



BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

NOV. 26, 2023

PITTSBURGH AT CINCINNATI

ZAC TAYLOR

Head coach

What did you think were the biggest keys to the game were?

"I think it started out how we how we assumed it was going to. Against a team like that, 7-3 coming in the half. I talked to the team about this, when we get opportunities with the ball in the red zone, we have to come away with points. We had an opportunity at the end of the half to pin them down there deep, as opposed to a touchback — we've got to take advantage of it. When we do pin them down there at the 11-yard line, we can't let them pop out on the first play. I think you look at the entirety of the team there. There were some situations that we certainly could have handled better, that in a one score game can end up making a difference. Credit to Pittsburgh, they handled those situations, and I thought we could have done a better job of that today."

Why was Pat Freiermuth able to have such a game?

"He made some one-on-one plays. I thought that there were a lot of times we were tight on coverage. There were some times he's over the ball and (we ran) zone coverage, and they put it on him and it goes down quickly. We'll watch the tape and see really what the issue was there."

How much of the inability to run the ball really hurt you guys and what was the issue in the run game?

"That's life versus Pittsburgh. You know that's what's going to happen, it's going to be tough. When you run the ball, we need to get more production out of that. It takes the pressure off the pass game. That's what they rely on, taking off the run. We've got to do a better job managing the drives as we go and put ourselves in a little bit more advantageous situations. If you can put yourself in a situation where you call more runs and you're not at second and 10, second and long, third and longer, you get more runs off, and eventually some of those runs start to get you bigger gains. We didn't get an opportunity get enough runs off."

Is volume an issue right now in the run game?

"We only have 40 plays. You're going to look at a lot of them in the two-minute and third downs. At the end of the day, you have to look at normal-down plays from the past. We tried to do our best to keep some balance there but there wasn't a lot of opportunities in this game."

What is your confidence level in Joe Mixon right now?

"This has nothing to do with Joe Mixon. This is the entirety of the unit coming together. Don't make this about one person. It's not like there was missed opportunities there from what I could see. He continues to run hard and he's given us what we needed this season."

What did you think of Jake Browning's first start?

"I thought he handled some things really well for us. It's a tough task to play a divisional game versus a good defense in your first game. There's going to be plenty of things he can learn from. I told him this is just the first chapter in his story. He's getting to play in a real football game and getting a chance to assess his performance and rebound, and still have all the confidence in the world."

Why wasn't Chase Brown able to run the ball today?

"We just didn't have any opportunities. (Joe) Mixon had eight carries. We need more snaps, we need to get more first downs that give us more snaps. That can be defensively getting them off the field a lot quicker so we get more possessions, but at the end of the day, I think the offense has got to find a way to generate more production, get points on the board, keep the defense off the field, and take some of the pressure off."

It looked like there were some miscommunications and penalties, can you pinpoint why that's been happening?

"The ones that stand out to me — there was no P.I. (pass interference). That's a bang-bang play. We are going to be blocking downfield after the catch, it's just a timing issue of when you can do it. I think they dropped a defensive end and so it happened a little quicker than you're planning for it to happen. That's unfortunate there. I know we had a false start on a third-and-five which pushed it to third-and-10. We cannot have that. That's a communication issue that we've got to be better at. We've got to continue to just assess them all as a whole and see. Some of them are just going to be part of playing the game and some of them we can certainly clean up and we can assess."

Are there reasons that strengths in the roster last year have not carried over into this year?

"I think we have a really good football team. We just have to find a way to get wins here. We're on a three-game stretch now where we haven't found a way to do that. We had a great stride going into these three games. That's how the NFL season goes. You're going to hit stretches and you've got to find a way to overcome them and regroup. I told these guys Monday Night Football is the perfect opportunity to be able to put your best foot forward and change the narrative of what's happened these last couple weeks. I've got confidence this team will rebound the right way this week and put in the work they need to do."

There was a flag called on their only touchdown and picked up, what did you see on that play?

"The initial call was holding and they decided it wasn't holding. That's all there is to it."

Is it frustrating when some of the same themes continue to happen on the defensive side of the ball?

"They keep points off the board and that's what we want. They held them to three points in the first half. I feel like offensively, we can do more on that first drive in the second half to build a 10-3 lead or 14-3 lead. Then the defense can really play the style of ball that they want to play. We'll assess the performance by everybody and what we need to continue to improve on. I saw some really positive things from our defense."

