



BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

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CAROLINA AT CINCINNATI

ZAC TAYLOR

Head coach

How was it to see Joe Mixon play so well today?

"Great. He ran hard, a lot of yards after contact, finished off a lot of runs there, had some big ones for us. So, really happy that he had the day that he had. Franchise-record five touchdowns; had that great catch there with three seconds left in the half, I think it was. So, really tremendous job by him. Great job up front by those linemen, and great job on the perimeter by the receivers, the tight ends, and the run game. Awesome job — that's exactly what we needed. Based on the plan that we had and the run game, everybody stepped up to the plate and delivered, and allowed Joe (Mixon) to have the day that he had."

Why did this rushing performance look different compared to other rushing performances throughout the year?

"We got more runs called early in this year. I just thought we were efficient on the first couple of drives which allowed us to play that way. The big thing coming into this game was first-down efficiency. I think that's a defense that really does a great job on second-and-seven-plus, making things really hard for you. One of our keys to victory, certainly on the offense side of the ball, is being efficient on first down, and the rushing game allowed us to do that."

How would you assess the defense today, especially in the first half?

"They set the tone. We wanted to follow up a performance like we had the last time we were at home of protecting our turf. We've got a lot of home games here in the second half of the season coming up, so we've got to be able to set the tone for that. I thought our defense really answered the bell — the shutout in the first half, very few yards. I think they had about 80 yards through three quarters. We had the short field there to start the second half, which was disappointing. We gave up the touchdown there, but aside from that I thought they really answered the bell today."

Why did you respond so well today after the tough loss on Monday?

"Again, because we were able to move past that quickly. It was easy to us to see why that game got away from us. No overreaction on our part, just keep being the same group of guys, group of men that we expect from ourselves. We expected a performance like this today."

Why is Joe Mixon capable of the day he had today?

"He got in a great rhythm. Again, that's a credit to him. He did a great job making people pay when they were tackling him and getting those extra yards. I thought the whole unit did a great job supporting him and getting him some really good opportunities that he took full advantage of and then some."

Do you have any injury updates on Chris Evans or Dax Hill?

"I don't know where it's going to stand. They'll have to do some scans, especially on Chris' knee, Dax's shoulder. I think those are the two that we'll have to get some more information on."

How have your conversations gone with Joe Mixon recently, and how does a performance like today open up the second half of the season?

"He's a captain for us. There's been some games we've had a style of play where we've relied on the passing game to be explosive and attack defenses and complement it with the run game, and as we've stated many times efficiency in our run calls. There's plenty of times there's been great opportunities for run looks where we've pulled the ball out of his hands and thrown it for great gains. So he just hasn't benefitted, maybe, from those carries that have been turned into productive throws. We're not going to apologize for that. Obviously, great players want the ball. He's a captain and he's handled this thing really well. All of these guys know that sometimes their number isn't called as much, but then there's a game that's going to smack them right in the face where it's games like this. T.B. (Tyler Boyd) a couple weeks ago. Again, that's why we care so much about the character in this locker room of guys that understand the big picture of trying to win and be a great team."

How much can this change what the team can be in the second half of the season, now knowing that there's a proof of concept that works for this team?

"I feel like we've always been — if you're talking purely offensive — a team that can be flexible from game to game. We're not afraid to pull the trigger on a type of plan that maybe is different than a style that we've played before. I think we've proven that over the last two years that we can adapt to different plans. Guys buy into it, understand it, and some games receivers are going to catch a lot of balls for a lot of yards, and other games we're running the ball and being detailed in the run game. I think those are things you've got to have if you're going to have the type of season we want to have. Our guys understand that and have done a great job responding when needed."

With the way Monday night evolved and then looking at today's game, was there a sense that this would be a run-heavy game?

"It was clear for us to see why that game got away from us, and move on from it. This is an easy job responding for this group, because we just didn't play well enough last week. Plain and simple. Unfortunately we had that performance, but I knew that these guys would be able to regroup the right way and be focused on this game and know how important this was going into the bye. Focusing on the next game — that's what's so important right now across this league is just to focus on the next game, not look down the horizon at what's to come, but just focus on being a great team and focus on finding the next win."

How important is it to get off to a quick start and set the tone for the game?

"That was the challenge to our team: 'Whatever unit starts first, set the tone for the game.' And the offense happened to start first

and they set the tone, and the defense immediately responded with a three-and-out, if I'm not mistaken. That's the performance that we needed versus a young quarterback that's getting one of his first couple starts. You want them to have to play from behind and be able to adjust that way, so I was really proud of the team for the approach that they took and that they delivered with."

What's going on with Evan McPherson's missed field goals?

"We'll just have to look at it. I've got a lot of confidence in Evan that he'll be able to respond the right way."

What about Joe Mixon enables him to have a game like that?

"He always shows up on game day. He practices his tail off — that's always been consistent since as long as I've known him and I'm sure well before I've been here. On game day, he always cranks it up and is ready to go."

What's the difference between being 5-4 this year compared to being 5-4 last year?

"It's a very similar situation. You're in the mix, and you've just got to take it one game at a time. There's still a long season yet to go. I know it's at the halfway point now. But again, we've just got to be very narrowly focused on our next opponent which is Pittsburgh. First of all, just recovering this week and just making sure we're rested, hopefully start to get some guys back a little bit, and start to make this run starting with Pittsburgh. Big divisional game, obviously. We haven't taken care of business in the division, which is always key, so it's a great opportunity to get that on the right track."

