



BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

JAN. 8, 2023

BALTIMORE AT CINCINNATI

ZAC TAYLOR

Head coach

Zach, that seemed like kind of a grind game today after the first couple of series ...

"(That's) AFC North football. Show me a pretty game that anybody's won in this division yet, and that'll be the first one I've seen. (I'm) so proud of the way these guys just found a way to get it done by two scores. I thought our defense was excellent taking the ball away and finishing off some drives. The offense tacked on the points when we need to. Certainly, there are some things that we can clean up that we can be better off particularly in offense, but (I'm) just proud of the way that these guys found a way to win in January. That's all that matters. (We) finished the second half of season 8-0 the right way, and so these guys got a lot of confidence right now heading into the playoffs."

Was that a playoff-winning celebration after the game? Is today's celebration any different?

"Today was just about finishing off the regular season and being back-to-back divisional champs for the first time in franchise history. So again, that's something to celebrate. These guys have worked their tails off to be in this position; anything less, and we wouldn't be in this position right now, (if) we'd have anything less than the last eight games. (I'm) so just really proud of the way these guys have focused every single week that's so hard in this league. There isn't another team that's won the last eight games in a row — maybe San Francisco. (I'm) just really proud of the way these guys have been able to focus and find different ways to win."

How big was Drue Chrisman's punt at the end of the first half in setting up that next touchdown?

"However you want to phrase it — that was big, down and inside the five right there (with our) defense (and) Trey (Hendrickson) finishing off (with) Joseph (Ossai) on the fumble. That was big, because we were positioned to get the ball on the 50 (-yard line) and then we could tack points any way we could offensively, but to get some from our defense was a huge boost going into halftime."

We heard your comments about the NFL and going into playoffs, and Joe Mixon had a celebration with the coin toss after he scored today. Was there any extra fire going into this game based on that?

"I think these guys channeled everything the right way, and we knew again how tough it is to win this division. Whether we're at home or on the road, I'm just proud of the way these guys focused, found a way to get it done and secure the No. 3 seed, and now have get a chance to play these guys again (and) host a playoff game. That's a huge deal to be able to do that. And so, again, we have to have great focus going into this next game."

What was the cause of the struggles on offense in the second half?

"It's just not enough consistency. We had some three-and-outs and some third-and-ones, fourth-and-ones. (It was a) tough situation there and just not enough. (We) didn't put our guys in a good enough position, (and we) didn't execute well enough in some instances as well. (It was) not our sharpest game that we've had. There's a lot to learn from this week and be better next week."

Did you keep anything back knowing that you could play them next week?

"There certainly is. You don't want to put it all out there. You want to have control the game early. I thought it'd be a decent control. Certainly anything can happen of course in the game, but there's that balance there."

How challenging was it to stay dialed in and focused this week with everything that's happened?

"Yeah, it's a challenge. This was a strange week (and a) strange game. Again, our players do everything to handle it the right way. Now, we get a chance to put this one behind us and just focus on playoffs."

What can you say about Alex Cappa's injury?

"I don't know anything about Alex yet — just that he left the game. I don't know his long-term prognosis yet."

With the good news about Damar Hamlin's recovery coming out this week — he was able to watch the Buffalo Bills game from his hospital bed this morning — what is it like to close out an emotional week like this with this win and watch everything play out as it has and secure a home playoff game?

"That's just spectacular news considering six days ago, you would have never, never thought that could happen. So, to hear that, just to see how that's evolved over the course of a week, is just incredible."

"Again, you have to go back to thanking the people who are on the field helping Damar immediately that gave him this chance to be where he's at today. That's awesome to hear, that he's able to watch the game."

You've talked about putting thought and meaning into messages to the team before games. This was a strange week and strange game. How did you kind of approach that this weekend?

"Yeah, you're right. There's a lot of thought that goes into it. We'll keep that to ourselves what the messaging was, but again, I thought our guys came out ready to play."

Do you have any concern over the way the last couple of games against New England and again today that the team has gotten up early and then had trouble putting away teams in the second half/later in games?

"No."

What have you said to the team about putting teams away when you have the chance? What's the key to doing that once the playoffs start?