Would you say that interception is where the game turned a little bit?

"I think just the turnover battle in general is something we preached all week. We ended in a tie. We've got to find a way to get one out on defense or special teams, that was a big part of it. That factors in as well. We've just got to do a better job protecting the ball."

How much of what you called was similar to what you would call if Joe Burrow was able to play?

"It's a hard question to answer. Sometimes when you play these divisional opponents, the whole game shifts. These are some of the best defenses in the NFL. You have to play a certain way against these teams. We didn't have to this week, so I didn't make game plays with Joe, so I can't really answer that question. We've got to be situationally sound. We have to win the turnover battle and can't have the calls that we had today in order to win games like this."

Logan Wilson got injured at the end of the game, do you have any word on that?

"I think it's an ankle, and we don't know the severity of it. There were only a couple plays left in the game, so unknown whether or not he would have been able to come back."

Big picture-wise, how much of a dent does this put in to what you want to do and where you want to go?

"We just have to move our focus forward. There's nothing we can do to change this one. It's important that these guys just continue to step up, these guys are going to remain close. Our attention to detail is going to continue to be sharp, and we will find ways to win in December. This team has shown the ability to do that in the past. I assume that we're going to play a lot of teams coming forward that have a lot of adversity of their own. No one is sitting around feeling sorry for (us). We're going to pull ourselves up and find a way to get wins down here in the stretch."

How do you think Jake Browning managed the aggressiveness part of the game?

"I thought he made some great throws that allowed us to move the ball down the field. That's all going to be part of the experience process with him. The more he gets to play, the more comfortable he's going to be. That's one of the better defensive lines in the NFL. They pose a lot of issues. When you get behind and they get to really play to their strengths, that becomes a challenge. We've got to do a better job of taking that pressure off of him and finding a way to play through."

Can you confirm that Joe Burrow is going to have surgery on Monday?

"Yes."

JAKE BROWNING

Quarterback

Obviously not the end result you wanted, but what did you think about your performance?

"Some ups, some downs. Definitely not my best game. (I) tried to keep fighting. Starting with the first drive, kind of getting settled in, I felt like there were times where I was settled in. I felt like there were other times where I needed to play better, but I think it was not up to my standard of how I would've liked to play."

Walk us through your interception and what you saw on that play ...

"Yeah, I knew we had points, so we called basically just a slot curl concept. I felt like it was cover three, but it ended up being two-invert. I was just trying to get the ball to Ja'Marr (Chase) quickly and not go backwards, get an easy field goal. The guy just kept buzzing out there, and I made a bad read."

How much did the lack of running game compromise what you wanted to do on offense? Maybe you were in third-and-longs and third-and-not so manageable because of that?

"I think any time, as a defense, if you can make a team one-dimensional, it's definitely in the defense's favor. But that's not really my job to assess the run game. I have my run game checks. I think I was 100 percent on those, and that's kind of my role in the run game. Long answer, but yes, that does make it difficult, but that's not really my area of focus. I need to focus on being better in the pass game."

What worked on the touchdown play? How did that come about?

"Just the naked for the counter. I dumped it off to Drew (Sample), and he did a good job finishing it in the end zone."

What's it like to see Drew Sample have the year he's had after his first few years in the league?

"I think that Drew (Sample) is carving out a nice role for us. He does a lot for us on third down, does a lot in the run game and is catching more and more passes, which I think rounds out his entire game. I think everybody knew he's a really good run game tight end, and really smart and adding that to his game definitely makes him more versatile."

You talked all week about being aggressive. How do you think you managed the line between pushing the ball and making a play?

"I think that's always kind of hard to know until you watch the tape. It's hard to give a generalized answer. I think there were some where it was good to be aggressive, and I think there were some where I could have just checked it down and maybe not have taken some sacks. But I think part of me getting back into the groove of playing and stuff like that is kind of figuring out, 'OK, where is that line for me, and where is that line in this offense? What is that line I need to play on in order to give us the best chance to win the game?'"

Do you feel you were able to start establishing a chemistry with Ja'Marr Chase today on big plays striking downfield? You had the 31-yarder down the right sideline ...

"Yeah, I think any time Ja'Marr is one-on-one, I'm going to go give him a chance. I think that's what you want from your primary receiver, and I thought he did well and made some plays. Any time he's one-on-one, I'm going to give him a shot."