Does being 5-4 feel better this year because you have a win going into the bye week?

"I don't know. I can't put myself back in the shoes of last year. I know the situation: we lost two in a row and had a tough divisional loss going into the bye. I don't really remember how I felt, but I think our guys are in a good place right now."

How do you feel now?

"I'm just glad we took care of business. That's the biggest thing coming into this game. It's a dangerous football team. They've got a lot of change going on, and that frees them up to be aggressive in some areas. So, you're always ready for some unscouted looks and some situations they could throw at you. I was glad that our team came out and set the tone and established dominance early in that first half."

How do you feel about how the secondary played today?

"From what I saw, I saw Eli (Apple) knocking a ball out. I saw Cam (Taylor-Britt) contest some throws, Jalen (Davis) trying to make some plays on some balls. We'll watch the tape and clean it up to see how consistent it was. But, first glance I thought it was pretty solid."

How nice of a balance do Trenton Irwin and Trent Taylor give the offense?

"That room in general — we move those guys around a lot. The personnel was not so easy to handle. I was late getting a couple of them in which was stressful for those guys, knowing where to line up, because we move them around so much. Troy (Walters) has done a great job all week, and Brad (Kragthorpe), making sure that they're aware of how we're going to utilize them, what their role is going to be, and then they did a great job maximizing it with their performance this week."

Who earned game balls?

"The turnover guys, Germaine (Pratt) and Jessie (Bates III), and then (Joe) Mixon. Obviously, the franchise-record five touchdowns, 211 yards — awesome performance by him."

**JOE BURROW
Quarterback**

What are your thoughts on today's performance?

"It was the first complete game of the year. It's how we expect to play every week. Run game, defense, pass game, it was all clicking today. We have to find that sauce and keep it in our back pocket for the rest of the year."

What was it like watching Joe Mixon go out there and have a day like that?

"That's what we expect from Joe. He's been the same guy every single week, working hard. He hasn't had the production I know he wants, but today was a big breakout for him. Hopefully we can carry that momentum out of the bye week."

Is today the team's real identity?

"You'd love to do exactly what we did today. We're running the ball, we're play action, and we're dropping back, throwing screens. When you're multiple like that it's tough to stop."

If you rush the ball like that, it's pretty easy to get the results you want ...

"If we run the ball like that, it's tough to lose a game when you run for 200 yards."

What can you do to keep pace in the playoff picture?

"We have to keep winning. We have a big one Sunday night in Pittsburgh. Have to get one in our division. Then we have to find wins, scrape them out any way we can. Not every day will be like this so we have to find ways to win games down the stretch where it's not perfect but you find a way to win."

Was is the key to finding that consistency?

"Keep practicing hard. If we run the ball like we did today, it's tough to stop us. We're getting healthy again; we'll get some key guys back after the bye and continue to get guys back after that. That's going to be big for us, to get everyone healthy and ready to go for a big divisional game on the road."

How important was that opening possession?

"When you start like that, you know it's going to be a good day. Those kinds of teams, you have to jump out early on. They have a good defense and their quarterback is playing well, they can score points in bunches. You have to jump out early on them like we did, and put them to sleep."

The defense brought the ball back to you pretty quickly in the first quarter ...

"They were playing great. They were affecting the passer, mixing up coverages, making all the throws hard. The run game was great. I thought the defense did unbelievable, just like they did all year."

How would you grade the Remember the Titans celebration after Jessie Bates III’s interception?

“I can’t say I saw it, so I’ll have to watch the tape.”

Was there a cue for your paparazzi celebration with Joe?

“I don’t know, it felt like that was the one.”

You said three games ago the next three games would define your season. How do you feel about the last three games?

“It was some good, some bad, being 2-1 in those games. It was a decent job. Two games that were complete games and one that was horrible. We have to find that consistency game to game. We’re trying to score points any way we can and continue to get better in the run game, pass game, special teams. This is the stretch that’s going to determine that.”

When did you put Monday behind you?

“You had to right afterwards. There wasn’t a lot of joy in the locker room this week. It’s good to win a game like this in the fashion that we did going into the bye, so everyone can enjoy the bye, get their bodies right, and be ready to go.”

What’s the difference between this year’s 5-4 record and last years?

“Hopefully nothing, we come out like we did last year.”

Did you sense any frustration with Joe Mixon this year?

“No, Joe’s a great teammate, great guy. When we lose a game everybody is going to be frustrated and feel like they can play better. But Joe’s a team guy.”

How nice was it to get Trent Taylor and Trenton Irwin involved?

“Those guys were awesome for us today. When you lose a guy like Ja’Marr Chase, you can’t replace him with one guy. It’s going to be by committee. Trent and Trenton were awesome, Mike Thomas too. We handed a couple of jet sweeps off to Trent, Trenton was robbed of a touchdown, which we would have been super excited for him. Mike didn’t catch a ball but was blocking his tail off in the run game and in special teams. Those guys really stepped up for us.”

How is Ja’Marr Chase doing?

“He’s good. He feels good. We’re going to take it slow. I know he wants to get back out there. It’s a long process, so we’ll see. Maybe after the bye, we’ll see.”

