



NEW ORLEANS
SAINTS

POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES
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NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS MINNESOTA VIKINGS
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2023 • U.S. BANK STADIUM
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the 27-19 loss to the Vikings, the Saints hold a 5-5 record on the season with a 3-3 mark on the road heading into their Week 11 bye.
- New Orleans will return to action to play at Atlanta on November 26 at 12 p.m. CT at Mercedes-Benz Stadium
- The Saints defense was dominant in the second half, allowing just three points and 91 net yards while also holding the Vikings to 2-of-9 on third down conversion attempts.
- QB **Derek Carr** finished 13-of-18 for 110 yards before exiting in the third quarter due to injury.
- Carr's 13 completions pushed his career total to 3,421, passing Joe Montana (3409) for 22nd place all-time.
- QB **Jameis Winston** relieved Carr in the third quarter and added 122 yards and two touchdowns and two interceptions on 13-of-25 passing.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** led the Saints backfield with 75 yards from scrimmage, including a team-high seven receptions for 33 yards.
- WR **Chris Olave** added six grabs for a club-best 94 receiving yards and a touchdown.
- Rookie WR **AT Perry** contributed two receptions for 38 yards and a touchdown grab from Winston in the fourth quarter. The two catches and touchdown were the first of his NFL career.
- WR/RS **Rashid Shaheed** added five receptions for the Saints offense, pushing his season total to 31 receptions through 10 games in 2023 and surpassing his 2022 rookie receiving figure of 28 grabs.
- WR **Lynn Bowden Jr.** made his first grab of the season on a 12-yard catch in the fourth quarter.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played in his 202nd regular season game Sunday, moving into a tie for 46th place all-time among NFL defensive linemen, Rob Burnett, Tony McGee, Anthony Pleasant and Jack Youngblood.
- LB **Demario Davis** led the Saints defense with nine stops (six solo), a stop for loss, and sack on the afternoon. With six solo tackles on Sunday, he now has 403 solo stops in his Black and Gold career.
- CB **Paulson Adebo** tied for a team-high nine tackles while adding two passes defended.
- S **Tyrann Mathieu** had a game-high seven solo stops for New Orleans.
- CB **Alontae Taylor** added five tackles, a tackle for loss, and two passes defended.

- K **Blake Grupe** made all of his kicking attempts against Minnesota, adding a 48-yard field goal and making both extra point tries. All four of his kickoffs sailed into the end zone for touchbacks.
- P **Lou Hedley** punted six times for 279 yards (46.5) average, including one boot downed inside the 20-yard line, including a 41.2 net punting average.
- LS **Zach Wood** played in his 108th career game on Sunday, moving him into a tie with RB Dalton Hilliard and K John Carney for 39th on the club's games played list.

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Saints Head Coach Dennis Allen

I'm disappointed with the way we played today. Particularly in the first half of the game. I've got to find a way to get this team to be more consistent. So that's on me. I'll have to do a better job. I'll take your questions.

Q. What's been the biggest issue with the slow starts on both sides of the ball?

A. Look, I think the bigger thing really has been our inability on first and second down to do a better job of getting them into third and longer situations. We're allowing too many first and second down conversions, not forcing enough third downs early on in games. We struggled again with quarterback again today. You know, we had some opportunities to get him on the ground. We didn't cash in on those opportunities. We had some guys that were spying him, and he made some plays. But, yeah, look, we have to do a better job. Offensively, I thought we ran the ball early in the game pretty effectively, and then all of a sudden you're chasing points. It becomes a little bit more difficult to do. I think just as a team we've got to do a better job of being more competitive in first half of games. Our guys fought their tails off to give themselves a chance, but can't keep digging yourself into these holes and think you're going to be able to come back all the time.

Q. What happened with Derek?

A. He was evaluated for a concussion. I can't really talk about it or elaborate on it.

Q. The right shoulder, is that anything to do with his last injury?

A. We'll look at it, but he was out of the game because he was evaluated for a concussion, so...

Q. Has anybody else done testing on the shoulder because of the concussion?

A. Listen, I don't know all the answers to that. We'll see where he is at tomorrow.

Q. Why do you think you respond so well when you get behind and then things start flowing on both sides?

A. I don't really know what the answer is to that. I'm just being honest with you. I don't know what the answer is to that. I would like to think that we could start a little faster, get the momentum going a little bit quicker. I do know our guys never feel like they're out of it. I do know they're going to continue to fight and battle. But, like I said, we can't keep digging ourselves into these holes, especially against a good football team.

Q. What did Jameis bring to the offense when he went in?

A. I thought Jameis did some good things in the game. Got a couple of explosive plays. We were able to score a couple of touchdowns, a couple of two-point conversions. I thought there was some good things that he did in terms of in the passing game. It's obviously a tough situation to come into when you're down that many points, and the team really kind of knows that you're going to have to throw the ball. So I thought under all those circumstances, I thought he did a good job. I thought Chris (Olave) and A.T. (Perry) made some nice plays for him. There were probably a couple of opportunities that I thought that we could have cashed in on, but I thought overall I was pleased with what he was able to do under those circumstances.