On the TV right after you threw the pick, your reaction showed you knew exactly what happened ...

"Yeah, I think I just made the decision too early in the play. (I should have) let the play play out, and let 17 (Trenton Thompson) decide if he was going to cover the curl or cover the guy in the flat. I kind of made the decision without really reading it out, to 'OK, let's just get the ball. They're very soft on Ja'Marr (Chase); let's just get the ball to him. Get four, get three. This is going to be a game that comes down to — it's not going to be a shootout.' So, that was kind of my thought process, and in hindsight, I guess (I should) play out the play and read it out, don't just see something pre-snap and kind of make a decision."

Does that come from your last start being in the 2019 Rose Bowl?

“Yeah, I think that’s a little bit of a cop out for me to sit here and say that any interception was because I haven’t played in a while. That’s a cop out. I think I can read out that play and make the right decision.”

Is it too early to get a sense of what is the biggest thing you’ll build upon going forward from today?

“Yeah, probably a little too early. I would say there are just some things that maybe don’t show up on tape, like kind of learning, ‘Here’s what it looks like to start a game.’ And figuring out, like I said, where that line is, playing aggressive but then also knowing that this isn’t going to be a 42-45 game. So, taking some of those sacks when you’re trying to make the play end up hurting you in some field position stuff. I think just the overall experience I will build from. Being able to see myself on tape and critique it pretty hard will be good for me, too.”

Were you dealing with a hand issue?

“I just started cramping.”

How much do you think the early-down efficiency — over the course of the year, not just today — how much has that made the offense not what you need it to be when you’re in second-and-longs?

“I think any time you get behind the sticks — especially in this division with all the really good defenses and really good pass rushers — it’s going to be difficult. As far as an assessment on the overall first-down efficiency, I’d be lying if I had any real assessment on that, but in general that’s going to really make it difficult. You look at our division and you look at the last two games, we’ve played against two of the best defenses in two of the first cracks at live action in the NFL for me. So, you need to stay ahead of the sticks, you need to be more efficient. Everybody plays a role in that, but I’m just going to focus on my role which is getting the ball out quicker and finding that line that I’ve kind of gone back to.”

I know it may only seem like three yards, but as a quarterback what is your vantage point on the difference on when you’re in a second-and-six or five versus a second-and-nine or eight? From an offensive standpoint, how is that different?

“The main goal is to stay out of third-and-long. Third-and-long is very difficult, especially against a defense like that. I think when you’re behind the sticks on second down, there’s a lot of pressure to get an efficient play on that second down. So, your play calls kind of go down. Some defenses will even start calling their third down calls on second down because they know, ‘Hey, they’re going to throw here.’ I think that makes it difficult. Staying ahead of the sticks — like the one drive where we went down and scored — we stayed ahead of the sticks, we stayed out of third down, we had some good play action, we called a couple screens that were good. I think that’s ideally how you would like an offensive drive to go. You kind of saw how efficient we were there, and that capability to be that efficient. We just have to find that efficiency consistently.”

You waited so long for this moment, and now it’s here. Can you appreciate that, or does the loss color over it?

“I think over the next 24 hours maybe, or at some point it will not feel like just pissed that we lost. Or maybe it will take a year or two. But I think we just lost a close game where you feel like you didn’t play your best, and we didn’t play well enough on offense. We only gave up 16 points on defense, and we lost. That’s kind of my primary thought in my head.”

You had said that you weren’t one to feel the pressure of having to take over a team that’s trying to achieve goals of the postseason. Do you still feel that way after a loss like today, or do you feel the weight of that a little bit more?

“I think just focusing on what I can build on from this game. All the overarching themes of a season and stuff like that ... Those kinds of storylines are big for your jobs, but for my job, it’s just day-to-day and trying to consistently get better. If I do consistently get better, then good things will happen. I think just really having a narrow focus on that. There are a hundred different narratives you could run with in your head, and I think for me to play my best I have to avoid all those. That’s kind of my plan of attack — avoid whatever narratives are going on, just go home and watch the film, come into meetings on Monday and just say, ‘OK, where do we go from here? What do I need to do better in order to help us win?’”

JA’MARR CHASE

Wide receiver

How do you think Jake Browning performed today?

“He did well. We can do better though.”

What caused the offense to not be as effective as it wanted to be today?

“I don’t know. We had pressures. (There were) a lot of pressures today. I would probably say that was the (biggest factor).”