How does your body feel?

“I feel great. Body feels really good, it’ll be good to get back in the weight room and get my body right going into the stretch.”

Do your bye week workouts change at all?

“They’re more intense. You try to get some strength back you lost in the last nine weeks. I always look forward to the bye week lifts to get your body back to what it should be.”

Any bye week plans?

“I haven’t decided yet. I’ll probably just sit on the couch and watch TV and the games next weekend.”

Would you rather enter the bye week with this record or 6-1, given your competitive nature?

“No. I’d much rather be 6-1 than 5-4. But we are where we’re at, and we have everything in front of us. We just have to take care of business.”

Did you watch the LSU game last night?

“I did, yeah, it was a fun win. Fun to watch. Good win.”

What was going through your mind when LSU went for two to win the game?

“I thought it was the right decision. I always think going for two to win is right.”

The tight ends were active today ...

“Those guys really stepped up for us. Mitch Wilcox has really found his stride this year. He’s been playing great all year. Run game, pass game, special teams, he understands what we want out of it all. Obviously Hayden Hurst continues to make plays when he gets opportunities. They’re stepping up and it’s good to see.”

JOE MIXON
Halfback

Do you come into a game with five touchdown celebrations in the tank?

“I wasn’t even thinking about those celebrations. I was just excited we came out and executed. We were firing on all cylinders and got the run game going. The celebrations came on the run.”

What was it about the run game today?

“It was the way we came out. We came out with fire and were physical. You could tell the way the linemen, tight ends, and receivers were blocking. We had a balanced attack today. Zac kept calling the runs, and we were trying to be as physical as possible. I’m happy for my teammates.”

What’s it like to have this type of performance?

“It feels great to be able to have a special game. I knew at some point the dam would break, and it did today. I’m very excited for my teammates. The way these guys come to work and the trust we have, it’s a blessing.”

What was it like running today? What did you see?

“I was hitting the holes hard. Those guys blocked their butt off. The way the receivers blocked today played a huge part. I’m happy it all worked.”

Do you feel like you’ve been able to handle the ebbs and flows of a season as a veteran?

“I guess so. At the end of the day you have to approach it week to week. The fact that everything is coming together, I’m very excited. We stayed true to what we wanted to do. I’m happy how everyone fought for it and did the right things.”

Did you have any conversations with Zac about establishing the run?

“No. At the end of the day, we’re all professionals, we know what we have to do. Everybody has a job and we’re all on the same page. Most important is coming out with a victory and we did that today. We finally got that nasty taste from Monday night out of our mouth. I won’t get too high or too low. The fact we stayed true to the game, we’ll always do that. I’m living in the moment, and will keep on doing whatever I can. I’m excited to go into the bye week with a win.”

When did you know today would be special?

“After the second or third carry is when I thought we’d have a running game today. I’m very excited I was able to deliver for my teammates. It was long overdue. I’m very thankful to God for having these tough times. You never get too low, you never get too high. Being able to sit down and have real friends, real people, real family, be there for you when things aren’t going your way, and to make sure you stay true to yourself, is basically what I did the last few weeks. We’ll keep building off of this, but I’m very excited for how everybody came out and battled.”

You guys seemed to have a more diverse attack today besides just zone, with more pulling and trapping. Is that correct?

“For sure. (Bengals run game coordinator) Frank (Pollack) — he did a hell of a job scheming it up. Zac, he stayed true and kept dialing it up, and I’m sure he believed in us, like ‘We can come out here and be physical today,’ and we actually did. Not that we can in any other game, but the fact that he stayed with the runs and (got) us in a groove to be able to be physical, running downhill, we needed that as a whole. I felt like, with the backs, the O-line and the tight ends and even the receivers, because I don’t know if you all (saw it), but they were blocking their (tails) off today. Without (those) guys (the WRs), I wouldn’t be here at this podium. I’m just very thankful and blessed to be here in this situation.”

The cliché in the NFL is when it gets late in the season, you better be able to run the ball. Is that one reason today the physical aspect of the game was so important?

“I guess so. At the end of the day, we try to do whatever we can to impose our will and get the team to really know what type of game it’s going to be. The way that Zac and especially (Bengals offensive coordinator Brian) Callahan (helped prepared us). He (Callahan) had a hell of a meeting on Saturday. You could just tell the hunger and everything in his eyes and we had great preparation all week, but the way that Callahan was getting at us on Saturday — I just loved how he came in with an edge in that meeting and basically everything that he said. We made it happen today, so we spoke it into existence.”

Was he talking about the running game?

“He was mainly talking about us in all phases. When a run is called, we have to deliver, no matter how many carries we get. And when we’re in the pass game, no matter what is called, we must do whatever we can to not get bored with what the defense wants to give us. And if they’re going to give us five (yards), we have to go take it and also get the yards after the catch or yards after the carry. Man, we did that today.”

Joe, you said that last few weeks with the run game struggling, you talked to your family and friends about staying in the moment. Were you doing some soul searching over that period? Was it frustrating for you going through that stretch?

