



## BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES

DEC. 11, 2022

CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI

### ZAC TAYLOR

#### Head coach

#### How important was it mentally to overcome the rough few series that you had in the first five to six minutes of the game?

"This team just kept finding a way. I've got confidence here that these players are just going to step up. We really lost Tee (Higgins) in warmups. We lost Tyler Boyd on the second play of the game, offensively. Guys just stepped up. There had to be a lot of modifications, but we settled in and found a way to move the ball, and that's really because our defense allowed us to. They gave us the time by limiting the points off the board to let our offense to find a way take that route there. (Overall, it was a) really good team effort of finding a way to win in December and finish the game."

#### Did Tee Higgins get worse as the week went on?

"Tee was good. He practiced every day. It was really in pre-warmups, he felt (the injury) and so, he was questionable to play. He found his way in there a couple of times because there were some things we were going to utilize him to do even though we didn't — some short area stuff — but ultimately, we just kept him out and we don't want that to turn into something worse where he's going to miss more games, so we'll just see where it goes."

#### Do you have any update on Boyd?

"He dislocated his finger, and that's all the information I have right now."

#### Tee played only that first snap of the game. What feedback did you get after that, letting you know he couldn't go today?

"We didn't want him in on that first snap. He found his way onto the field. We had him dressed up we in case we did some stuff, but Tee did not want to be held out of the game. He wanted to play, but (with) some of the information I got in pregame, we did not want that to turn into something worse."

"So again, he wanted to play. I appreciate that. He found his way out there the way some guys do when they want to play (when) they're a competitor, but ultimately, we did not want him out there."

#### With Joe Burrow and Ja'Marr Chase executing the way they did despite the loss of Boyd and Higgins, how much can you take from this game? It just feels like you guys keep finding ways to win.

"There's not much we're taking from it at this point. We're just going from week to week in December, and we're trying to find ways to win. This team, obviously — we've played so many games at this point, we know that it can work any different way, and we've just have confidence someone is going to step up and make plays."

"Today, we have plenty of guys throughout the team that did that defensively, with the rushing totals they had in the second half. (It was) just amazing. Jessie Bates III had a huge turnover. ... They all did a great job."

#### Did you see something that showed Cleveland biting hard on running plays that made that flea flicker for the touchdown the right time to call that play?

"You carry those because you think they're going to work, and they've done a great job. They're a fast defense, they come downhill (well and) they're good against the run, and sometimes those plays pop up. Sometimes they work, (and) sometimes you run a reverse later in the game, and they don't work. It can be hit or miss. We understand that you're rolling the dice sometimes, but we felt good about the look we might get, and it worked out well."

#### On the play that went to Ja'Marr, was he looking to throw the ball downfield or did something happen to prevent that?

"Well, there's no throw involved there. That was a reverse all the way. We had some mechanical issues in even getting the play off the ground, so it didn't work."

#### Feel-wise when you call the flea flicker, did you think, 'This is a good time to take a shot'?

"We have a grouping of plays going into the drive. Sometimes it's a skill thing. As you get going, you feel like you're gaining advantage in certain ways and can run the ball well and do can do some things play-action wise to complement it. That's basically play-action in a sense. It worked out for us."

#### How nice was it to have Joe Mixon back today?

"That was good. I thought Joe had a heck of a run that put us in a great position there. We put the tackle on the toss play (and they did) a great job. So, just a combination of him and Samaje (Perine) is going to be a great deal for us going forward."

#### Were there any major adjustments made for their first couple of series after the Higgins and Boyd injuries?

"(We had an) offensive staff meeting at 12 o'clock on the dot because we went into the game with two tight ends, and that affects us and things you're going to do with multiple receivers. To lose two receivers right out of the gate, third down became a challenge. I thought our coaching staff did a did a really good job."

"First and foremost, I'll start with (quarterbacks coach) Dan Pitcher and (offensive coordinator) Brian Callahan getting third down right. (Wide receivers coach) Troy (Walters did outstanding work for) red zone (plans, along with tight ends coach) James (Casey) and (running backs coach) Justin (Hill) being on alert, both with things that they had to deal with in that game — James had only two tight ends (active). I just thought it was a really good a team effort by players and coaches to solve the problems."

#### How do you have Chase still be so productive after losing Higgins and Boyd, along with the defensive attention they would command leaving them to seemingly be able to focus on stopping him?

"Yeah, he's a smart player, first of all, because he is able to handle playing all three positions ... He's got all sorts of motions. He's got a lot of things he's got to remember — which side he's on, what part of the concept he's involved in — but that allows us to just

have so much freedom to move him around and find ways to get in the ball because of his understanding of the alternative opposition in his communication with Joe (Burrow).”