What did you see on the pass that was intercepted from your vantage point?

“He just jumped it. He made a good play.”

Did they do anything to disguise their coverages today?

“They really didn’t do any disguise, for real. I saw them. (Trenton Thompson) had flat (coverage), you know.”

At 0-4 in the division and a record of 5-6, does it feel like things are slipping away for this team?

“I don’t know. It’s my first time feeling like this, so I really don’t know how it’s going to go.”

What’s going through your mind right now?

“Nothing.”

Do you think the offense looked similar to what happened in Baltimore when it struggled?

“Not really. They just brought a lot of pressures. That’s what kept it going (for them). We knew what kind of game — it was going to be a possession game. We just had to make some opportunities when we got to the red zone and didn’t make those opportunities last. That’s how the game slipped away.”

How were you able to catch those two tipped balls you had for completions and turn them into big plays?

“I don’t know. It was just meant to be, I guess.”

You’ve talked about not being used to losing. How do you stay focused and what do you focus on?

“Just keep working. It’s the only thing I can do. Take advantage of the reps we’re getting right now with Jake (Browning) and keep moving forward. That’s all I can do right now and keep the guys on the side of me pushing forward, too.”

ZACH CARTER

Defensive tackle

How do you feel the defense played today?

"I thought we battled hard. Obviously, we gave up too many explosive plays. We could have been better containing in some areas, but overall, I saw the fight in the guys. We were on the field a lot, but guys were fighting and going to war. That's what you want to see."

The Steelers have a new interim offensive coordinator in Eddie Faulkner. Did they change it up much?

"(It was) pretty much what we've seen on film during the week, that's exactly what they ran. They're not a team that switches up the offense. They have their plays like their runs and they stick to them."

Did they attack the middle of the field a little bit more?

"They were trying to find the seam throughout the game, especially with their tight end. (Pat Freiermuth) was in the middle of the field, so I did see that."

At 5-6, what might the Bengals need to do from here on out?

"We've just got to keep fighting (and) stick together as a team. There will be a lot of outside noise (but) we've just got to stick together in here. We believe in each other, so we've just got to go out and execute and keep coming."

DJ TURNER II

Cornerback

What were the Steelers doing that was making it so tough for you guys down the stretch?

"They ran the ball. We have to limit explosives. Those were the two things — limit explosives and (them) running the ball."

How do you correct that before you face Jacksonville next Monday night?

"Film study. Film study and practice. We just have to hit it hard, honestly, just doing that. We can definitely make improvements."

What's the hardest part about coming up empty against teams in your division?

"You've got to keep going. We can't just get down. We're playing them again, so you can't just get down and have that affect your next game, next play, next week, whatever it is, so I feel like (we need to) just play and keep going."

What's the benefit of having one more extra day to prepare for a team since you play the Jaguars on Monday Night Football next?

"It's a lot, really, on the body, especially since you had a short week right before this game. So definitely (for) your body, it will help a lot and then with preparation, we get an extra day film-wise and practice-wise."

TRAYVEON WILLIAMS

Running back

What did you see on your 46-yard kickoff return in the second quarter?

"They gave us opportunity. The guys up front did their thing. If we get 10-for-10 blocks, we can do something special. They gave us the opportunity, and the guys up front did a great job and we did something great, set up a good return and gave our offense a great opportunity with great field position."

It looked like after that return that you were a little frustrated they wouldn't kick it to you again. No doubt you wanted the chance to get your hands on the football again ...

"One-hundred percent. I just want to be here to be a guy to be able to affect the game, especially in these type of moments and knowing the situation. Just want to be able to affect the game. It is what it is. We've just got to keep coming to work and doing what we're doing."

Did Pittsburgh's defense do anything different that you're aware of?

"Surprisingly, they played a little more man than we expected. They stayed true to what their keys were. They kind of broke a couple tendencies, but it wasn't anything that we weren't expecting."

They did a good job of controlling the running game and made it one-dimensional once they took a lead and then you have to throw the football. You don't want to have to be in a situation where you have to fire and fall back against this defense, right?

"One-hundred percent. That's the National Football League. You've got to be able to run the ball and you've got to be able to control the turnover battle, and on this Sunday we didn't do that effectively today. They did a great job making us one dimensional. We've got a big opportunity next week Monday night against Jacksonville. We'll be ready to work."