"Just being more efficient."

Baltimore had several players inactive today in J.K. Dobbins and Mark Andrews among others that will probably play next week. When you see that they are not starting guys today that you could face next week, how do you read that as a coach?

"You really try to just put that out (of your mind) because you gotta go play football. We needed this win. There was a lot on the line for us (with) potentially losing the home field game ... There was just too much on the line and we had to block that out and just play whoever they put out there (in front of us)."

JOE BURROW **Quarterback**

How does it feel to clinch home field advantage next week?

"We needed this one. If we didn't win this one, I guess technically we would have won the division, but it wouldn't have felt like it. So, it's good to get this one. We're going to have to play better next week to get the win, especially me. It's great to get the win, but on to the next one."

What is the locker room celebration like right now?

"It's always nice to celebrate with the guys that you work so hard with and to achieve something together. It's a special feeling that I don't think a lot of people get to experience. I always cherish those moments."

How are you feeling after such an emotional week?

"It was a long week. I think guys started feeling better at the end of the week when we started getting some good updates. At the beginning of the week it was tough."

How did you feel about your performance?

"Did not like the way I played today. I missed throws I usually make, but I won't miss those again."

What's it like to end this week with a win after all of the positive updates on Damar Hamlin's health?

"Awesome. Collectively as the NFL and as the players, you love to hear those kinds of updates. He's able to watch the game and experience that. It was a tough week for everybody and even tougher for him and his family. So, the fact that he's doing better is what matters to me."

What does it mean to win back-to-back division titles?

"That's our standard now. We're going to celebrate it every single time we do it. We're going to smoke our cigars and wear our T-shirts and hats, but we expect that every year."

What does Alex Cappa mean to you and the offensive line?

"He's really been playing unbelievable all year. No. 1, Cappa's a guy you love to be around, a great locker room guy. No. 2, (he's an) unbelievable player — smart, physical, tough — everything you'd ask for in an interior guy. I don't know the severity of the injury, but I have a lot of confidence in the guys behind him. Max (Scharping) has played a lot of football, and he knows his stuff. He's going to have to step up but we have all the faith in the world in him."

What are your thoughts on Joe Mixon's touchdown celebration?

"I didn't see it."

What was your take on the idea of a coin flip tiebreaker?

"It is what it is, doesn't matter now. I would love to get that same opportunity for us in the second round if we happen to get there, but that's not what they decided. So, it is what it is."

What's the challenge in playing a team in back-to-back weeks?

"It's tough because one, they're in our division so we play them all the time. They know our scheme, they know our guys, they know what we're trying to do. They make it tough on us. They're going to be able to run some stuff off of a lot of the defenses they ran today, and we're going to be able to do the same. It's going to be a tough challenge for us, but them as well."

How do you feel about where the team is?

"I love where we're at. How many games have we won in a row, seven? Eight? I think that's (one of) the longest win streaks right now. Going into the playoffs with a lot of momentum, happy with where we're at. Still a lot of room to improve."

Ja'Marr Chase eclipsed 1,000 receiving yards today. How impressed are you to see that?

"That's what I expect from him. He's going to have 1,000 yards every year that he plays, and he doesn't miss a ton of time. That's how good he is."

What was your initial reaction to the NFL's playoff rule changes?

"Whatever we've got to do. We'll play wherever, whenever. Make it happen."

What does it mean to you that this team keeps finding new ways to win?

"That's the sign of a great football team. We've got coaches that really understand what we're trying to do. They game plan really, really hard. I know the kind of time they put in, so it gives me a lot of confidence to go out there and execute the plan the way it's supposed to be executed. All year, our defense steps up when we're not stepping up and we step up when they're not. Drue (Chrisman) punted the 'heck' out of the ball today, so that was fun to see."

You said you didn't like the way you played. What do you attribute that to?

"Just missed some throws I usually hit. Not usually — always hit. I got to be better."

What this game what you expected emotionally after such a tough week?

"It was definitely a weird feeling going out there, initially. We settled into the game and put that behind us, but pregame was definitely a little weird."

Does the 'Us against the world' mentality suit this team right now?