#### **How much more did Chase’s performance impress you today with Higgins and Boyd out?**

“I’m always impressed by what Ja’Marr is able to do with the ball in his hands. If you could just find a way to get him the ball, he is going to be productive and that’s what he wants to do.”

#### **Is there any significance of beating a team that’s gotten the best of you the last five meetings?**

“No. We really just look at the next week and don’t focus so much on that. Obviously, we looked at that game (earlier this year in Cleveland) and the reasons why it didn’t go well for us. We’re fully aware of the style of game we’re going to play. (The Browns are) a really good football team. They are. That was a really good one for us today. Again, it wasn’t always pretty, but we’ll take it, and I’m really happy with our players overcame some adversity.”

#### **Joe Burrow had a very tight window to complete his pass to Tee Higgins last week for a critical first down to seal the game, but his pass today to Chase in the end zone might have been even tighter. Would you agree?**

“That’s what you get for just running plays over and over and over. We’ve thrown touchdowns on that play before. Tee’s caught touchdowns on a similar route, and that’s just timing and rhythm of the quarterback and the receiver being where he’s supposed to be. You feel the safety just give you enough right before the snap and you know the ball’s going to a great place to Ja’Marr there. Again, that’s the red zone. That’s a point we’ve worked since training camp. It doesn’t always get called, but you still invest the reps in it every Friday so then, when that moment comes in big game like this, those guys are ready to make that play.”

#### **What can you say about your defense, particularly in stopping the run today since Browns running back Nick Chubb only had 34 yards on 14 carries?**

“It was awesome. I think more importantly in the second half, it was maybe six yards. That’s the information I have. That’s just entire-team defense. I could go one-by-one and press those guys up front, but that’s a great plan by (defensive coordinator) Lou (Anarumo) and all the defensive staff. (I’m) really, really proud of the defense today. They gave us our best chance to win it, and then the offense found a way to overcome that adversity and score some points. But it really started with our defense.”

#### **How happy have you been seeing DJ Reader swat more passes on the defensive line, and Sam Hubbard’s ascension as a player this year?**

“You’ve got to praise all those guys. DJ definitely stands out. He gets his hands on balls, eliminate downs, is great on run defense. He and BJ (Hill) complement each other well.”

#### **Why not rule Higgins out with an hour until kickoff instead of dressing him and seeing how he feels?**

“We already had five inactives. And again, we didn’t want him to open up and run. That doesn’t mean he couldn’t run a fade (route) on a one yard post. I didn’t see any reason to do that. He obviously felt the decoy. There were some plays we still had highlighted for him. I was hoping that the game would go in our favor to where he would not be used. That was really my hope that we could get a lead and not feel the need to put him in there to do some of the whole red zone stuff we’re going to do. So, again, he felt good. He felt good enough to play, I should say, and so that’s the position we were in.”

#### **How much did Boyd going down alter your offensive game plan today?**

“It was a constant conversation for four quarters in how that affects the game plan. Again, that’s why (I’m thankful we’ve) got great coaches on staff. I gotta focus on the game, I’ve got to focus on calling plays, and guys are feeding me calls as we get in different situations based on their problem-solving taking place behind the scenes.

“I speak a lot about the offensive staff because they’ve do a great job. But defensively, our coaching staff, when you look at Lou Anarumo, (defensive line coach) Marion Hobby and (linebackers coach) James Bettcher, (secondary/safeties coach) Rob Livingston, (secondary/cornerbacks coach) Chuck Burks, (assistant linebackers coach), Jordan Kovacs, (defensive quality control coach) Louie Cioffi and (senior defensive assistant) Mark Duffner — they got these guys ready to play on defense, and these guys played lights out. It gives you a great chance to win the game, and I’m really proud of the staff and the players (today).”

### **JOE BURROW**

#### **Quarterback**

#### **What was the turning point for the offense today?**

“It’s tough to remember. We had three straight drives where we start deep and we’re not really moving the ball and our defense bailed us out. That first quarter I wasn’t playing very well. I was missing throws. (We) settled in there in the second half of the second quarter and from there we were moving the ball really well. The run game was good to us, Ja’Marr (Chase) was incredible like he always is, defense played great. Team win — team ugly win but we got it done.”

#### **How do you stay level-headed with all the injuries on offense?**

“I’ve got so much faith in the guys that come in for those guys. Trent (Taylor) and Trenton (Irwin) are guys that work really hard and know their stuff and are going to be right where I expect them to. That’s really what it comes down to. I see those guys working hard every day and have so much faith in them.”

#### **How tight was the window on the touchdown pass to Ja’Marr Chase today, and how did the play unfold?**

“Yeah, that was a fun one. That’s a route we like. Ja’Marr is really good at that route. They ended up rotating away from him and (I) found a window. It was a tight one but we got it in there.”