ORLANDO BROWN JR.

Offensive tackle

The easy thing to do would be to say run the ball more after only 11 rushes today. Would that be helpful for you as a guy who can fire off and get some run plays in there to get through a game like today?

"I don't want to really point my finger to that. I'm just here to do my job. If it comes down to 70 pass plays in a game, two pass plays, 80 runs, it doesn't matter. I'm just here to do my job. That's all I can really say on that."

What were they showing on run defense today?

"I think they did a good job on their five-man front. They've got two great four guys, one of them being a Hall of Famer, and obviously T.J. (Watt) outside, and (Alex) Highsmith, and some good linebackers running around making plays. They did a good job being better than us today."

What advantage can there be for the linemen to run more under center than from out of the gun?

"I think just sometimes being under center allows obviously the center to be more aggressive, and some of our linemen to be a little tighter and for us to be a more aggressive with our footwork and the angle that it creates. But as I said, I'm just here to do my job, and whether we run under center or not, it doesn't matter to me."

What did you think of Jake Browning and his performance today?

"He fought his (tail) off. He came out there with the mentality and confidence to be able to go win that game. I'm very proud of the way he came out today."

How did it help the confidence when you came out strong?

"It definitely helped us. It was a one-score game. Jake (Browning) did everything he could to put us in position with the way he was scrambling and how hard he was playing."

How much does this one hurt considering where you are in the standings?

"They all hurt to be honest with you, especially when it comes down to the AFC North battles."

What was the mood at halftime?

"There was confidence there that we were going to be able to come out and fire on all cylinders. We just didn't do a great job executing today."

How do you keep from getting frustrated and letting things snowball?

"Just sticking together and taking it day-by-day. It's just part of the business. It happens."

DREW SAMPLE**Tight end****What happened out there today?**

"It was tough sledding. Early on it was hard to get into a rhythm. They were doing some different things, and we tried to do some different things, so there are just some things we didn't execute on. We had some big plays and weren't able to capitalize. That's the story of the game, just not fully being able to capitalize on drives."

The Pittsburgh front four is excellent, T.J. Watt had a couple of sacks. That seems to be the key to their team ...

"Yeah, those guys — (Alex) Highsmith, (T.J.) Watt, (Cameron) Heyward — are really good players. They have guys all over, obviously, but that's in their DNA. They've always had a tough defense. We know we were playing a good team. We just weren't able to capitalize and get in a rhythm."

What did you think of Jake Browning in his first NFL start?

"I think he had great poise, he made some plays with his legs, which is always great, and it's tough going against that D-line. They tried to give us some different looks, but he's a competitor. His first game starting — he's going to learn a ton and make a big step next week. I'm excited for him."



STEELERS POSTGAME QUOTES

NOV. 26, 2023

PITTSBURGH AT CINCINNATI

MIKE TOMLIN

Head coach

Initial comments ...

"We're excited about the victory. It wasn't an easy day. We hung together and fought. Field position was a component of the first half. We gave up a kickoff return to midfield, we had two touchbacks on punt circumstances when we had the chance to put them on a long field. We had some penalties in the punt return game. The field positioning component made it more uncomfortable than it should have been. I thought maybe Diontae Johnson scored on that one, but then we fumbled a few plays later. We have to take care of the football — we lost points there. I don't know if the score was reflective of how we were operating. But that's football, that's how things go, and we did what we needed to do to win the game. I'm appreciative of the efforts. From an injury standpoint, George Pickens got the wind knocked out of him. Calvin (Austin III) maybe hurt his ankle late, but I don't know the extent of that so we'll where those roads lead us. AFC North football, road venue — I'm appreciative of the win today and the efforts that produced it."

What did you like about the flow and direction of the offense today?

"I thought we spread the ball around, we changed things up schematically with different launch points. We attacked down the field early when they were in split safeties. We weren't going to let them sit in that comfortably all day. We did what we needed to do."

Was the plan to use Pat Freiermuth as much as you did today?

"Sometimes coverage dictates that. Pat's first week back was last week. He was out an extended period of time. It was more of a reflection of him and Kenny (Pickett) getting back on things. When (Freiermuth) is on, he really makes a difference."

Are you pleased with the jobs the coaches did, given the circumstances?

"I'm not worried about the circumstances. That's our job, and we did it."

What was the reason for not challenging the Diontae Johnson play?