Q. Was it enough to evaluate that position after a bye week as far as the starter?

A. Well, we'll see where Derek is at. I don't think we're -- well, I know we're not in a competition there. I thought Jameis did some good things, but Derek Carr is our starting quarterback.

Q. Did Michael Thomas get hurt on that first hit?

A. Yes. Yeah. Yeah, he has a knee injury.

Q. What did T.J. Hockenson do in especially the first half that kind of gave you all trouble?

A. Well, look, he is an exceptional route runner. So he ran some good routes and got open. We struggled to be able to cover him today. I'll go back and look at the tape and see if there's some things that maybe we could have done differently, but he obviously was a major factor in the game.

Q. On the impact of Mike leaving game early...

A. It impacted some things that we were wanting to do. I thought overall I thought A.T. Perry came in and performed well, but I think any time you lose a guy of Mike's magnitude, it affects what you're doing.

Q. Do you feel like overall that you have regressed this season?

A. Progressed or regressed?

Q. Regressed.

A. I don't think we're playing as well as we're capable of playing, you know. So, yeah, I don't think we're playing as well as we're capable of playing. I think we need to play better.

Q. As for Hockenson, was he doing a lot of zone better stuff?

A. I think he beat us in zone. He beat us in man. He beat us on a few things.

Q. Is there anything you can say about -- I know we're going down a list of injuries. Is there anything you can say about Lattimore and what happened to him?

A. He has an ankle, so Mike Thomas -- any issues really coming out of the game really is Mike with the knee and Lattimore with the ankle, and then obviously Carr is in the concussion protocol.

Q. What's the focus for the players going into the bye week? What was your message?

A. The focus for the players is to get away, get their minds off of football for just a little bit, kind of reset again. Get their bodies healthy, so there's a lot of rehab that's going to be going on over this next week to try to get guys healthy and get back. Then us as coaches, we've got to look at how we can put some better plans together to give our guys more opportunities to be successful.

Q. Do you feel like it comes at a good time?

A. Yeah, look, you play a game like this, yeah, you kind of want to reset a little bit. Yeah, I don't know if it comes at a good time or not. We'll evaluate kind of this tape and see what we can do better, and then we have to get ready for Atlanta.

Q. Can you live with the interceptions at the end with Jameis just because of the situation you all are in, or do you want to not make those kinds of decisions?

A. Look, without seeing the whole thing, I'll probably reserve judgment on that. Again, when you're in those situations and you are kind of in a little bit of desperation mode, sometimes those things happen.

Q. You had a lot of success with Taysom the last few weeks, but he only had one rush today. Was that a product of getting down so quickly?

A. Yeah, yeah. I think when you get down like that so early in the game, it really limits a lot of the things that you want to try to be able to accomplish in a game. So we have to be better defensively of keeping the score down in the early part of the game, so what we have is our game plan going in offensively. You kind of get out of it probably by the early part of the second quarter just because you're now chasing points.

Q. The sort of boost in production the second half on the offensive side, did that come down more to execution, or did you all find a different way to attack?

A. Yeah, I think probably a little bit of both. We had a couple of thoughts coming out of halftime of things that we liked. I thought our guys executed those things a little bit better, and some of the tempo stuff, again, was pretty good for us.

Q. Would you say similarly kind of from a defensive side as well, as far as slowing them down?

A. I think that was a lot more about getting our eyes in the right spot and our execution more so than it was kind of a change in philosophy or calls or whatever.

Q. Do you have a comment about what happened with Mike on Friday night?

A. No.

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Saints Quarterback Jameis Winston

Q. When you came in, what allowed you to spark the offense?

A. I mean, that was just us as a whole. When we are able to execute and do the things that we were capable of doing, we get good results.

Q. About the fourth and three play, were you going to get rid of the ball? What was the plan on that particular one? Is that the play call or did you just have to get rid of the ball?

A. It was a run-pass option. I'm not sure what play. I think it was third and three, if I'm not mistaken, because I think we converted on the fourth down, the fourth and one, the next play. I really don't know which play you're talking about.

Q. On pushing the ball down field, was that kind of a game plan?

A. We were in obvious passing situations, and we had to push the ball down the field. I just commend the guys for just continuing to fight. We never gave up, and we gave it all we got.

Q. What was working with your connection with Chris Olave?

A. Chris is just an unbelievable receiver. When you give him opportunities, he does great things.

Q. Can you talk about the play with A.T. Perry?

A. It's just A.T. Wanted his first touchdown so bad that he goes up top and makes a great play. Sometimes the best play in football is the scramble drill. Me and A.T., we're working every Tuesday. Letting him know when you get a one-on-one opportunity, go up there and make a play.

Q. What did you see on that play as it unfolded?

A. I saw him in the corner of the end zone by himself, and as I let it go, I saw #7 (Murphy Jr.) break on it, so I just gave him a ball that only he can get to.

Q. Can you speak to -- there were a couple of plays where Rashid Shaheed just went all out and gave it everything. Can you speak a little bit to his --

A. We have a great group of guys. We just have to get it together. Rashid, Chris, Mike, A.T.; our tight end group with Juwan, Taysom and Foster. We have guys that can really go. We just have to continue to develop, continue to get better, and execute.

Q. Can you speak to the mentality that you have when you lost Derek Carr and Mike Thomas during the game and just kind of going on without them?