"Yeah, I think with all the stuff that happened this week, with all the changes and everything, that's what it is."

Has that been the mentality of this team the last couple of years?

“It’s expected now. We’ve got the guys that can do it. We like the hard path.”

Do you ever think about the idea of a window of contention?

“The window is my whole career. Everybody that we have in that locker room — all the coaches we have — things are going to change year-to-year, but our window is always open.”

Why does this team like the hard path to success?

“Would you have it any other way? We don’t want it easy. It’s not as satisfying.”

Has your personal path been the hard way?

“It’s always been the hard way for me and for a lot of guys in there. That’s just the way it is. There’s no easy path to the NFL and into the playoffs and to the Super Bowl. The harder it is, the better it’ll feel.”

What gives you the confidence that you will always be a championship team?

“I know the guys that we have in the locker room. Like I said, it’s going to change year-to-year but I’d like to think that a lot of guys in there will be around for a long time. We’ve won a lot of football, played a lot of football together. We’ve got great players in there.”

What is the most unique thing about why this year’s team has been successful?

“We’ve faced a lot of adversity. Guys going down, guys stepping up. Guys that maybe hadn’t played a lot of football in the past have now played a lot of football and gotten some opportunities and made the most out of them. We have guys that have been in these moments, had this experience, and know what it’s going to take these next three or four weeks.”

Jessie Bates III said that Joe Mixon’s touchdown celebration came from a movie you watched last night. What movie was that?

“The movie was Gladiator. Great movie, by the way. I think after that a lot of guys went and watched it.”

Were you aware of what was going on in the Buffalo Bills game?

“No, I was not. I kind of assumed they were going to win.”

Did you think you’d get pulled from today’s game early?

“Against those guys? These AFC North games are never going to go like that. It’s going to be too close at the end. It’s too hard, too tough. That’s the way these games are.”

What’s the key to your dancing and escapability in the pocket?

“That was a cool one today. I saw the highlight after. I was proud of myself on that one. I got caught, though. I don’t know how many yards I got — six or seven. I would have liked to get more, but it is what it is.”

What accomplishment are you most proud of this season?

“We won the division, we’ve won a lot of games. We’re 12-4, so we’re right where we want to be. Obviously we would have liked for the beginning of the year to go a little different, but you never know how it’s going to shake out if things happen differently in life. We like where we’re at, excited about the playoffs. We’re going to have to play a lot better to win those games, but we know we have what it takes.”

You’re 12-2 since you said “relax” ...

“Well (chuckling), I told you guys to relax, and you relaxed.”

Have you seen any major change from the Monday night loss to Cleveland to now?

“No, just playing better, executing better, playing team football better. We’re just a much better team than then.”

JA’MARR CHASE

Wide Receiver

Who came up with the coin toss celebration after the touchdown?

“Mix (Joe Mixon) came in with it today. He was like, ‘I’ve got a coin toss.’”

What does it mean to be AFC North Champions for the second year in a row after what you’ve had to overcome?

“It means a lot just for me and myself. Just to set goals for myself and accomplish goals after injury. It’s a big difference. My teammates all lifted me up and then when I came back they didn’t think anything was wrong — everything was the same.”

You won the division last year and we saw you celebrate after winning the AFC Championship. What’s it like when you get to celebrate these accomplishments with your brothers?

“This is what our goal is at the end of the year. It’s something we talk about every year at the beginning of the year.”

How do you feel about getting a chance to play the Ravens again next week?

“It’s a team we play twice every year. They found a way to stop us or slow us down a little bit. If we’re at the top of our stuff there’s no stopping us.”

TYLER BOYD

Wide receiver

Talk about the feeling in the locker room right now?

“It’s fantastic. It’s always a great atmosphere when you’re a winning team. The camaraderie around us is getting bigger and bigger and the motivation that we carry is going to continue build.”

What were your thoughts on a possible coin flip scenario?

“It was dope. We felt that the league was trying to play us and it wasn’t fair, so at the end of the day we gave them what they want.”

Was it a motivating factor?