#### **It looked like you surprised Ja’Marr Chase a bit on the touchdown pass. Did he say anything to you?**

“I think he thought it was middle-open so he wasn’t really getting the ball. Fortunately, when Ja’Marr doesn’t think he’s getting the ball, he’s still the best receiver in the league.”

#### **What was the biggest adjustment you made in the second quarter after Tee Higgins and Tyler Boyd were injured?**

“We didn’t have to make an adjustment. That’s what’s great about those guys that come in for them. We have all the faith in the world that they’re going to do the job. There can’t be any drop off and there wasn’t today.”

#### **What does Ja’Marr Chase’s performance today, without Tee Higgins or Tyler Boyd, say about him?**

“He’s incredible. You can move him around, he’s going to make plays in different spots. You give him the ball, he’s going to get five or six yards after contact every single time. He’s just a great player that I’m lucky to play with.”

**Is it nice to not have to answer questions about losing to the Browns?**

"Well, we're still 1-4 against them so we've still got some work to do, but today was a good start."

**Is DJ Reader playing at a Pro Bowl level?**

"He really is. It's tough to see from the sideline, but he's always around the ball, always penetrating, always in the backfield making plays. He's one of the best defensive tackles in the league and, for some reason, not really anybody knows about him. It's time people start knowing about him."

**Ohio is historically seen as the Browns' state. Can you change that?**

"It is what it is. If people want to root for them, it is what it is. We love our fans. If you want to come on over, you can hop on the bandwagon."

**Is there anything mentally that a win against the Browns does as you push towards the playoffs?**

"Not too much. We've been right there in all the games against them, we just haven't come out on top. Today we did. The defense played unbelievable, and that really ended up being the deciding factor in the game — how well they played. That's showing the kind of team we're becoming. We're able to win a lot of different ways. We've seen it over the last couple weeks, just winning on the defensive end, offensive end, kicking game — we're just a complete team right now."

**What happened on the scramble play when you got the first down to Trenton Irwin?**

"Whenever we play those guys, they're so good on the defensive front. I always go in expecting to have to make some plays with my legs and get out of the pocket. Trenton did a great job of just finding some space. I talk about it all the time with him, he just makes opportunities for himself. I got it in his hands and he went and got the first down for us."

**What did you think of Samaje Perine's run right afterwards?**

"It was incredible. Samaje is a beast."

**How did Joe Mixon look today coming out of concussion protocol?**

"He looked great. He ran really hard, found the holes. I thought he played really, really well."

**How nice is it to have Joe Mixon back with Samaje Perine by his side?**

"It's great having two guys like that because they're not going to be able to run the ball every single play. So when you take one out, there's no drop-off to the next guy. That's great depth to have in your running back room."

**What does it say about this team that you were able to deal with adversity early on in the game?**

"It was a big win. Like I said, defense stepped up early until the offense found their footing, then we started moving the ball. Another tipped ball interception — feels like that's the only way I throw interceptions these days. That's frustrating, but it is what it is. Defense stepped up big time in the fourth quarter to seal the game for us."

**What made that the right time to call the flea flicker, and how often do you work on plays like that?**

"It depends on the week. We always have that one in our back pocket. It was Tee (Higgins) throughout the week — that just goes to show that Trenton Irwin studies his stuff and knows every position. He's going to get thrown in there if somebody goes down, so credit to him. We were running the ball well at that point, that's why it ended up working."

**Are the tipped interceptions just bad luck, or is there something you can do?**

"Everybody always wants to talk about tips and how you combat against that — you really can't. There's too much stuff going on to have to worry about that. When you play really good defensive ends and defensive linemen, they know that's part of their game, that they're going to have to do that sometimes, especially when I'm getting the ball out as quickly as I like to. He made a great play."

**Do you notice teams resorting to that more?**

"Yeah, I do."

**TRENTON IRWIN****Wide receiver****You scored the second touchdown of your career today. How did it feel to get it in a game where points were hard to come by?**

"It felt great. They called my number on that play, a classic little flea flicker. Joe (Burrow) threw a dime and I was wide open, I knew I had to catch it."

**You share a birthday with Joe Burrow. Did you have that conversation before the game?**

"We did, we did. We casually did. We always know."

**What was the conversation with Joe Burrow before that play?**

"He came out of halftime and said 'We have a flea flicker coming up,' so it was coming."

**After the start that you guys had, with everyone doubting you, what does it feel like to be playing great football in December?**

"It kind of just shows the type of team we have. I don't think the team really thinks about it a lot. Everyone else talking this and that, they're going to say what they want. We have a lot of different dudes just making plays and having fun."

