When you're game planning for us you definitely have to figure out your plan on how you're going to handle him, as well as Ja'Marr [Chase], and then you have the run game and Tanner [Hudson] and there is so many different pieces that when you have someone like Tee, it does create more headaches. Great player.

Q. The fourth and three to Ja'Marr, third and 3, he drops it, which is pretty rare.

JAKE BROWNING: Yes.

Q. Can you walk us through that progression, what you saw?

JAKE BROWNING: Ja'Marr [Chase] could drop like five straight passes and I would keep throwing him the ball. I'm going to have bad throws; he's going to have drops. I'm not going to speak for him, but I would bet the reason he dropped it is he's probably thinking, 'I'm going to catch this and break both these tackles into a score.' I think the next play was the fourth down. We went right back to him and again, I thought he was going to score again. We've got a pretty resilient locker room, but you know who our guys are, and I'm going to continue to throw him the ball regardless of what happens.

Q. What did QB Joe Burrow say to you after the game?

JAKE BROWNING: Congrats. Joe [Burrow] has been great. Nice to have him on the sideline. It's nice to have him travel down to Jacksonville. He's probably got some other things he could do and are maybe more enjoyable for him, but he's coming here and being supportive, it's awesome.

Q. Who behind the scenes deserves some credit that helped you get on this road, Jake?

JAKE BROWNING: As far as?

Q. All the time, four plus years wondering if you would get a crack at this thing? When you look back at that, is there anyone who stands out?

JAKE BROWNING: Probably my girlfriend. It's been a long road, a lot of the moving, a lot of,]Am I going to make a team? Am I going to make any money? Am I going to make – you know, just some of that real-life chaos and kind of what happens behind the scenes. She's been very supportive, and that's an awesome to have, somebody very calm. That's why I always date somebody smarter than me.

Q. Was there something going on in the last drive in regulation? Couple of false starts.

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I think we just had some issues on the snap, you know, procedure and all that. But, I don't know. Glad he made the kick though.

Q. Earlier this week, you spoke about how quarterbacks, beginning of the season takes them a few weeks and start to hit a plateau I think is the word you used. You said you are not there yet, this was going to be your second start. Do you think there is more before you plateau?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, I think it definitely feels good to have solid performance under your belt, but I'm not planning on plateauing any time soon. I think I can continue to get better. I think there will be a lot of different looks thrown at me over next couple weeks. There is always a new challenge. Even the best of best quarterbacks that have been doing it forever, and there is always something new and some new game plan, new adversity or whatever it is. So, I'll be focused on continuing to improve, continuing to grow as a quarterback, and keep playing every week.

Q. Do you think this sets the standard for you and the team and the offense specifically going forward for what your potential is?

JAKE BROWNING: Yeah, yeah, I mean, on Wednesday or whatever day I do my press conference now, I said that it's never as good as you thought and never as bad as you thought. So, I'm sure there's going to be something where I'm watching it—and usually it has to do with how the game went. When you win, you think you're the greatest player, but then you watch the tape and you're like, 'Ahh.' There will be something, nobody plays a perfect game. So, you know, something on a short week to get ready for Indianapolis, and but it does feel good to have a solid performance under the belt.

Q. What are you going to do with the game ball?

JAKE BROWNING: With the game ball? I don't know. Hopefully not lose it. I struggle with memorabilia because I always lose it. So, I've got to figure out something. Probably where my girlfriend comes in again.