A. It's always next-man-up mentality, and everybody out there is grateful for their opportunities. Those guys, they took advantage of it. We just didn't end up on the winning side.

Q. What was your mindset when you entered the game?

A. I'm grateful every time I get out there. I just want to finish.

Q. Can you talk about how the team regroup?

A. Man, we're so close. We're so close. You just saw really in the first half it showed all how we were so close to converting, and things were open, and we just needed one extra second, or we needed the ball to be right here or a little bit more. I think we got it, man. Obviously, you want to go with a win heading into the bye week, but this is a time where we're all going to dig deep and look inside of ourselves and come out on top. I believe this team has the will to persevere. I believe this is a resilient team. I believe we have some resilient coaches. Now it's time to go do that.

Q. Can you walk us through the second interception?

A. The second one. I was trying to give Rashid Shaheed a chance down the field. In that case take what the defense gives you. We had a chance to tie up the game, and that's what I said. We just have to finish. I have the to finish.

Q. And the first one?

A. The first one I just gave Chris (Olave) a chance. I had some pressure up the middle. At the end of the day, it don't really matter. When you don't win, those get escalated, but when you win, you know, you can move on and find a way to get better. Myself, I'll continue to be studious and continue to give it all I've got when I'm out there. So I'm grateful that I had the opportunity, and I'll continue to get better and finish stronger.

Q. Did you feel like -- you played in Green Bay. Was this an improvement on that game? How do you feel kind of just after everything?

A. I only can focus on right now, and right now we didn't finish, so that's the biggest thing. Really next it's going into the bye week and continuing to prepare, continuing to find ways to build on the positives and eliminate the negatives.

Q. We don't know the status of Derek Carr going forward and his injury. How comfortable are you leading this team?

A. If I'm given the opportunity, I promise you I'll be doing my best to execute, stay disciplined, and give my team all I've got. We've got a great group of guys, so I know any and everybody will be ready.

Q. If that were to happen, how impactful is having this bye week in between your next start?

A. I don't like going into bye weeks losing, so we definitely are going to have to just sit on this bye week and evaluate how we can get better. I think that's going to be our main focus.

Q. You guys treated kind of the last 20 minutes of the game like it was got to go now. Was that by design? Is that what the defense was presenting? I think there's only one run play maybe --

A. We were in obvious passing situations until we got down by one score, so I mean, that's what was given, so we've got to go out there and execute. We have to be grateful. Any time we're on the field, we have to go out and put our best on film.

Q. Obviously that worked for the first two touchdown drives where it got the offense going. It's one of those hindsight things, you know. Throwing deep on third and three and things like that. In any hindsight, do you wish that those drives had been --

A. We're going to check it out and get back to them. Right now I'm not able to visualize what we could have done. It's a lot of could have, should have, would have. However, we need to finish, and we will finish. So right now it's about eliminating the negatives and building on the positives, and we have a lot of positives out there. So we have to do that, and we will.

Q. What did you like about being able to get Chris and A.T. those chances?

A. Well, I mean, they're just great players. Chris is an amazing player. A.T. is a great young player. Rashid Shaheed is an unbelievable player. Lynn (Bowden Jr.) even got out there and got a catch.

I think we have an amazing group of guys, man, and we just have to find ways to continue to get better. I believe we're gelling together as a team. This one just was unfortunate. So we have to get back in the drawing board, come closer together as a team, and build off this.

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Saints Wide Receiver A.T. Perry

Q. What did you see on that touchdown catch?

A. I saw the corner run away from me. It was a two-invert. They were playing the whole time on the field. When I saw the corner run away from me and Jameis [Winston] rolled right, I waved my hand to say I was open, and he threw the ball, and the ball was in the air.

Q. Tough situation in a loss, but what was it like to get your first NFL touchdown?

A. Feels great. When Mike [Michael Thomas] went down, I was the next man up. I made sure I was detailed and doing what I was supposed to do, so when I get my chance, I can take advantage of that opportunity.

Q. I know you've been fighting to get on the field. Mike [Michael Thomas] goes down and you had the opportunity to step up. How do you feel like you took advantage?

A. I was confident. Week in and week out, I make sure I study the plays. Just making sure I stay on top of everything.

Q. What did you make of the way Jameis [Winston] threw the ball across? Do most quarterbacks make that throw?

A. That was crazy, I didn't think he would throw it. Once I saw the ball in the air, I thought I had to go make a play. That was great by him, a great pass, and a great spot.

Q. Is there something about him that lets it fly or what do you make of that?

A. I would say that. Just putting the ball in the air and most importantly making sure we do our job.

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Saints Defensive Tackle Malcolm Roach

Q. Why did you guys have such a hard time today with Joshua Dobbs?

A. Keeping him in the pocket. He does a great job of when the play breaks down, when it comes to backyard football. It's kind of like you get to the point where we are just trying to go get him and he elusive, he's a great runner. He did a great job, extended plays and once he extended those plays he ended up with a positive fight. We just have to do a better job, being disciplined in our rush lanes and keeping him in the pocket. Also knowing that these guys are going to make plays, we can't let them continue to make plays. We have to be able to move onto the next one. Go to working and play hard.