"They were definitive and I lost vision of it. There were people between me and him, I couldn't count steps. They didn't give another look at it in stadium, and we didn't get a quick enough look at it up top. Sometimes that happens when you're on the road. Some games it's on the road, sometimes it's at home — it evens out in the big scheme of things."

How important was it to shut down Joe Mixon today?

"That's what we aspired to do, playing against a young quarterback. It really puts the emphasis on the run game. It's two weeks in a row we did a nice job versus the run. We were really committed to it and I'm appreciative of that."

Winning third downs leads to more plays, and that seemed to make a difference today ...

"No doubt, but I thought there was a lull there in the second quarter when they were winning some possession downs and lighting us up with pressure structure. Once we adjusted, it got a little more fluid in the second half."

Najee Harris has several hard runs ...

"He's our down-in and down-out ball-toter. He doesn't get a lot of credit because of the nature of which he plays and the style we play. But that attrition component is significant and we're always appreciative of his efforts."

What did you like out of Kenny Pickett today?

"We did what we needed to do to win. Guys like myself and Kenny, we're judged based on winning and losing, and we don't run from that, we run to that. He and I are winners today."

Trenton Thompson had a big interception today, what can you say about his performance?

"One man's misfortune is another man's opportunity. Efforts like Trent's today make that real. We're really appreciative of it. I think it's what team is about, particularly over the course of the journey that is the season. There's going to be opportunities for people to ascend and change the perceptions of who they are professionally. This guy has been excited about his opportunity and we're excited for him. He delivered."

His interception then the score really flipped the game ...

"Sequencing like that, with complementary football is really important. That's why I was upset about the field positioning component of special teams in the first half. We had a punt return to midfield and had a penalty that lost us 20-plus yards. We had a couple of touchbacks (that) we had a chance to down inside the five or 10-yard line. That field positioning component in special teams in the first half really minimized the complementary component we're discussing."

Did you see a step forward in the recent lack of fluidity in the offense?

"I'm not trying to paint with a broad brush and act like: 'Eureka!' We did what we needed to do to win today and we'll keep pushing."

Are you overall happy with how the offense performed?

"I'm happy that we won. We'll keep pushing."

It didn't seem like there was an obvious hiccup between Eddie Faulkner and Mike Sullivan ...

"We didn't anticipate any."

KENNY PICKETT

Quarterback

What was the biggest difference this game versus the previous one?

"I think we came together as a unit. Huge shoutout to Coach Faulk (Eddie Faulkner) and Coach Sully (Mike Sullivan). I think those guys did a great job preparing us this week. I think we did a great job of coming together and staying together in a time of adversity, coming on the road and getting the really big-time hits in a win that we needed. It feels good."

It seems like Pat Freiermuth was there all game right from the beginning. Was that something you knew it was going to be a thing or was it just reacting to what Cincinnati was doing?

"Yeah, playing off of what they were showing defensively. It felt like they were showing a lot of middle field open coverages where we need Pat to step up and be big for us, which he was. Having some one-on-one routes to move the chains. I think Pat had an unbelievable game. Really happy

for him. (He was) battling back off an injury with his hamstring which isn't easy. So, it's great to have 88 out there."

Did the way the game was called feel different today?

"It's definitely different with a new play caller. You kind of get used to the flow of how he likes to call things, and that's something that we're going to continue to iron out. We felt like every drive we were having productive drives, moving the ball really well. Some penalty things and a turnover that we wish — you want to take that out. That would help us put more points up. But overall, I'm happy with how those guys played."

What would you say about the ability for the most part for you guys to come away with first downs to move the ball?

"That was kind of something we talked about at halftime. No, I don't think we were great on it in the first half. I thought we really stepped up in the second half. Coach Sully (Mike Sullivan) was seeing it really well and what they were calling, putting us in really good positions to be successful. And we went out there and executed. So, that's kind of how it's got to go and how it has to be moving forward."

Did you need this after maybe struggling a couple of weeks, to go out there and really put together a good performance on your end?

"Yeah. My end and our end. Like I always say, it's the ultimate team game, especially offensively. You need everybody — all 11 working together, all 11 on the same page in order to be successful. So, for myself and the guys in the locker room, we're all really happy that we're coming out of here with the W, coming back to Heinz (Acrisure Stadium) this weekend coming up. It should be awesome to get back home. A lot of positive takes from it."

Did you think it was a touchdown to Diontae Johnson?