“Yeah, I mean (it was) definitely frustrating, but at the end of the day, I’ve never had to do (any) soul searching. I know what type of player — I know what type of back — that I am. It’s really about staying true to who you are, no matter the situation and what’s going on and the trials and tribulations that you go through. I used to go home and, you know, get that extra in. I’m still going to keep doing that, and I’m going forever do that until I’m done playing this game. But at the end of the day, I felt like staying true to the game and true to yourself — I felt like that definitely played a big dividend today. Like I said, I’m living in the moment, and I’m blessed to be here in this situation.”

Where is your fifth touchdown ball going?

“Probably to my momma.”

Offensive tackle La’el Collins said Joe showed today ‘He’s still that guy.’ Did you feel like you had to prove you’re still that guy?

“No. To be honest, I tried to come out here and prove to myself that I’m still that dude, and I’m going to forever continue to do that. Like I said, bro, just being able to come out here. And, I’m going to be honest — I work a hard six days out of the week. The day that that we don’t come in here, I still work hard. I still go to work, I’m still doing all the little things that I can to make myself better, to make sure I’m still ready. No matter how frustrating the situation is, or no matter how frustrating your play is.

“I just stayed true to myself during these tough times. To be able to have, like I said, a day like this ... Bro, it feels great. But like I said, I’m never going to live too high in the moment, and I’m never going to get too low. At the end of the day, I just appreciate the people that stuck around and still believe in me. I’m (going to) forever believe in myself, and that’s all that matters.”

Along those lines, you’ve been a popular topic with people wondering if can you still make people miss. Do you hear much of that, and does it affect you at all?

“Yeah, I heard a little bit, (but) to be honest, I’m (not) even on social media anymore. My teammates will say, ‘people say this’ or ‘people say that,’ but I just block that (stuff). I don’t worry about that.

“Like I said, my teammates know what type of player I am, and most importantly, I know what type of player I am. So, to be able to come out here today have a complete game and pass protection when my number was called, and delivered for my teammates, Burrow and the receivers, to be able to hit the right holes and do all the right things to have a complete game, you can’t ask for (a) much better day. I’m just happy that I rose to the occasion. My game rose, I’m here in this position, and I never take it for granted I’m just going to keep on building.”

Doing celebrations. You did ‘The Silencer’ celebration, LeBron James’ style. Was there any meaning to that, or was it just a coincidence?

“I’m going to be honest — that just came to me. I remember putting my foot in the ground, and no matter whoever (was) in front of me, I’m getting in the end zone. I just remember falling, kind of flipping over, and and I got up and it just hit me, like, ‘Do The Silencer,’ and that’s what I did. It definitely was on the fly, because I definitely did not have it in my head that I was going to do it.”

The 2019 season was a tale of two halves for you. Obviously, the second half of that year, you had a ton of success. Do you think this performance kind of set up the run game over the next eight games after the bye?

“This performance, I feel like we’re only going to build (from this). The way that we were balanced today, I feel like it’s going to pay huge dividends down the road because we ran the ball effectively and also we threw the ball effectively. When (Ja’Marr) Chase comes back and we start opening the offense even more, because the run game is going and the pass is on, I feel like it’s only going to get crazier. But at the end of the day, we just have to keep on coming out and going to work, and executing the game plan and just keep on building off of every performance.”

How good does it feel though to prove your haters wrong today?

“To be honest, I’m not worried about what anyone is talking about, to be real with you. At the end of the day, I just came out there to prove my teammates — which I owe to them — and to myself that I’m still a high-caliber player that I know I am and at the end of the day, have my play show I’m still (capable). I’m not worried about (what people say because I) block that out. I don’t see it.”

No Bengals player had ever scored five touchdowns in a game before and only four players in NFL history have scored six. How aware of that were you during the game today? What does it mean for you to be in that conversation?

“I was so locked in the game I wasn’t hearing any of that franchise talk. I didn’t even know I broke a record until they told me. I was locked in, just trying to do all the little things right so that (they) would take care of the big things. It showed today and I’m just very happy and excited for my teammates to get that nasty taste out of our mouth from Monday. We came out here on Sunday and we won, and going into the bye week, we’ve just got to keep on stacking.”

What was the key to finding the balance versus how you played on Monday?

“At the end of the day, we just have to come out and not beat ourselves. I feel like going into that game, emotions were high and we were down a guy that’s a huge part of our offense and trying to figure out what we’re going to do to be balanced because at the end of the day, we’ve got to figure it out regardless if (Ja’Marr) Chase is there, I’m there or anyone (is missing). Someone has to step up and we didn’t know what we were going to be and to be honest, we (didn’t) go out there and execute. We beat ourselves. They had a hell of a performance (but) at the end of the day, we had to get that (taste) out of our mouth by locking in going into this week. Just knowing the coaches still have that drive and we’re going to bounce back. We’ve got to bounce back. (My) teammates are still working hard, showing up, going to meetings — everyone’s still on a high. It’s a great feeling to come off a loss and come in the locker room and not see your teammates hung low. Everyone’s got their heads up, are in great spirits and playing ping-pong, still talking — that’s a great thing to see. Everyone still trusts and believes in each other. Everyone’s going to stay like a brotherhood and that’s what we’ve got to do moving forward, just keep building and getting better. (If we do that), great things will happen.”

What was your favorite touchdown you scored today?

“I don’t know. To be honest, I don’t even remember the runs. I just remember one where I bounced (outside) and scored on the left side. Other than that, I don’t have a favorite. They’re all good when they happen.”