**With Tee Higgins sidelined with the hamstring, and Tyler Boyd out with his injury, you had guys that just stepped up ...**

"I think we're deep — we're definitely deep. But I also think everyone knows their job and everyone knows other people's jobs too, and I think that shows the type of coaching we have, the players we have invested and our wide receivers coach, Troy Walters — he's unbelievable. He's helping everyone know everything."

**LOGAN WILSON****Linebacker****With Deshaun Watson, do you have to always prepare for the possibility he might roll out?**

"He's a different style quarterback. At the end of the day we did enough to stop him."

**What's it like having a defensive lineman like DJ Reader out there against a team that likes to run the ball?**

"We appreciate him, and let him know that."

**Talk about Cam Taylor-Britt, a rookie who's playing like a veteran football player out there ...**

"He's coming along well. For him to be playing the way he's playing right now has been huge for us."

## **CAM TAYLOR-BRITT**

### **Cornerback**

**They were coming right at you a couple times, especially near the end of the game. Did that stand out to you in your mind and was it a big moment for you when they weren't able to make the completions?**

"I knew in the fourth quarter, they were coming to the rookie. I was ready for them."

**The Browns seemed to have your number for three years. How did it feel today to get that off your back with a win?**

"It feels good. That (Week 8 loss) was my very first start, so it feels great."

**What does revenge feel like for you?**

"It feels great. If we play our Cincinnati Bengals football, I don't see anyone beating us."

**Nick Chubb had Kareem Hunt both had incredible games on Halloween. DJ Reader did not play that game. What kind of impact did he have today?**

"Can't get through. He's a gladiator. I love playing with DJ. I don't see anybody stopping those guys (defensive line) without holding. You see that on the film."

**The defense held Derrick Henry to 2.4 yards per carry a couple weeks ago and held Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt in check today. How good can this defense be, because it seems like you're getting better each week?**

"I feel like that as well. We were having a conversation on the sideline about the top tier that we're going to beat. We just have to keep getting better every day, especially with this group here that I look up to. With all of us playing at a high level, we can't be stopped."

## **DJ READER**

### **Defensive Tackle**

**Can you explain the feeling when someone tries to run Nick Chubb at you and you bring him down in the backfield?**

"I wrestle with my son. I know he's going to try me every time but I throw him to the ground every time. I know when it's coming, and when it finally comes, I get excited. I get that opportunity to really show what I'm about."

**Logan Wilson ended up with 17 tackles behind you. How much is your game a combo with him?**

"He's does a great job. I know if I can clear up the picture for him or Germaine (Pratt), they're going to make the tackle. It makes my job easy. They go in there and make plays."

**How did you keep Nick Chubb to what he had today?**

"I think everybody just cares about it, how important it is with the team we're playing this week. We kind of took a step back last week. This week we got it done. I think guys take pride in it. That's what it is."

**What's it like to play on this team?**

"I love this team, man. There are so many competitive, fiery guys, everyone cheers for each other. You don't find that in a lot of places. I've been other places, I've talked to other guys. You don't find that type of group everywhere."

## **MIKE HILTON**

### **Cornerback**

**How is Cam Taylor-Britt coming along since the last Cleveland game?**

"That was his first game on that Halloween night, being into the lineup. Now he's had a couple games under his belt, got that experience and gaining more confidence by the week."

**Is he a different guy because of that confidence, a different presence about him in practice and meetings?**

"Oh yeah, absolutely. He knows we're leaning on him a lot more than a couple weeks ago. We know we're going to count on him for the rest of the year, and he embraced that. He wants that pressure and had a great day today. We hope he can keep it going."

**When you went down in the first quarter, was there any nervousness that it was something serious?**

"At first there was. It was bad. It felt bad. Once everything calmed down the doctor said it was good enough to get back out there."

**What happened on that play?**

"I planted it funny and it just ended up getting stuck in the turf. I feel good now."

**Does a worst-case scenario go through your head?**

"Absolutely. It's just a shock feeling and I didn't know what to expect. There was some pain in my knee but I feel good now."

**What is it about Trenton Irwin that makes you smile so much?**

"Number one, both of us were undrafted guys. He finally got a chance to show it. I know how much work he puts in. He's one of the first people in and last to leave, so when he makes big plays like that, it's something I'm proud of. He's an undrafted guy and I know the struggles he's gone through to get to this point. I'm just happy for him."

**Did you like his touchdown dance?**

"I didn't like the dance. We'll work on that."

## **JOE MIXON**

### **Running back**

**Everyone knew it had been a while since you had beaten the Browns. How important was it to get a win today?**

"It's a good thing, obviously, for Cincinnati fans and it's a good thing for our players to know we finally beat them. I guess it has been the past two and a half years, maybe three. It's a great feeling to stack another 'W.' We deserve it and now it's on to the next game."