“No. We’re built to be motivated, the way our team is. We motivate ourselves. Like I said, we keep the camaraderie going whether it’s the defense, offense — we just figure out a way to go.”

What were your thoughts on how today’s game would impact whether you were home or maybe had to play on the road next week?

“We weren’t just satisfied with them just giving it to us, the AFC North. We were going out there and taking it.”

When you were going off the field to get checked out, you gave a thumbs-up. How were you feeling?

“I was just trying to let everybody know I was good. It was a bang-bang play. That’s football. For precautionary reasons, I had to go through the concussion protocol. I’m ready to go next week.”

TREY HENDRICKSON

Defensive end

How did you guys react to the coin flip possibility and all of that?

“I think it just motivated us a little bit. For us, we knew we had to win in order to wear these hats. We earned it. They know it, we know it. There’s no question now. There’s no coin flip even on the table. They’re coming to Cincinnati.”

You wear the division champion hat for the second straight year. What does that mean?

“I was fortunate to wear it four times with New Orleans. It’s always great and not to be taken for granted. Six years I’ve been in the league, and six years I’ve won the division.”

Is this one a little different considering the Buffalo game and the eight-game winning streak?

“We control what we can control and that’s the next game. We flush things that don’t go our way. I think that’s a characteristic that makes this team special.”

SAM HUBBARD

Defensive end

How did you feel coming back from the injury?

“Testing it out I was a bit nervous, that first game back from injury. I’m really glad I got that game in before the playoffs and I’m ready to play my best football now. It’s huge for me mentally. I’m ready to roll. If my first game back had been the playoffs, I would have been out of whack.”

The game next week will be in the same place. Do you expect it to be a different game?

“It’s a different game for anybody you play in the playoffs for speed, and it’s a whole other level for intensity.”

Baltimore didn’t have their starting quarterback and running back, so how do you go off of this film?

“It’s a lot of the same guys. There’s going to be certain points we can make improvement. That’s what we’re going to do.”

MIKE HILTON

Cornerback

You guys were division champions on Friday but now it must feel different with the win. What is the difference right now?

“Technically we won it earlier in the year. Knowing we won out — we deserve it. We’ll see them again this weekend and a lot more will be on the line.”

Thoughts on going into next week’s game?

“We just have to be ourselves and that will be enough.”

JOE MIXON

Running back

Talk about the coin flip celebration idea ...

“I’ll be honest, the best thing about that was the actual flip. That thing was in the air and it just landed. Did it come up heads or tails, though? I knew where it landed.”

The win today left no doubt who won the division, now what goes into getting ready for the playoffs?

“Next week, we’ll be ready to go to work again on Monday and be ready for our next game.”

How are you going to celebrate tonight?

“I’m going to celebrate with everybody. We’ll have fun tonight but after that we have to wash it all out and go to work. We just have to lock in for these next few weeks and be ready.”

JESSIE BATES III

Safety

How hard was it to get through this week?

“Damar’s (Hamlin) positive progress and hearing that he’s FaceTimed his team, that gave this locker room a bit more energy. It’s been a tough week emotionally. I lost my cousin this past week as well. It’s been a rough week for sure. I’m happy we could end it like this (with a win).”

You entered the playoffs last year perceived by some as an underdog. You come in this year with crowns on your head from this year. Are there any thoughts about running back the AFC as you enter the playoffs?

“I think all the stuff that we do throughout the regular season doesn’t really matter once you get to the playoffs. All the seedings are set in stone. All that matters is that game. It’s win or go home. I’m happy that we’ve been able to be in that situation, those win or go home type of games. We get to play here at home. It’s an exciting time for Cincinnati and a lot of guys in this locker room.”

You’re AFC North Champions in back-to-back seasons for the first time in franchise history. What does that mean?

“It means a lot. It means a lot, I know, to the people upstairs and it means a lot to the city of Cincinnati. I remember reflecting last year on what we did and having the opportunity to do that again this year is something really cool.”



RAVENS POSTGAME QUOTES

JAN. 8, 2023

BALTIMORE AT CINCINNATI

JOHN HARBAUGH

Head coach

Obviously, you rested some starters, but what did you think of the effort today?