You were on the sideline recreating your touchdown reception. What did you see on that play and worked for you?

“I just remember — we were in empty (formation); I think we had a four-yard completion maybe? I don’t remember exactly how many yards, but I just remember the corner chirping (at me) and I told him, ‘When you see me, you what time it’s going to be,’ to say the least.”

Did you say that when you lined up?

“Hell yeah — he knew what it was. Anyway, like I said, I remember going to the sideline and telling Zac (Taylor), ‘We’re lining up in empty again?’ He said ‘Yup.’ I remember it was maybe third-and-10 and I ended up going in and I said (to Joe Burrow), “Joe, what are we doing?’ (and he said) ‘Just run a fade (route).’ I lined up on the right exactly where (the cornerback) was and I ended up releasing on a fade and I saw Burrow come out and scramble and all of sudden, (the defender) tried to hold me, so I just shook him off. I saw Joe throw the ball and said, ‘Man, I better catch this.’ I caught that thing, toe-tapped it and it was just a great feeling. It was a great feeling for me and knowing Burrow trusts me as me as a receiver is a great feeling, too. Just having that extra tool for him is a great thing.”

Who was chirping at you — was it No. 8 Jaycee Horn?

“No, I think it was (No.) 24 (CJ Henderson?)”

Every game, when the defense comes out on the field, you’re always the first person there to greet them. Why is that important to you?

“To be honest, it’s just (part of being in) a leadership role. I’ve been doing that since probably my rookie or second year in the league. It’s just something that you guys would call a superstition; that’s just something that I do going into the game. Those guys come out and I’m just like ‘Let’s go — it’s that time.’ Everyone comes out, there are handshakes and all that. That’s just something that I’ve always done since I’ve been here and will continue to do.”

Whose idea was the photo celebration after the first touchdown?

“I’m not going to lie — that happened on the fly. Literally. (Joe) Burrow was (yelling) ‘Joe Mix! Joe Mix!’ I’m looking around and I see him and he (made a photo taking motion with his hands) and I was like ‘Okay!’ That’s just how we’ve been as a team. That stuff was like how he had it last year with the chemistry and how off the fly, we can get in things like that, just so quickly with everyone on the same page. That’s just something you can’t teach. That’s just something in you. To see Joe come out there and do something like that, it almost shocked me.”

The last touchdown, the jump-cut on the edge, what was going through your mind on that play?

“I believe that was on the left side. I just remember pressing the line of scrimmage and the (offensive line) were getting them blocked off and sealed off. We had a hat-on-a-hat and then I just saw the corner right there and I was like if I make him miss and get around the edge, I know I’m going to score. (That’s) literally what I was thinking pre-snap and what happened post (snap). I just pressed the hole, made a jump cut, stiff-armed the corner and was off to the races. I knew if I got rolling, they weren’t going to catch me.”

You were counting it out, right?

“Yeah, I just knew and figured at that point, (it was a) five (touchdown) day.”

Have you ever had a five-touchdown game before?

“Yeah, a few times in my career. In terms of literally high school, college — I mean, it’s obviously my first time (doing it in) the NFL. But I’ve had that happen a few times.”

TED KARRAS
Center

Initial comments ...

“We had some stuff going on and we were hitting it. Like I’ve always said, in the run game, it’s hat-on-a-hat and get the ball downfield, and that’s what we did and that equals success in the run game.”

The run game looked more diverse, didn’t it?

“It was diverse. That’s very astute.”

You said Joe Mixon would have a good time tonight. What’s on deck for him?

“I don’t know, but I know what’s on deck for me. I’ve got a bunch of people in town again. We’ll be at the house really celebrating this one.”

What’s it like blocking when you have Joe Mixon running like that?

“A lot of fun. I’m focused on just getting my guy, and I felt like I did a decent job at it (except) for a couple plays, but this is the National Football League. I think the entire unit as a whole — and shout-out to the tight ends, too, they really, really blocked well today.”

How much does the run game elevate the offense?

“Well, it would be nice to run for 220 (yards) every week. You’re not going to lose many games with that, especially with No. 9 as your QB. So, if we can continue to do that, it’s what we’re going to strive to do.”

JESSIE BATES III
Safety

Initial comments ...

“We knew we had a short week. We didn’t practice on Wednesday. Zac (Taylor) did a really good job of keeping us healthy, being able to communicate with players and stuff like that. I just think the guys came in with a fresh mind knowing that we were going into a bye week, as well. I know that these games are going to continue to get more important over the next several weeks.”

A day like this, what does it do for everybody’s energy level and mood?

“It’s different when Joe Burrow is having a day like that, but when (Joe) Mixon is running the ball, it kind of creates the dominance of our team on all three phases. Joe (Mixon) was definitely running with a different type of pop. Like I said, it got going, not just through the offense, but through our defense and special teams, as well.”

Being up 35-0 at halftime, have you ever been a part of a dominant performance like that before?

“No, I’ve been on the other side of it. But it’s good to see our offense have some confidence. I know how much they take pride in their work, from the offensive line, from Joe Burrow, to the receivers, to the running backs. To see them do what they did today, and our defense — I don’t think they crossed the 50 (yard line) until the second half. Just like I said, we’ve got to continue to play complementary football the second half of the season. A lot of these games will be here, and our fans were great today. It’s good when we start fast and the fans are starting fast a little bit, so it was a great win for us.”