**This team again faced adversity today. Tyler Boyd goes out, Tee Higgins goes out and yet you find a way to win. Does that speak to the depth of this team?**

"Yeah, most definitely. I think Zac (Taylor) has been preaching that for a long time now. One thing about our team, we've been fortunate enough that when guys went down we had other guys come in and step up. It's literally no drop off. Everybody, when their number is called, comes through and delivers, so it's a great thing to see. We've just got to keep on having those guys step up when we need them and keep on going to work."

**You came back after being off a couple weeks and almost got 100 yards. Do you feel like the running game is where you want it?**

"Yeah, most definitely. I had a run I wish I could take back but other than that, I thought the line did a hell of a job today, pushing on those guys and wearing them down."

**Nick Chubb is talked about as one of the best running backs in football. You and Samaje Perine outperformed him today. Any pride taken in the fact you guys were the better running backs today?**

"No. I think that was totally on our defense. We've got guys like DJ Reader, B.J. (Hill), Trey Hendrickson, and Sam (Hubbard) also. When those guys are playing the run like that, it's hard for us to be beat. I think he's been averaging like five yards a carry, and that just shows what type of defense we have. Those guys come in and they're ready for downhill, physical games like that. They show up each and every week. Every opposing back, they've pretty much been imposing their will on the offense. I'm very glad for the defense. They showed up today."



## BROWNS POSTGAME QUOTES

DEC. 11, 2022

CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI

### KEVIN STEFANSKI

#### Head coach

##### Initial comments ...

“OK, obviously very disappointed with the result — didn’t play good enough, didn’t coach good enough against a good football team. It’s really frustrating. You come down, and you put a lot of work into it. There were some good moments, but we just didn’t do a good enough job. You’ve got to score more than 10 points. Too many penalties, and ones that were very, very costly. And the run game — couldn’t get it going. And, ultimately, we just needed one more stop. And, we just need to score more points. (That’s) probably the easiest way of putting it, but that’s frustrating. I know this — we win as a team, and we lose as a team. We lost, so credit to them, first of all. Credit to the Bengals; they did a nice job. I know this, we’ve got a game in six days at our place against a division opponent, so that’s where our focus is going to go very quickly. I’ll take any questions.”

##### You talked about not scoring enough. What do you think is the biggest issue there?

“Yeah, I mean, first drive, we’ve got to come away with points there. With opportunities, you’ve got to stay in a rhythm, so you’ve got to stay on the field on third down to give yourself a chance to have opportunities to go score points.”

##### How did you think Deshaun Watson looked in his second game back?

“Yeah, like us as a team, some really good moments, and made some plays. Some plays that I know he wants back, but I thought there were some good moments.”

##### Why didn’t you kick the field goal on the first drive?

“I felt that we had an opportunity there on third-and-one, and then on fourth-and-one. Felt like touchdowns were going to be at a premium in this game, and just didn’t get it done.”

##### What did you like about Jacoby Brissett in that spot?

“Yeah, again, anything not related to us coming through, that’s on me. I’ve just got to make sure I give those guys plays that we can go get one yard — that’s really what we’ve got to do.”

##### Why did you think touchdowns would be at a premium this game?

“Just when you’re playing a high-powered offense, and you’re playing a good team, you feel like you’ve got to score a bunch of points.”

##### So was that Jacoby Brissett play called to be a deep shot to Donovan Peoples-Jones there?

“Yeah, I think the play itself — not to get into too many specifics, but you have eligibles out there. You’ve got three eligibles. But, ultimately, we just didn’t come away with the completion.”

##### Was Amari Cooper not 100 percent and just battling out there?

“Yeah, he was battling. No, he was not 100 percent. I don’t know the exact percent, but he was battling.”

##### Why did you elect to stay in single coverage on Ja’Marr Chase for most of the game?

“We tried at times to take him away, but he made his plays and did a good job. Again, we have to find a way to slow him down.”

##### Did you want to go after the punt on the roughing?

“Yeah, we felt like we could pressure the young punter, but you can’t do that.”

##### What about all the penalties in this game that you mentioned were so costly ...

“Yeah, and they all kind of came in one drive. It was the roughing, then it was hands to the face, then it was a DPI. And offensively, had a couple on first-and-10, which that will back you up. I have to look at all of them, and, obviously, you want guys to play hard and with clean technique, and there are certain times that maybe it’s not the strongest call, those type of things, but ultimately they really cost us today.”

##### What did you see on Deshaun’s interception?

“I think he was late. I think he may have lost vision there, but was just late with the throw, and the post safety was able to grab it.”