Q. You mentioned the rush lanes, but the four working together as one, you think that might be the issue as well?

A. At the end of the day it's still about going out there and playing. End of the day they could call a call and it might be a bad call, but we still have to go to work because we are the players out there playing. You have to go out there and make plays. It's a mindset that we have to have. A mindset of going out there and giving it our all and playing hard for our brothers, and doing our job as best as we can. The crazy thing is, is when we do it, it's a sight to see. We have to find a way to do it for four quarters, do it every play and to be consistent. That's our biggest challenge right now, I feel as a defense and as a d-line.

Q. What did you guys do while in the end of the game when you were able to start to kind of slowing him down and getting them off of the field?

A. They started running more traditional runs. I feel like that's something that is one of our strengths. Defending the traditional run, handing the ball off and getting our block shedding blocks, making plays. We did a good job of clawing back and making plays. At the end of the day it's all about making one more play, and we didn't, they made more plays than we did today.

Q. Does this one hurt a little more seeing that Jameis Winston was almost one play away from getting it there?

A. Yeah, like I just said it's about making plays and Jameis did a great job of coming in, emergency, not knowing that he's about to come in the game. He did a great job of rallying the troops, and doing a great job of giving us hope, we had a chance. In this league that is all you can ask for is a chance. Once we get that chance we have to go make the plays, and today unfortunately today we didn't make the plays.

Q. How did you see the offense respond when Derek Carr went down and Jameis had to come in?

A. They did a great job. When they get to that point where we are in survival mode we have to go to work and the offense was in survival mode and there wasn't anything we could do but go up from that point. As a team we did a great job of giving ourself a chance today. And like I said when it got to that point, at the end of the day they made more plays than we made, and we have to find a way to make more plays.

Q. I see you getting emotional, what are the feelings right now, when you guys are five for five and you guys feel like you could be in a better spot?

A. You get emotional when you see these guys in this locker room come to work every day. Every day you put in the work. We know we put in the work, and work our tails off and not get the results. Anything you do in like and you don't see the results, its tough, because you know what you are working for, you know what you are

working towards. But it's also life and you have to compare. You have to take the wins with the losses. Last week we were having a great time, we won. It's a part of life, the ups and downs. It's all about how many times we can get up and keep fighting. How many times we keep on giving ourself a chance to go to work. And the thing about the football season, you don't get too many opportunities. You only get what, seventeen of them. It's guaranteed. We still have opportunities to go out there and the reason you feel so bad is because you put in so much work. You would think we are the worst team, at the end of the day we are sitting here .500 going into the bye week. This first half of the season has been a rocky roll. We didn't hit it the way we wanted to, but that's the ups and downs. It's about how many times we can get back up, keep going to work. I know the guys in this locker room are going to continue to work every day, continue to put our best foot forward, continue to attack, attack this field with energy, and continue to give our all out there. We'll be better.

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Saints Safety Tyrann Mathieu

Q. When Jameis Winston got that first touchdown did you kind of feel that start to shift a little bit? It seemed like the whole team kind of started playing a little bit better.

A. Anytime you are able to make a play, offensively, defensively, special teams, it's a morale boost for the team.

Q. Going into the bye week, what's your assessment of where the defense needs to improve?

A. I think we have done a lot of good things professionally, obviously taking the ball away. We have to find a way to take the ball away on the first drive. The first half of the game we have to not put ourselves in the position of clawing and scratching and fighting hoping to pull it out the second half.

Q. Is that part of the frustration?

A. Yeah it is frustrating. Like I mentioned a couple minutes ago, you feel our preparation was good this week. Obviously, we had an expectation of what we were going to expect for today, and we got it right. I think from there it's all about players and executing, snap-in and snap-out.

Q. What did T.J. Hockenson do in the first half?

A. He caught a lot of balls that's for sure. I mean, he's a great player. He is a big body target. He's a smart tight end and I think Dobbs (Joshua Dobbs) was able to find him more often that we would've liked.

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Saints Offensive Tackle Ryan Ramczyk

Q. Are the penalties what you notice as far as killing momentum?

A. We were running the ball well, we were getting chunks. You get a holding penalty, you get a false start, and those are drive-killers. They put you behind the chains and it puts you in a tough position. We have to clean that up because we are not going to win football games doing that.

Q. Can you talk about Jameis [Winston] being able to come in? You guys were down big when he got in the game, getting you guys to the position to potentially tie this game.

A. We have a lot of faith in Jameis [Winston] as our quarterback. He stepped in there and did a great job. He is a well-prepared quarterback, and he did everything he could to get us back into this thing.

Q. What do you feel is the key to getting a quicker start?

A. I don't know, I don't have an answer for you. As I said, I feel we are well-prepared, ready to execute, and ready to go. I don't know what it is that could give us that start.

Q. Do you feel, going into the bye week, especially being 5-5, this is a good time for not only physically recovering but some mental recovery too?

A. I think so. Bye week falls at a good time when we're halfway through the season. It's a time to step away for a couple of days to reset your body and mind. Get away from it, regroup, and come back swinging.

Q. You guys are professionals and never make excuses, but Mike T. [Michael Thomas] got hurt on that first play, did that hurt some of what you guys had planned in this game?