GERMAINE PRATT
Linebacker

Did you expect the team to be this sharp today?

“The way we showcased Monday, we wanted to get the bad taste out immediately. Showcasing with Joe (Mixon) and how well he is running the ball — scoring five touchdowns and being aggressive today — that was huge for us.”

How do you feel the defense performed today?

“We played solid. We wanted to get that goose egg. We let up points when Baker (Mayfield) got in — we don’t need to have that.”

What did you see on your interception?

“Coach Lou (Anarumo) called a great coverage. He kept the base (defense) out there — he knew they were going to throw the ball. So it’s basically him making a great call, and I just executed the play.”

How much does Joe Mixon’s five touchdowns energize the team?

“It’s energizing. Anybody on the same day can have a breakout game. We carried the momentum that we needed to make a run for the playoffs.”

TYLER BOYD
Wide receiver

How do you think the team responded after Monday night’s loss?

“We are a well-connected team. Guys don’t put their head down and point fingers after a tough loss, or when things don’t go right. We keep our camaraderie going the same way, week in and week out, regardless of the outcome. We just have a special, special group in this locker room.”

What did you think of Joe Mixon’s performance today?

“The best I’ve ever seen — that was it, right there. But I expect that out of Joe. I know he always has those games each year where he goes crazy, but this is the craziest one yet that I’ve seen. It was a hell of a game for him, and every guy did his job so he could have a great game like that.”

How much does having Trenton Irwin and Trent Taylor step up help the team?

“When your name gets called, you’ve got to answer. I’m kind of sad for my guy T.I. (Trenton Irwin) — I think they kind of robbed him of a touchdown. They robbed me too, but mine was a little in the gray area. His was a guaranteed touchdown. I don’t know why they did that to him. As long as we have guys knowing the system and knowing what to do, they’re going to make plays.”

Did Joe Mixon run out of touchdown celebrations today?

“Yeah, that’s what it looked like (laughs). At that point he was giving the ball out to Ted (Karras) and other guys, letting them have fun. Once (he had) the fourth or fifth one, he was kind of running out. It’s surprising, because he always has something brewed up in

the tank for a celebration. He played great.”

HAYDEN HURST
Tight end

Was the balanced offensive attack important today?

“Absolutely. We need to get No. 28 going. When Joe Mixon’s rolling, his head bobbing down the field, he’s one of the best backs in the league, if not the best. Like I said, just incredible to be a part of that performance.”

Does it feel different when Joe Mixon can do what he did today?

“Absolutely. We’re lethal. We’re already lethal in the passing game, and then when he gets going, that’s one of the best offenses in the league.”

How would you describe the difference between being 5-4 compared to 4-5 going into the bye week?

“It’s huge. We wanted to get back on track and impose our will on a team, show what Bengals football is all about, and I think that’s what we did today.”

Was it a big day for the offensive line today?

“Absolutely, from all those guys.”

After not having the efficiency in the run game early this season, and then to have a day like today, was that something you guys have felt like has been close to happening?

“We’ve got to stay patient. This team is capable of whatever it wants to be. We sometimes have to get out of our own way, and I think we did it today. If we can get Joe Mixon going like that, and the passing game, watch out.”

Have you talked to Joe Mixon much this year about not having a game like this yet, and did you notice him itching to have one?

“Yeah, he’s a competitor. We’re all competitors. Everybody wants to have a big game. I’m happy for him that he got it today. Like I said, if we can just get him rolling and the passing game, this is going to be a hard team to stop.”

What was it like watching Joe Mixon today?

“Incredible. He’s one of the best in the league, if not the best. Watching him do his thing today, just running hard, running through people, I love it, because that’s the type of player I am, and seeing some other guy do it, it’s pretty cool.”



PANTHERS POSTGAME QUOTES

NOV. 6, 2022

CAROLINA AT CINCINNATI

STEVE WILKS

Head coach

Initial comments ...

"A lot of credit to Cincinnati, a good football team. I felt like today we did not give ourselves a chance in so many categories. We couldn't get anything going offensively. On defense, we couldn't stop them to get off the field. We started slow and really couldn't stop the bleeding, and I put all that on me. We've got to be more prepared and ready to play, we've got to go out and execute. And most importantly right here, we've got to find answers, and that's exactly what we're going to be looking for tomorrow. I'll take your questions."

What was your message to the locker room as you go into a short week?

"That's exactly what we said — short week, quick turnaround. We're going to do a great job getting in there tonight, getting back into the building, and starting to get a jump on our rehab. We'll push the meetings back tomorrow and come in ready to work. As you just mentioned, short week, so our minds have got to be prepared. We've got to put this one behind us. We've got to be professionals, we've got to be pros, starting with me with the mindset and understand that, again, it's one game. We've got a divisional opponent this week. Thursday night, we've got to be ready to play."

Who is going to start at quarterback Thursday night?

"I couldn't tell you right now. We'll be able to sit here and look at a few things, talk to the staff, and I'll have that answer here soon."

Who would be in the running to start at quarterback?

"I'm not going to get into hypotheticals. Right now, coming off this game, we've got to watch the tape and figure out exactly where we are in all three phases and get guys to step up, as well as coaches and myself."