##### Why don’t you think you were able to run it like you normally do?

“Again, credit to them — they had a good plan. They gave us a couple early looks where Deshaun kept the ball, and made a few yards, but they weren’t enough to be consistent with the running game.”

##### Do you feel in some ways this was a missed opportunity because Joe Burrow was without three of his top weapons?

“Yeah, I think just missed opportunity period. You come down here — again, division opponent, understood that they’re a good football team. But we have to play our best.”

##### What’s the mindset with the game coming up against the Ravens?

“The mindset is, you’re disappointed, and you’ve got a game in six days. It forces you to turn the page, it forces you to heal up and get ready to roll, and get your mindset ready for a big one at home against a division opponent.”

##### I guess JOK (Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah) was limping in the locker room. You don’t have an update on him?

“I don’t really have an update yet, no.”

##### Do you think all the rust is knocked off of Watson after this performance?

“I don’t know to say. I know he’s getting better, and he’s only going to get better with more game reps and those type of things, and he had some really good moments.”

##### You knew it was going to be tough sledding running the football, and obviously that turned out to be the case ...

“Yeah, without watching it and looking at it closely, we got beat a couple times. They made some plays. But that’s uncharacteristic of us, so we’ve got to look at it.”

### DESHAUN WATSON

## **Quarterback**

### **Did you feel more comfortable out there today compared to last Sunday?**

"Most definitely. Like I said before, just keep letting the game come to me. The game is going to continue to speed up for myself. The process, the game plan, everything is just going to. Each week, (I've) got to get a little bit better, and a little bit better."

### **Does the timing still feel just a bit off for you?**

"Certain plays, certain routes that I haven't been able to throw to a couple receivers. We've got to continue to just improve as much as we can. The only real reps we do really get (are) in the game, so today was another learning lesson also for myself and for the receivers on different routes and different concepts."

### **Do you see the possibilities of what this offense can be?**

"Most definitely, yeah. I saw it beforehand. I saw it before I was playing, I saw it when Jacoby (Brissett) was out there, and the last two weeks I see it. We've all just got to continue to see it. Continue to see through the same lens, through the same eyes, not just with me and the players but also with Kevin (Stefanski) and AVP (Alex Van Pelt) and the whole offense. There are things that they're learning that I like in certain situations. Same thing with me in certain situations I've got to learn with them. This is a process and we've got to keep going together and sticking together and keep pushing forward."

### **How did WR Amari Cooper's injury he dealt with over the week factor into the game?**

"You can kind of see it here and there. You've got to make sure that certain routes that we call during the game, that he's feeling 100 percent and some routes that he's not. I know early on, I guess they were subbing him in and out. I'm not sure with that situation. But toward the end, we've just got to keep getting better and I've got to keep trusting him and he's got to keep trusting me, and we're going to continue to do that. There's a long process ahead of us and it's a marathon, so we're going to have to keep pushing forward."

### **What happened on your interception?**

"I was late. I was late across. We had a post going, and the backside safety (Jessie) Bates cut the cross. He cut it a little bit, and the rush was coming. The corner dropped back, so me being on the other hash throwing across, I can't do that. Probably just take the check down. I felt like I could make that throw, and Bates made a good play on that interception."

### **On the incomplete fade to WR Donovan Peoples-Jones in the end zone, did you like the way you released the ball and feel like it was on the mark?**

"Yeah, that's something we've got to continue to work on, too. That's another timing route where certain receivers like it in a certain place. DPJ (Donovan Peoples-Jones) is a jumper, he's a vertical guy. I think he had a high vertical jump in the draft, and he feels like he can go up especially on smaller corners. That opportunity was there and we didn't capitalize it, but we've got to continue to push forward."

### **Despite not getting the win, do you feel good about the week in terms of personal progress?**

"Yeah. The progress is always taking one step forward, just one step forward. The biggest ultimate goal, though, is trying to get the 'W,' especially in the division. That one hurts, but we have to learn from this, watch the tape, turn around this week, get back in there, get guys healthy, and we've got a big one Saturday."

### **What is the team's mindset in terms of your playoff chances and what you still have to play for the rest of the season?**

"The mindset is just trying to be 1-0 this week. This week, we weren't. We ended up losing this game, but for the next week against Baltimore, we have to be 1-0. Anything can happen in the NFL and we can only control what we can control, and that's going out there and playing very, very good Cleveland football in our home stadium in front of our home fans (in) another tough in-division game against Baltimore. So, that's the goal. We'll see what happens. That's all we can control, is try to be 1-0 this week."