"I thought (it was). I was running down there to go celebrate and then I didn't. Obviously on the road you don't get to see a replay. So, I want to see it on tape and see what happened."

It was one of the weirder weeks of your pro career. The frustration in Cleveland, big change on Tuesday and bouncing back the way you guys did today ...

"I'd say so. It's lot of adversity, a lot of things going on, moving parts. But like I said, it felt like a short week almost, because when we got the news and how quickly we all had to kind of react to what happened and flush it and move on and get ready to go this week. Hats off to our guys in our locker room that did that."

You said Wednesday that you can only do so much. You can only make so many changes. How did the offense feel different to you today with the way you all were running out there?

"The flow of calls like how Coach Sully (Mike Sullivan) likes to call games and our communication sounds great. Which, he's been there — my right-hand man since I got here — so that communication has always been great with Coach Sully. Now that he has to call the plays, it obviously is an adjustment, but I felt like we handled it really well."

Do you think the change impacted the way you played or anybody on your side?

"It's like I always preach, it's the team. I think it did impact our team and the flow of the game. As a play caller and the instincts and where they go is different. Each guy is different. Each guy sees it and feels it differently. So, having those conversations with Coach Sully (Mike Sullivan) on the sideline and knowing our plan of attack every drive and how we're going to adjust to what they're shown is good."

Reacting to the change, did that affect the way you guys played?

"You can give rah rah speeches and get blown out. There's nothing anyone's going to say or do. You've got to go out there and play and execute and put the plan together, which is what we did."

It's been frustrating at times for Najee Harris this year. Speak on the impact he had ...

"He was awesome. He was running downhill, being able to watch from a bird's eye — view from behind — see how he was hitting the holes. He was hitting the holes hard. And it was great to have Najee and Jay (Jaylen Warren) doing their thing like they usually do. So, huge positive for 22 (Najee Harris) and our offense as a whole, putting up the yards that we put up today."

Do you sense some relief that the offense had a good day, just knowing that the trouble you had this week, you can go into next week with a positive?

"Yeah, I wouldn't say we're relieved. I would say we always knew what we're capable of doing, it's just putting it together. And we still haven't 100 percent put it together. We were driving really good. It felt like we left points out there. But you've got to take the positives and continue to march forward, which is what we plan on doing. So, yeah, there's a lot of positive. I wouldn't say relieved is the word though."

What does the three tight ends thing do for you?

"I think all those guys do different things well. It's not just an obvious run structure. I think with Connor (Heyward) and Pat (Freiermuth) and Darnell (Washington), being able to get those guys out in some route concepts and they do a great job, they run great routes. I think each guy had an impact today."

You guys hit all the talking points on the first play, the play action, going to numbers to the tight end, was that by design and how much did that help you be successful?

"That's Coach Sully's (Mike Sullivan) preparation and tendencies, and what he saw and what we plan to attack. It was great execution by everybody. Pat (Freiermuth) did a great job of seeing it. Put the ball on them is a good start for us, but nothing to what anyone would say more of what defense showed us, preparation-wise."

Was Mike Sullivan different today?

"Well, he's calling the game. He's steady. He's always been steady. He preaches that as quarterbacks, you have to be steady. It's such an up and down game and up and down league. A lot goes on during the week. But he was steady, steady as always. So, it was great to have him calling the plays and always by my side but now in a different kind of aspect."

You had a couple of longer passes to Diontae Johnson and George Pickens. Was that something you felt was a focus or was it just kind of how things played out?

"It's the way things played out. You get that one-high press, you're going to take those shots. If they're playing too high, you're not going to take those shots. You're going to work Pat (Freiermuth) over the middle. So, it's all about the defense dictating where I throw the football and how I kind of go through my reads."

What would be the word that you would use to sort of describe just the chaos of the league and the elation of this victory?

"I can't give you one word. We all know what we're capable of, is the best way to put it. We know we're capable of putting that kind of offense out there every week we just weren't able to do in these previous weeks. But it is awesome. It feels good to come together like that and put it put out a great game."

ELANDON ROBERTS

Linebacker

How nice is it to get back on the winning track after today?

"Yeah, real good because you put in work all week. Like I talked about last week, it's November football — you've got to learn from it, but you've got to make quick adjustments. Today I thought we were able to do that. We played complimentary football on offense, defense and special teams. We've still got some stuff to (improve) in this game, and we're going to get better. Always going to get better."