A. Yeah, Mike is a hell of a player, you guys know that.

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Vikings Head Coach Kevin O'Connell

Excited for our team. Come back and get another win at U.S. Bank Stadium was our goal coming off of our last performance. And what the crowd was like a few weeks back and then to have them show up again today, I thought the crowd was phenomenal, the juice, the energy. And it really fueled and really got us going, especially in that first half. Complementary effort all the way around in the first half. Would have liked to, you know, maybe have the chance to put the football game away, you know, got a touchdown pulled off the board there on a short yardage situation. But good defense over there. Some really good skill players. And, you know, offensively they've been doing some good things. So, it was going to take a complete team effort, 60 minutes of football. And we got it done. So excited for that group. Locker room is feeling, you know, very strongly about, you know, where we're at as a football team right now. But also total awareness that it's back to work and a continued emphasis on improving. I want to give you guys an update, Jordan Hicks, you know, lower leg, kind of contusion. And he did not return. Once he came back in the game for a few plays, did not return. We'll see how that swelling looks and if we can get that to go down. Akayleb Evans did not return with a calf. And then Alex Mattison did not return with a concussion sustained there. But, you know, a lot of guys stepped up. You know, didn't have K.J. (Osborn). Didn't have some guys that we've been without for a few weeks and that next man up mentality continues to flourish with guys ready to step on the grass and help us win football games. I thought T.J. Hockenson was as good as I've ever seen him when we absolutely needed him the most, just like he was last week. Can't say enough about T.J. And then, of course, Josh Dobbs. You know, having fun coaching him right now. Just because, you know, there's a lot that goes into it. But then when we get to play football, he goes out there and he looks like he's enjoying himself. I know his teammates are enjoying watching him, continuing to get acclimated to our team and just really proud of Josh. And Josh knows he's ready to get back to work and continue the momentum on this thing.

Q. This was not a shutout, but you didn't turn the ball over.

A. Yeah, that's -- you know, knowing kind of historically, it's kind of a win or lose type stat. We learned that lesson, quite honestly, early on in the year. When I talk about our team and how we're built from substance, there's some football things in there now, too, as far as what we've learned, how we need to play, technique and fundamentals of how we carry the football, decision-making, timing, accuracy. And then the defense's ability to continue helping us win the turnover battle by making some critical plays, especially in the second half when, you know, we scuffled a few drives there. And it's totally on me. Got to give our guys a better opportunity to move the ball offensively. But that's where the complementary phasing comes in. I had guys coming up to me on the sidelines, 'We got you Coach. Hey, next snap is going to be the best snap.' Even when we got the touchdown taken off the board offensively, the expectation was we could still convert and we had a chance to convert on that third and 11. But compliments to our football team, our leadership, and just the way these guys now believe in the man next to them and they believe in each other to go continue and improve. There's still a long way to go. We've got to get a lot better. I got to continue to coach better and get our staff, which I thought our staff did a hell of a job today, especially Flo (Brian Flores) and his guys. Again, that's a talented outfit over there. I do hope that, you know, Derek Carr is okay. Got a lot of respect for Derek and everything's he's done in this league. But when Jameis Winston comes in the game and you know how physically talented he is, for our defense to keep them out and hold on that victory, I was really proud of those guys.

Q. You said you have fun coaching Josh. Did you give yourself a second to enjoy it?

A. No. Yeah, I think it's just looking back in the week, going off of last week's game and knowing and time spent with Josh, watching him with our coaches, our offense. I think he had a fantastic week of practice, Wednesday and Friday, you would have thought he had been in our offense a lot longer than just the previous five days leading into last week's game. He attacked the game plan, how we prepare our guys, how we teach them about, you know, coverages and fronts and pressures and what we're trying to attack.

And he handled a full game plan today. And it was Josh Dobbs out there playing quarterback. And we saw it again today with game changing plays with his athleticism were, really, a defining thing to kind of fill some or the gaps for us offensively in the first half. And I just can't say enough about, you know, his last two performances to be 2-0 with him and so much room for us all to improve. It's what I'm excited about the most.

Q. Hockenson playing through a couple injuries there. Do you find yourself having to manage his workload?

A. Yeah, yeah. We tried to get -- you know, on some of those early down calls, we tried to get Johnny (Mundt) in there a little bit more, use Josh (Oliver) in some of the 11 groupings a little more. And, you know, mixing and matching personnel, making sure -- you know, I give Brian Angelichio a lot of credit because I'm howling into the headset a bunch of gibberish that I want the right guys on the field and make sure we're managing T.J. so he can make some of those huge plays in the passing game. But T.J. wanted to be out there for everything. And, you know, he was out there, had some big blocks in the run game. And just all the way around, T.J. was phenomenal today.

Q. Did you try to get more creative with play calling?

A. Yeah, especially against -- you know, that's another top ten defense. They've always been tough, physical, hard to -- you know, they're going to force some negative plays. And we were trying to avoid those, knowing that we could get into the different phases of our offense to try to -- it's one thing to try to marry it, but there's other things especially with, you know, Josh's athleticism and kind of an inside out passing game, still wanting to get Jordan (Addison) and Speedy (Jalen Nailor) and Brandon Powell going, as well, the screen game. There's a lot that goes into it. But the creativity I give our guys, you know, I love the design we had on the -- Ty Chandler's touchdown there. Even on both of them. Even the one that got called back, situational calls there. And then we'll continue to build on our inventory. Because I think our personnel will give us the opportunity to do that, to try to give ourselves advantages, buy back some numbers, angles, and things like that. But back to work and we'll keep on trying to improve on that stuff.