### **When the penalties are flying as early as they were in this game, how does that impact your ability to grab momentum and run a cohesive offense?**

"It's tough, especially on the road. Penalties definitely hurt the team overall, just everyone. It's hard to get into rhythm with that, especially being in second-and-long and third-and-long. You have to basically go against the grain. (There were) a couple times we almost got out of it and a couple times we didn't, so we have to learn from that and just keep pushing forward."

### **How disappointing was the interception you threw after completing a long pass the play before?**

"Every turnover is disappointing. That's something that I have to continue to grow from that. Again, I was late on that crossing (route). He was there for a second, and (Jessie) Bates made a good play on breaking on the ball. I just have to take my check down."

### **What happened on the two red zone trips that you weren't able to convert?**

"We're just not finishing plays. That's the biggest thing. We're just not capitalizing on it."

### **Is that a timing issue, or anything like that?**

"Yeah, we're just overall not finishing and executing that play on that fourth down. You've got to give the defense credit. They've been doing a good job of stopping people, especially if you look at their stats. I think they're in the top five or 10 in red zone (defense), especially passing the ball. We have to capitalize and execute."

### **On the ineligible downfield pass penalty in the fourth quarter, was that part of getting on the same page with the offensive linemen?**

"Most definitely. They have to learn me when I'm outside the pocket in different situations. And then, also it just depends on the play call. I know there was one that was a screen, and I got outside so they were expecting the ball to be out quick. They did a good job of sniffing out the screen. I could've 'dirted' it, but at the end of the day, I didn't want to 'dirt' it and get an intentional grounding because I was still technically in the pocket and there was no receiver other than Dave (David Bell), and then I couldn't 'dirt' it right in front of the D-End necessarily unless I do it quick. Who knows if they call it or not, so I was just trying to extend the play and make something happen. Especially in the fourth quarter, just trying to make something happen, and they called it. We've got to continue to grow from that and see what happens next time."

### **Donovan Peoples-Jones was hard on himself after the fourth down incompleteness in the red zone during the fourth quarter. When you hear someone being hard on themselves, what do you think?**

"That's a guy that's a competitor. He felt like he can make that play, he feels like he can make every play and I respect him for that. I told him 'We're going to make that play and I'm going to give you a better ball, I'm going to give you another opportunity.' This is something we can watch on the tape. This is 'Hey, when we are in this situation with this down and distance leading into the goal, I can put the ball placement in a different area, so you get a better opportunity to jump for it.' We are both on the same page with that. We are going to watch the tape and get that going for this week."

### **What's it been like getting to know and building chemistry with WR Donovan Peoples-Jones, since he's such a quiet guy off the field?**

"He's definitely quiet. I know outside of football, he's a great individual, a great human being. His family is awesome. Being able to learn him and know him exactly, he just wants to be great. He wants to make every play, like I said before. He's a great, great, great teammate. I just love being around him and we are going to continue to grow that relationship."

### **How did you feel about not taking the field goal on the first drive?**

"That's just something as a team and as a whole we have to continue to just see what's the best situation. That was something that, we had the opportunity, we had opportunities beforehand that we went on fourth down and got it so that was something that Kevin (Stefanski) wanted to do, and we didn't capitalize."

**Jacoby Brissett was used for a short yardage play against the Houston Texans last week. Did you know all week that there would be a certain fourth-down play that he would come in for?**

“Of course. I know exactly the game plan and different situations for that.”

**Are you alright with coming out on a big down like that?**

“I just want to win. Like I said, me and Jacoby have a great relationship. Anytime he’s on the field, I’m supporting him. When I was away for 11 games, I was supporting him, calling him and texting him different things like that and he’s doing the same thing for me. At the end of the day, I’m one person. This is a team game and whoever is on the field, I want everyone to execute so we can get the ‘W.’”

**What have those conversations on the sideline between series been like with Jacoby Brissett?**

“It’s been awesome. He’s a veteran guy, been around a lot of guys. He’s played 11 games. I’m trying to get my groove back of just getting my feet back under me and seeing the game again. He’s stepped in to help in different situations. Taking completions, field position, all those different little things that really help and go a long way.”

**Myles Garrett said that there is no quit in that locker room, and that no one’s giving up. Is that the sense that you get?**

“Most definitely. We get paid to do this job. We have to go out there and show up and we have to go get that win and that’s what we want to do. Like I said, there’s five games left, anything can happen. We can control what we can control and that’s going out there on Saturday and showing up in front of our fans and showing that we’re here to play and we want to get the ‘W.’”

## **NICK CHUBB**

### **Running back**

**The penalties, how much were they a killer?**

“I know we’re in Cincinnati, but we just can’t be ourselves like that. But ultimately we can’t beat ourselves.”