They had a bit of a hot start on offense, but not much after that ...

"Like I said, we came in here with a game plan from our coaches, and we were able to execute it from a defensive standpoint, and we just kept playing. We played a 60-minute game."

What does a win like this do for team morale?

"It's November football. If you start stacking them in November, it's big. Obviously, it's a divisional game — that's a great team out there — but we went in and played a 60-minute game. We were able to come away with a win like we dig in each week in practice to come away with, and we were able to come away with our goal."

JOEY PORTER JR.

Cornerback

How important was this win for you guys with the state of the team right now?

"We needed that. We needed to get that bad taste out of our mouth from last week, and we came in today with that mindset, and we did (well). We performed."

You guys really came together today and got a real team type of win ...

"Yeah, that's what we were going for this whole week, to play a complete game — offense, defense, and special teams — and we did that today."

Do you like when guys chatter back to you?

"Oh yeah, that's what I look for. That's what's entertaining to me. That's what get me going. It's football at the end of the day."

Most of Ja'Marr Chase's yards today were on those tips ...

"Yeah, how did he catch those? He's catching tipped passes I don't even think wide receivers would go for. It was cool, though. It was good."

TRENTON THOMPSON

Safety

On the interception, was that something you saw? Were you jumping that or was that ...

"Nah, it wasn't anything I saw — it was just playing football and being where I'm supposed to be on my drop, and he just happened to throw it to me. I dropped one last week, so this made up for it."

With you being on Ja'Marr Chase, did you think he's probably going there?

"I saw they were in 'one,' so I was thinking they've got to be running an out. It was a perfect play call, honestly."

Were you seeing green grass once you picked it off?

"I thought I saw green grass, but I slipped, so I might've had more green grass. But I caught it. That's all that matters."

Have you thought about the impact that play made in this kind of game?

"Nah, I didn't think about the impact. It was a close game regardless. I'm not sure if it made the biggest difference, but we won, so I don't really care."

How big was that play for the whole defense?

"Game changer. We needed a turnover for sure, just to get us pumped up and get the offense rolling. And obviously it took away some momentum from their sideline."

Did you get the ball?

"Yeah, I gave it to the equipment dude, but I definitely get to keep my first pick."

What was it like to see the offense have so much success?

"Since I've been here, I was definitely glad to see Kenny (Pickett) go out there, and be able to throw the ball more. We've got a lot of playmakers — Diontae (Johnson), GP (George Pickett), A-Rob (Allen Robinson) — it doesn't matter who it is. So I was happy we were able to go out there, and do something a little different. What was it — 400 something total yards? I'm really happy for him, because I know (when you're) a first-round draft pick, the media can bash you. So I'm happy for Kenny."

DIONTAE JOHNSON

Wide receiver

Did you think you had the touchdown?

"Yeah, but it is what it is. I had three feet in front of me, but I just got to hold on to the ball."

Did you like the feel, and flow, and direction of the offense today? What was different?

"Like you said, the flow of the game. The calls were just coming in, everybody was doing their job today. Just seeing the energy was different. We were moving the ball, playing our part, and we were able to get the job done today."

Was there anything different schematically or was it just execution?

"Just execution and everything. There's nothing different. The play calls are still the same, but we executed today, making the offense look good. That's all it is."

What happened after Jaylen Warren's fumble? Did you not see the ball?

"No, I didn't see it. I was just doing what I was doing — blocking or whatever."

Did you feel like you were taking more shots down the field and across the middle than in other games?

"Oh yeah. They were giving us certain coverages, and just taking advantage of it."

There was a report out there of something happening after last week. Can you talk about it and what exactly happened?

"It really ain't nothing. You all are outside looking in. That's my brother at the end of the day. We're passionate about the game. Everybody wants to win. So you all look at it as we had an all out brawl or whatever. It ain't that, so don't get it twisted, you know what I'm saying? Football players on every team talk junk to each other, so we squashed it. We won the game today. That's all that matters."

How big is having a game like today for moving past what happened last week?

"Obviously, it's big. We had to get this win. AFC football. They've got a great team over there — the Bengals — they've got a great squad. Like I said, we just wanted it more today."

Did you guys come in today feeling a little more energized and excited with the change at the top of the offense?

"Yeah, for sure. Because it was his first game, we had to be on top our job today, and we were able to pull a win out for him."