Q. How does the team keep winning even when losing great players?

A. Yeah, I think it's putting together plans to try to maximize the guys we do have up for us. You know, guys like T.J. and Jordan, Alex and Ty. But then continuing to ask, you know, guys that have stepped up already like a Brandon Powell. You know, great to get Speedy back in there today. Which I was really proud of the way he went out there. And he might have not always got the ball, but I know he was separating and bursting and playing fast. And that's going to be a great addition back into our offense. But, you know, it's truly about, you know, how well can we execute the scheme, what we're trying to get accomplished, can we give our guys that premier, premier mindset, regardless of who's in the game. And then the expectation is, if it is a one-on-one, go win, pitch and catch, progress in rhythm. I thought Josh did a really nice job in this game, especially the first half of really trusting that protection. The O-line gave him time and then he still used his legs. That's really hard on the defense. And you saw them kind of respond a little bit, spying him a little more, doing a little bit more of that in the second half. And that's when, you know, it gets exciting to think about when we do get Justin Jefferson and K.J. and our full group back, you know, defenses having to account for his ability to activate his legs only helps us.

Q. How has that running ability, like, changed the play calling for you and changed the offense?

A. Yeah, I think it just -- you know, it allows me to be aggressive, knowing that if we get the premier look I'm hunting or I'm looking for some scouted looks, have a lot of confidence there. But also his decision-making and then knowing kind of the perfect balance. I mean, when he found T.J. off-schedule, drop 8, 2 Tampa, knowing he's got time, kind of a veteran feel, buying some time, getting out and keeping his eyes up, those are all veteran things that Josh did today. And then there was still some dynamic throws in the pocket, play passes, third down. I thought the third and long conversion in the second half was kind of a nice one, feeling the zones and being aggressive to BP over the ball. So, there's a lot to build off of. Like I said, there's a lot of things that all continue to improve on to help Josh and the rest of our offense. But really encouraging, kind of two performances in a row, that we can operate with that group of guys on the field and continue to move the ball against a really good defense.

Q. More impressed by the fact that what Josh was able to do last week with almost no time, or this week to do against a good defense that he prepared for?

A. Yeah, I think last week -- I can't emphasize enough what the circumstances were for him and our offense last week. But what I think was really special this week is even coming off of that performance, his work, how he prepared, you know, he was essentially living at the facility and going through his normal process while also allowing us to kind of show him how we do things, how we try to, you know, enhance his ability to play fast, while also giving him really good plays that he can be responsible for getting to one versus the other at the line, still using tempo, communicating the way he is. So I thought, you know, it was a pretty outstanding day from Josh. And the best thing about it is we're all still getting to know each other and getting the comfort level where we can continue to apply layers to this thing to be the most successful we can be on offense.

Q. On the direct snap, when did you guys put that in and what made that the moment to call it?

A. Yeah, we put it in this week. We've had a couple things kind of -- similar thoughts up at other times. But, you know, we just wanted to try to, you know, find some different unique ways against a really, really good front. It's hard to get big with them and just think you're going to run the ball down there, not many people have. So we wanted to try to see how we could get different numbers at the point, still have a chance to, you know, punch it in, but also give ourselves an advantage of making them react on the fly. And I thought our guys executed it. You know, as soon as I saw big CD out there, there was really one guy left, I thought we were in good shape.

Q. How about D.J. Wonnum's performance today?

A. Yeah, huge. I mean, there was a sequence there where he individually wrecked the game with a sack and, you know, tripping up -- I think he tripped up Derek (Carr) on a scramble that would have got them off the field. DJ's been -- really, been as consistent as any player on our football team this year. Danielle has been outstanding again for us but I think DJ has really fed off that, as well. We ask him to do a lot of different jobs that maybe don't jump out at people that's maybe as impactful. But he's making an impact on every snap and he continues to do it week after week. I gave him a game ball and he's one of those guys -- I've said this before, but the guys in that locker room know, they know the coaching staff and the teammates know. And they went crazy for him knowing that DJ is one of those guys that doesn't get all the headlines, but all he does is show up on Sunday and playing winning football.

Q. When you get a lead like that in the second half, how difficult can it be to find that balance between wanting to run the ball and lose the clock but also not wanting to take your foot off the gas?

A. Yeah, I think it comes down to knowing the fact that you want to be aggressive, but you also want to walk out of the stadium still winning the turnover battle. And I was that confident in our defense that if we didn't give them anything and, you know, we played smart with the clock, that we could get it down to a situation where maybe we could get to 31 and get a touchdown on that play. We did and that would take us to 34. And then, you know, it gets pulled back and we don't convert and we ended up punting and try to pull them deep there. But, you know, I've got to try to find that balance where I do believe in our guys and I do believe that I can stay aggressive for four quarters with our guys. And I'll continue to work through that to make sure I'm giving them some premium ops. We had some chances there that maybe we didn't make the play. But there were certainly few that I'd like to have back and knowing the situational management and milking the clock is one thing but staying aggressive is something we've got to do, as well.