"I thought the effort was outstanding. Our guys always fight, compete, and get after it. We've got a bunch of fighters. We love our guys. We love the way they play and the way they compete. We're looking forward to the playoffs now. That's our next step, into the playoffs. That's what we've been preparing for and we're looking forward to our opportunity. Everybody is 0-0 going forward. We can't wait to get started Monday probably, Tuesday is our first workday and we'll be rolling."

What was your ultimate rationale for resting the guys that you did?

"What's best for our team and for our season."

What did you think of QB Anthony Brown in his first career start?

"Yeah, I mean he was out there fighting, made some plays, did a good job. Obviously, other things to learn from. He's a smart guy, he'll take those things and learn from them. Our guys appreciate him and know he's another battler out there. He made some outstanding throws. I liked it, I thought he did well."

Were you happy to see the rookie tight ends get a chance to show what they can do as playmakers?

"Yeah, absolutely. That's a great point. I just thought those guys are big targets, and they'll tell you they want two catches back — each of them. (They) want a couple inside breaking catches back, so that's how competitive those guys are. Those guys are going to be really good players for many years to come, no question about it ... Just to add to this since you didn't ask, I thought our defense was outstanding. I thought our defense flew around led by a couple guys sitting right there (ILB Roquan Smith), there's your young quarterback right there, but I thought they played a really good game. We'll be preparing for the next opponent. If it's these guys back here again, we'll be ready. If it's somebody somewhere else, we'll be ready."

It's official (the Ravens will be playing the Bengals next week.)

"It's done? Okay good, so that's what it is then."

How do you feel about playing the Bengals again?

"I don't have any feelings about it, there are no feelings. There are just preparation and getting ready to go compete for the next game."

How different is it to play the same team again?

"I don't measure that. There's no gauge to that. Who cares? What difference does it make? I appreciate the question; I think it's a cool question, but I don't need to get involved in all that. It doesn't matter what my feelings are or how I gauge it. What matters is how we come out and prepare for the playoff Wild Card round. Our guys have earned that opportunity and we're looking forward to it."

Just to reiterate what you said last week, you did treat this as a two-game plan in a lot of ways because you knew it was a strong possibility, correct?

"That's correct."

ANTHONY BROWN

Quarterback

When did you find out you were going to start this game, and what was the week like getting all the first-team reps?

"I found out today, but getting the first-team reps all week was good, because I just needed to get the speed of it, and get comfortable with the plays that I haven't ran all year, and just get the timing of it."

What were your impressions of your first NFL start?

"A lot to learn from, just can't turn the ball over three times. Don't turn the ball over three times, and we don't know what happens. Yeah, just learn from my mistakes, move on, and get better."

On the first interception, was it hard to get a clean throw because the tackle was coming in on you, or how would you describe what happened on that play?

"Yeah, getting hit while I'm throwing doesn't really matter. Looking back at it, I could have just checked the ball to a running back — Gus (Edwards) was by himself. That's just that."

It seemed like you settled in as the game went along. Did it feel that way to you?

"Yes it did, but still I'd like to start that way and not finish that way."

Before the Pittsburgh game, you put a photo on Instagram of Willie Beamen from Any Given Sunday. Was that inspiration at all?

"A little bit, but I won't get into that now."

ROQUAN SMITH

Linebacker

What was the intensity level out there?

"It was very high. We came up short, but I'm looking forward to next week, seeing these guys again. I think it'll be even sweeter then. All the marbles."

What is the thought process knowing that it's not often that you have to play a team back-to-back, especially going into the playoffs?

"Honestly, my thought process each and every game is just go out, give everything I've got, study my opponent just like I study any opponent. I don't look at it any differently, and I'm excited to get back out here next week, back here, and do what we have to do to make sure we're victorious."

Did you notice Joe Mixon's coin flip celebration after his touchdown?

"No, I didn't see it."

When you know there is a decent chance you will be facing the same team next week, how do you balance not wanting to reveal certain things? Does that even concern you?

“Honestly, no, because when you’re out there, it’s a war. It’s an all-out war and those guys know that when we come back next week, we’ll be here. I’m excited and I think it’s going to be a great opportunity for us to show the world exactly what we’re going to do.”