Is there a reason you waited until halftime to make a quarterback switch?

"It's not any kind of reason, it's letting you kind of feel. You're going through the process, and you saw what we gave up (with) the last interception there before the half, and I felt like we needed a change, and that was it."

It seemed like the run defense wasn't stopping anything. From your vantage point, what was going on there?

"It was a combination of everything. We weren't setting edges on the defense. We've got to understand, even though we're in man-to-man, we've got to get a little wider. Inside, we can't get reach. We've got to fight and play downhill as linebackers, using our hands to get off blocks. It was a combination of things."

What do you think the issue was on offense in the first half?

"I can't really pinpoint it. I've got to watch the tape and see exactly where things are. I just know we couldn't get into a rhythm."

Were you disappointed considering this team has played inspiring football since you took over, and today it didn't look like that?

"I put all the responsibility back on me. I've got to have the guys ready to play and prepared, so I'm not saying anything, as far as who had effort, who didn't have effort. I've got to make sure I do a much better job getting those guys ready."

What was the deal with all the neutral zone infractions?

"Definitely undisciplined up front. We've got to make sure that we're detailed — (that) we're communicating with the officials, making sure we're behind the ball. And again, just inexcusable."

Do you feel like the intensity and effort that you expect were there today?

"Did I expect us to play the way we did? Not in a million years. I'm not going to question the effort. I've got to watch the tape and see exactly (what happened) from every angle, every play. But I'm proud of those guys, and I'm looking for us to be able to come back tomorrow and bounce back."

What was the situation with RB D'Onta Foreman?

"D'Onta, ankle. He didn't feel good pregame when he warmed up. I wanted him to be able to dress, just in case we had an emergency."

Did DT Derrick Brown get sick?

"Derrick got sick before the game, came in from the hotel, didn't feel good. He pushed through it, and then at halftime, it just felt like he couldn't go any more."

What made HB Joe Mixon so effective today?

"Again, I think it's just a lot of credit to him. He's a good running back. A lot of credit to them as a team and offense. But I didn't think we helped ourselves up by alignments, by execution with our hands, staying in our gaps, playing downhill, getting off blocks. A lot of combinations of things, but again, congratulations to them. They did a hell of a job today."

PJ WALKER

Quarterback

From a vision standpoint, was it difficult seeing the field? Is that kind of what the disconnect was?

"No no, it was none of that. I just wasn't getting in a rhythm, getting in a flow on offense, and it hurt us today."

You guys have played pretty rough-and-tumble football throughout, but today it seemed like you wanted to favor the passing game. What did you see on tape that made you guys want to do that?

"That was just the game plan. We wanted to attack them any way possible. We struggled to run the ball a little bit early, but we've just got to continue to keep that rolling. We've got to continue to trust what we do — whether that's running the ball or passing. We've just got to continue to get better and do what we do on offense, and not let the negatives turn us from what we want to do on a game plan."

What would your case be for being the starting quarterback this week?

"I'm going to go out there and continue to work, continue to put the time in, put the work in. I'm going to let Coach Wilks make that

decision. That ain't on me, and that ain't on Baker (Mayfield) either."

Why do you think you were off today?

"I'm not really sure. I prepared my ass off this week. Things just didn't go my way. We just didn't go out there and play our best football, and that started with me."

Do you flush the game tape (down the toilet)?

"I'll watch it, and I'll learn from it. I'll continue to learn from it, and get better from it. It's football at the end of the day. We made some mistakes on offense that we shouldn't have made. Just got to go out there, watch it, learn it, and continue to get better."

Since Steve Wilks took over, you guys have been playing inspired football. Today didn't look like that ...

"Yeah, it was flat. It was flat out there today. It was flat all around — all three phases. We've just got to continue to get better. It was just one game, but that ain't us. It didn't feel like us on the football field. It didn't feel like us on the sideline — we had no energy. That's on this team. We've got to pick that up, and continue to get better, and play for one another, eliminate the "me's" and go out there and do it for the team."

When you say "this ain't us," what does that mean?

"You've seen the past weeks overall — offense, defense, special teams — a ton of penalties in all three phases. Well I guess the penalties today were just on offense and defense, but it was a slow start, and we've got to learn from that. We can't let it happen. We've got a short week this week, and we've got to continue to get ready to go on Thursday."

BAKER MAYFIELD
Quarterback

What was the conversation like coming out of halftime when you were told you were going to go in?

"That was pretty much the gist of it. It was more so everybody talking, and it was a decision to make team-wide. You either keep fighting, and come out of this thing being proud of what you put on tape, or you don't. This is a team, obviously things didn't go our way today, and that falls on everybody. It's not on one person — it's a full-blown team loss. Just going into the second half, and just trying to execute — it's going to be a short week for us — and go out there and put some good stuff on tape."

Do you feel like you were able to do that with those three scoring drives?

"Yeah, I mean, we went down and scored three times. So we'll look at the tape, but obviously we don't want to be in those circumstances."

How would you assess your performance today?

"When you're seeing certain coverages, and kind of a cautionary defense, (there are) a lot of check downs like that. Just trying to take what they're giving me, and just move forward."

You talked all year about trying to stay ready in case you got a chance to get back in there. It looked like you were taking a lot of notes in the first half. How did that help you when you got in there?