Q. What are you thinking when Josh Dobbs scored his rushing touchdown?

A. Yeah, I mean, a lot of times -- you know, I like to fist pump with the best of them. But that was one where I was just kind of, Wow, they -- I was going to tip my hat to the Saints. They ran, you know, a zone coverage there on third down and they got a little pressure in there on him. Had a couple chances here or there, but when a guy makes a play like that, it's exciting. It's exciting. Because you know that he just overcame a lot with an individual effort right there to finish it for six points. Huge, huge momentum play made by him. And that's one of the reasons why -- you know, listen, Josh Dobbs didn't just start doing those things. That's been a part of his game since he's been an NFL quarterback and before that. Our job is to continue to allow him to play the position the way he thrives playing it, while continuing to do our jobs. Which we feel pretty good about schematically helping him, as well. But like I said, we'll continue to build on it. I'm proud of Josh and we'll get right back to work tomorrow.

Q. How does that affect you as a play caller, having a quarterback that can do all those things and adding that to the offense?

A. Yeah, you guys know. We've seen a lot of shell coverage. You know, even with Justin and some of our guys out, we've seen a lot of coverage where people are saying, We're just going to rush four, potentially even drop eight and rush three. And, you know, he made some big plays today against some of those looks. Can we get more man coverage, can we be effective executing against man coverage? I mean, this team, I believe, led the league in interceptions coming in. And they're very, very good. The corner spots, the safeties are very good and two of the best inside linebackers in football. And I didn't even say anything about a front, I think with 94 (Cam Jordan) in that group, it's a challenge at every level, their defense. So as a play caller, you can start to feel, I can call anything on this call sheet, but I want to be smart and make the calls reflect my intentions of trying to attack certain looks. And then when Josh makes a play, it's a huge, huge bonus. And what I love is just, you know, how all of our guys, you know, are finishing those plays. You see when he finds T.J. on that scramble, who did you see down there barreling through the pile? Probably Dalton Risner, if my memory serves me right. So, our guys understand it's whistle to whistle and we might be playing through the echo of it a little bit more on unique things that maybe we didn't before when we were, you know -- you know, not that we didn't have mobility at the position. But, I mean, Kirk (Cousins) was playing as well as anybody in this league, you know, really ripping apart coverage and attacking things and kind of running everything. Josh, in two starts, has kind of shown us what mobility, you know, in addition to what we do offensively can do for us in this tough time where we're trying to overcome the loss of a guy like Kirk.

Q. You start 0-3. You lose Jefferson, lose Cousins, looked like the sky is falling. How are you guys in this position?

A. Yeah, the sky was never falling to those guys in that locker room. I can remember vividly standing in front of them the Monday after we did go 0-3 and I can remember the message was I felt, you know, all of us together included working forward to accomplish something special was one of the greatest opportunities we would have professionally. You know, adversity, truly, if you look at it as an opportunity and you have your football team all looking inward and trying to be the best versions of themselves for that greater good of trying to accomplish something special, I am of the belief that we can continue to go out and write our own story. And we're holding the pen. There's a lot of challenges out in front of us. We got to laser our focus like we've done each opportunity, each day, each meeting, each walkthrough, each practice. And when you do it the way these guys have, and you got the leadership we do, my expectation is things will continue to be, you know, what we've been.

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Vikings Quarterback Joshua Dobbs

Obviously, great team win. I, first of all, want to talk about the fans and the atmosphere. It's tremendous to be out here from the home side. I've seen this game from the visiting side. So, just to have the crowd behind us out there, it was electric. I had a lot of fun on this field. And then, you know, the game, I thought it was great just seeing guys step up. Offense, defense, playing complementary football, as we did last week and just make plays all day. Offense, we got hot, especially early in the game. Different guys were able to make explosives, keep the chains moving, make big plays for me. Which, obviously, helped simplify the game and slow it all down. And defense in the second half did a tremendous job of having our back and closing out the game in the fourth quarter. Great win. We'll continue pushing forward. As we always say, there's always room for improvement. But we'll definitely enjoy this for today and tomorrow and get back to work for next Sunday.

Q. Was the Skol chant better in person?

A. Yeah, it definitely was better in person. It definitely was better in-person. Chris (O'Hara), our QB coach came up during it all and just -- I was warming up, getting ready for the first drive. He said, Just take a second to take it all in. And so, yeah, it was a cool moment. It's definitely rocking in person.

Q. What was the week like getting to spend more time with Kevin and the entire staff as you prepped for this game?

A. Obviously, you know, stepping on the field and having the reps where you're not -- the first time throwing to the receivers and working with the O-line mid game allowed it to be a lot more comfortable out on the field. So just to have the week of preparation to get the offense under my belt and game plan under my belt was awesome. And so, there's room for improvement, man. But I think it's exciting to be able to do what we did out there and go back to look at the film and say we did leave some meat on the bone. And so, we'll continue growing and improving. I'll continue to find ways to continue to grow in my role and be better, man. Because, you know, with the playmakers we have, the mindset that we have, with the guys stepping up making plays, you know, I think we definitely have a lot of potential moving forward.