Do you feel like the Bengals showed their full hand, or were they hiding stuff because they knew there would be a chance you would play them again next week?

“Honestly, they did a lot of things they’ve done all season. I think they were running their offense at the end of the day. It was great. We’ll get back, we’ll bounce back and we’ll do what it takes to make sure we’re victorious next week.”

Do you have any feelings about the decision to rest some of your starters, or do you have to understand why that’s part of the bigger picture?

“Honestly, I don’t get much consumed by thoughts. I don’t really think about that too much. I just focus on what I need to focus on, and that’s me going out, being the best version of myself and trying to lead my teammates to be the best version of themselves as well each and every week.”

There were a lot of contributions from your rookies such as S Kyle Hamilton and OLB David Ojabo. What kind of confidence does that build going into a huge game next week?

“Absolutely. It gives those guys confidence, a lot of those guys showed up and made some plays, so I’ve got a great deal of respect for those guys and the way those guys work each and every day. They’re students of the game, so I’m excited for those guys to keep going and it’s going to be special. I’m excited.”

All year your defense has been playing well but also saying you haven’t played your best football. How ready do you think you guys are to do that next week?

“I don’t think there will be a better time to do it than next week, whenever the game is. I heard someone say it’s official that we’re playing back here, so that’s exciting. I’m excited to get back and take another shot at these guys.”

Can you remember ever having to play the same team back-to-back?

“Not really, but at the end of the day it’s nameless, faceless opponents.”

Did you know what was on the line in terms of OLB Justin Houston’s contract incentive to get a sack today?

“Honestly, I don’t even pretend. I don’t really worry about others’ contracts or anything like that. That’s their job.”

The fact that the Bengals are division opponents and you know them well, does that negate any of the factors of playing them back-to-back?

“I think at the end of the day, honestly, it’s just an opponent. Like I said earlier, nameless, faceless opponents. We’ll know these guys inside and out, so it’s just going to be about coming out, doing what we have to do to make sure that we’re victorious at the end of the day or night, whatever the case might be.”

JUSTIN HOUSTON

Outside linebacker

Did you know that you were not credited with that sack after the game?

“Whatever it is, shall be. If it was God’s will, I think it would have been done. I guess he has other plans for me. We will see.”

Are you proud of the way the defense played today?

“Yeah, I’m proud of everyone. I felt like our entire team played hard. To come in here today and play the way we played, I think that is a good sign for us. This should be motivation for us going into next week.”

What are your thoughts about playing the Bengals again next week?

“Let’s get ready to go. We have no choice. We’ll watch the film and learn some things from our mistakes, and then work to get better from it.”

Did you take any exception from the sideline encounter that happened late in the game?

“Yeah, it was just a football play. Their player had been on the sideline most of the game prior to that, and maybe took five reps in the entire game before it. He got in there on that second down and wanted it to look impressive for his guys. You know that kind of beef. He was just trying to make an impression. If he were out there the whole game, he definitely would not be doing that.”

Do you think the Ravens defense matches up well with the Bengals offense?

“I thought we played well. They are really talented. We are now headed into the playoffs, so this game is behind us and it really doesn’t matter. The only thing that matters is the game next week. We’ll see what we can do next week.”

Do you have any sense that they were holding some of their playbook in reserve?

“I’ll have to watch film to see. From what I saw, they were running their normal plays. It didn’t seem like they were holding back any of their punches. If they were holding some of their playbook back, I’m sure we’ll see those things next week.”

Coach Harbaugh held back and sat some players on offense today, but that didn’t seem to be the case on defense ... Do you think that was a benefit to the defensive side of the ball and something you can build momentum off of?

“Yes, I think that’s what we’re looking forward to. I think everyone is motivated by the way we finished, defensively. We will clean up our mistakes and move forward.”

Do you think the intensity and big hits that we saw today is just a preview for what is to come next week?

“I think that’s what we like to do every week. Just play hard. Every guy that had an opportunity today, played hard. We have another opportunity. We have to appreciate that, and take advantage of the next opportunity when we have the chance.”