"I was doing that regardless of how the game was going today. I've done that the last few weeks, and just trying to help out. Trying to get a beat on what those guys are doing, and just help out where I can, like I told you guys earlier in the week. I want to win, and whatever my role is, and however I can help, then that's what I'm going to do. Mentally, backup quarterback is a position where you have to stay ready, stay within the game, and just really prepare yourself, and it just so happened to be today."

Do you think you did enough to earn the start this week?

"I'm not going to get into that. That's not my decision. Like I said, I want to win, and whatever role that is decided to be, then I'm going to do it, and I'm going to do it extremely well."

PJ said it felt flat out there in all three phases at least early on. What's your read on that?

"I agree with him. I don't know if I can give you an explanation as to why. Yeah, that was the message at halftime as well. We talked about there's a decision to make. You either put up and you fight (or not), because that first half was just bad football all-around — all three phases. It just wasn't good. A lot of penalties. It just wasn't good. Yeah, it was flat. It wasn't us."

Cincinnati fans sounded like they remembered you ...

"Yeah, I've been here a few times. When they get rolling on offense, they get rolling. I've seen it a few times. It's the state of Ohio — they have good football fans."

FRANKIE LUVU
Linebacker

What do you think happened out there, especially with the run defense?

"I don't know. I can't speak for everyone else."

For you individually, was there any point on the field where something just felt off?

"To be honest, I don't know what went wrong today. We're going to see it on the film."

When you go into film review after games like this, what are the first things you look at?

"My key works and being physical at the point of contact. As far as everybody else, we've just got to do a better job."

After a game like this, is it better to ignore the tape and just move on to the next?

"I wouldn't say ignore the tape. Take what we can and work from it. Obviously it's a copy-cat league and we'll learn from our mistakes."

Do you think there was a letdown after the loss to Atlanta?

"No, there was no letdown. There was no letdown at all. It's a week-to-week thing. We're going to flush this one and come back next week."

MYLES HARTSFIELD

Defensive Back

What’s the mindset after a game like today?

“Obviously we’ve got to put this game behind us. We’ve got a short week coming up. We’ve got to learn from the tape and see what we can do better and be ready for Thursday.”

What happened out there that caused there to be the holes and such, especially in the run game for the Bengals?

“People — we’re just not playing together. On defense, everybody has to be 11 moving parts for one body. I think that’s probably what it was. You usually can’t tell just from being out there, so you’ve got to watch the tape and see what the problems were, and fix it before Thursday.”

How do you get 11 people to work in sync?

“Just the communication part and trusting each other, being in your gap and not trying to make someone else’s play. Just making the plays that come to you and your game, especially the run game. And just being able to trust the people around you that they’re going to do their job, so you can do your job.”

Do you feel you need to improve on being more physical out there?

“It’s finishing on the ball in the right spots. I gave Hayden Hurst two plays and didn’t finish on the ball. I’ve got to be better than that. It’s been my Achilles heel all year really. Just got to be better at playing the ball.”

Did the Bengals bring anything at you that you weren’t expecting?

“No. We practiced most of the stuff that they did. We just have to execute.”

DAMIEN WILSON

Linebacker

Thoughts on what you have to do to be ready for Thursday’s game?

“We can’t dwell on this one. We have to move on to the next one.”

Can you describe what happened with the run defense today?

“I really can’t describe it.”

TERRACE MARSHALL JR.

Wide receiver

After a game like this, is it better to ignore the tape and just move on to the next?

“We just take it one day at time. Whenever that day gets here, we know we’ll be ready, and we’ll just prepare in the meantime.”

Did Baker Mayfield coming in provide a spark?

“It was just the offense as a whole. We just felt like we had time coming out of halftime, and why not just do something right now?”

Were you surprised there was a quarterback change at halftime?

“My job is just to go out there and run my routes no matter who is the quarterback. I’ve got my trust in both P.J. and Baker. I just go out there and try to do my best and try to contribute.”

Were you surprised how fast the game got out of hand?

“I mean a little bit. That’s what happens in football. We’re going to have to dive into the tape and see what we did wrong, then make corrections and get ready for Atlanta.”

D’ONTA FOREMAN

Running back

The offense just seemed to be off today. Was there anything you can pinpoint?

“We were just kind of slow, you know what I mean? We’ve got to find a way to get started. I’ve got to watch the film and see exactly what it was. I just know that we didn’t play to our standard today, and we’ve got it get it fixed for Thursday.”

You don’t play defense, but what did you think about Joe Mixon’s game?

“He played good, you know. Congratulations to him. We’ve got to find a way to stop the run.”

Why do you think you came out flat?

“I don’t know. Every team in this league goes through that at some point. Today was just our day. Like I said, we’ve just got to go watch the film. I can’t really give too many (reasons) because I haven’t watched it. After you get a chance to watch it, you get a better understanding of what happened. That’s what we need to do first.”

Is it a benefit to have a short week?

“I definitely think being able to play on Thursday gets this taste out of our mouth and (allow us to) put it behind us. I definitely think it’s a good thing for us. Guys in this locker room come to work each and every day and play hard, and practice hard. We put it all on the line, and unfortunately we didn’t get it done today. We’ve got to watch the film and figure out what went wrong.”