## **DONOVAN PEOPLES-JONES**

### **Wide receiver**

**The chemistry between you and Deshaun Watson is coming together ...**

“Yeah, but we have to find way to win.”

**Is the deep ball an example of the stuff he can do?**

“Yeah, he can extend plays, and you saw it there.”

## **JACOBY BRISSETT**

### **Quarterback**

**What happened on the fourth and short?**

“I don’t know, I have to go back and look.”

**How hard is it to come off the bench and make a throw like that?**

“It’s part of the game. It comes with the deal.”

## **JOEL BITONIO**

### **Guard**

**Did you feel like Deshaun Watson improved as the game went on?**

“He started off decent, but overall it was a lot more comfortable. I think when you get into those two-minute situations, you get game action that helps you down the road. We didn’t get the win today, but we definitely felt more comfortable this week.”

**When he scrambles like that, is it something new for you?**

“I don’t see that because I’m blocking, but it’s what he does. He makes those big plays even when it’s not perfect.”

**Is it tough to avoid the ineligible player down the field penalty?**

“We have some RPOs, so there are some things we need to work through. When you have a quarterback that dynamic it’s something you have to work through.”

**At 5-8, how do you feel about the season?**

“We’re not where we want to be. We’ll be okay, we have a big game against Baltimore. We have to go 1-0 on a short week. We can’t control anything else.”

**Did Deshaun Watson seem more in command this week?**

“Yeah, he had much better command of the football stuff. After two years off, those things come back to him. He’ll keep improving every game this season.”

**How much of the run game struggles is because of the Bengals’ run defense?**

“They got us this week. I have to see exactly what’s happening. We didn’t have as many big sets as we had in the past. They did a good job of bottling us up. We did okay earlier in the game, but the penalties killed us. I’ve seen Myles Garrett get tackled and we get called for ticky-tack stuff. We’ll see.”

**What is that like on the sideline, when all the flags are hitting?**

“It’s frustrating. I’m sure some of them are penalties. They have a tough job, the refs. In those situations, it’s frustrating. We’ll have to be better. Those things add up.”

**Were you trying to play with more pace today?**

“That’s where (Deshaun Watson) succeeds, he likes those empty looks. He likes finding guys in space. That’s something we’ll continue to work with as he gets back into it.”

## **GREG NEWSOME II**

### **Cornerback**

**Did they do anything different today on offense?**

“We knew Ja’Marr Chase would get the majority of the targets, but they didn’t look too different.”

**How tough is a loss like this?**

“It’s always tough losing, but it’s tougher when you beat yourself.”

**What is it like when all the penalties are hitting?**

“You get a stop and see the flag, it’s unfortunate. We had a few of those today.”

## **AMARI COOPER**

### **Wide receiver**



**It looked like Deshaun Watson got more comfortable as the game went along ...**

“Yeah. That’s every player. As the game goes on, you get into a rhythm. Every play helps.”

**How tough is this loss from the perspective of winning out now?**

“It’s tough. Every loss is tough, especially division ones. It’s a team we’ve beaten a lot, we kind of had their number. We have a short week; we have to move ahead.”

**It seems at times you guys were your own worst enemy ...**

“With the penalties, you don’t want to give the ref the opportunity. Calls are subjective though. You don’t even want to look like you’re holding or pushing off. That’s why you practice.”

**How’s the hip?**

“It’s more of a core muscle thing. I’m fighting through it. It’ll get better.”

**Did it hold you back at all today?**

“Of course. Anytime you’re not 100 percent, it will be there in some way. It’s no excuse though, most players are fighting through something. You have to be dependable and do your best.”

**Did it loosen up later in the game? Did you have a pitch count, of sorts?**

“It wasn’t really a pitch count, but I hurt it on the first play of the game a little bit. That’s where it started to look like a pitch count. As the game went on and we did hurry-up, I started feeling better. I guess it was adrenaline.”

**DAVID NJOKU**

**Tight end**

**It looked like you had some rhythm with Deshaun (Watson) on the touchdown ...**

“It was good. But we didn’t finish the job. It is what it is. There’s no ifs, ands or buts. We have to pick up the pieces and get back to work.”

**Did Deshaun (Watson) seem more comfortable out there?**

“For sure. Cool, calm, and collected. But we came up short. We lost as a team. It is what it is.”

**The touchdown was not an easy play ...**

“I just play football.”

**Is a quick turnaround important?**

“Yes. This one stinks, but a quick turnaround is good. We’ll get back to work.”

**How tough is it to find a rhythm with all the flags?**

“They’re drive-killers. We have to do better with that. We’ll watch the tape as a team and get back to work.”

**When the flags come out, does it make you overthink?**

“It is what it is. We’re playing 100 miles per hour, and stuff happens.”