Q. What did your week look like? How long were the hours and how much was just studying the playbook?

A. Yeah, you know, I'm not paid by the hour, so I have nowhere else to be. So I did spend a lot of time at the facility. I probably ate almost every meal, every day there. Which is fine, man. I'm blessed to be in the position I am. I'm grateful for this opportunity. So no stone will not be turned over whether, you know, it's growing in the offense, creating simulated reps in the facility or studying the defenses we're going to play. They'll continue to adjust to try to slow us down. So I'm a constant student of the game. And I thought just having the QB room around me was awesome like Sean (Mannion), Nick (Mullens), and Kirk (Cousins) in the building and Jaren (Hall), they were in there hanging out with me putting in the hours. You know, as I asked them questions about the offense, you know, stuff that was getting installed, just to clear my mind as I exercise some demons in asking, you know, questions about things just to make sure I was locked in for game day or as we studied the defense. So it's great to have a tremendous support group around me with my teammates, as well. They were helping me prepare week in and week out. And, you know, it was a team effort. So shout-out to those guys and I'll be excited to get back to work with them this week.

Q. On the touchdown run, what point did that become a point where you thought you would be able to run it in for a score?

A. Yeah, I went through my entire progression. They did a tremendous job. They were in two-high shell and did a good job covering guys up. The Mike took my first progression, the Will took my second, and the safeties kind of exited out the back-end line throws. And so, when that happens, man, like, they're -- I thought, you know, the O-line, all day, allowed me the opportunity to go through my reads, stay in the pocket. And then when the opportunity presented itself, to be able to utilize my legs and make plays. And so, I was able to go through my entire progression, work through it, see everything was covered. And, you know, from there, it's just go make a play. Big play in the game, it's third down, those are four-point swings. So first to get the first down and get in the end zone was tremendous for us as an offense and a team propelling us through the rest of the second quarter and ultimately winning the game with it.

Q. Josh, when you were meeting with the coaches and the direct snap comes up, what was your reaction to it? Do you remember telling them anything about it when it came up?

A. Shoot, I'm all for touchdown plays. I wasn't complaining too much. I thought it was cool to have Ty (Chandler) get his first touchdown with it. Obviously, it's like as a quarterback, the first thing you worry about is logistics. Okay, clock should be running down, can we snap the ball when I'm moving, I got to make sure I'm set. And then, obviously, protect yourself when you get out there. But it's good, man. Any time you're able to keep the defense on their heels, switch it up, give them something different, new wrinkle, it's tough to stop. We do a good job. Ty getting in the end zone for his first one, I know he had his second one taken off the board, which was a little bit questionable, but for him to get in the end zone for the first

one was awesome, man. So to finish drives in the end zone are difficult in this league. So every time we do it, man, we got to take advantage of those looks.

Q. At what point did you put last week aside? You know, that was not just a winning performance, but kind of historic in a lot of ways. Like, did you put it aside? Did you carry it with you during the week or how did you deal with the one measure working towards the end there?

A. Yeah, you always carry the moment, right? But my mindset is, you know, no matter how the game goes, you have Sunday, you have Monday until about two o'clock. That's usually when you stop watching film of the last game to move onto the next one. So that's around the time, like, mentally when I was onto the Saints. I know, obviously, like, media and stuff had a field day with the stories, which is awesome, just commending us for what we did. Because it's not easy to do in the NFL. But, you know, mentally once two o'clock hits on Monday, man, I'm onto the next game. There's so much information that you have to consume at the quarterback position week in and week out to prepare you for Sunday. So a lot of times -- not the momentum and the confidence that you have from a week, but, you know, the information or whatever happened last week, you have to put that aside, man, and get onto the next one. Because as I said last week, You show up on Sunday, you don't play well, no one cares what you did last week in Atlanta, they care what you did this week in Minnesota. So I thought it was a tremendous job as a team, though, being able to carry that momentum and just that vibe. But also being able to be locked in on another really good opponent coming into Minnesota. We did a great job and we hope to do that again this upcoming week.

Q. Intelligence at the quarterback position with reading defenses, throwing to the right guy, do you use your intelligence when you scramble and run or just go?

A. No, you can't go rogue. You still got to be smart. There's some headhunters out there. You got to get down, protect yourself, and understand when I've gotten the most I can out of this run, I got to get down. Or, you know, I haven't, there's one guy to beat, the end zone's right there, I can go and try to make another guy miss and fight for those extra yards. So you're always thinking -- it's a constant game of chess. And, obviously, things happen very quickly out there on the field. But you always have to -- whether you're in the pocket throwing the ball, picking apart defenses, running the ball using your legs, you always got to play in a game of chess and protect yourself and be smart.

Q. What did you see on the last touchdown pass to T.J. and how tricky is that route that he ran?

A. Yeah, we had two wide shell. I literally just asked on the sideline, Hey, if we get this look, what are we thinking, just to confirm that my eyes are going to be in the right place. So we ended up getting the right look. T.J. did a good job of getting vertical and running to that open area. Because it's tough. The Mike has to run back there, he's got the middle of the field, two safeties. They're usually in that defense to prevent you to take shots, especially down the seam. So for him to be open, get into that little seam, and for me to put the ball over, it was a huge play. We got momentum with the first couple drives in the second quarter. And then we got the ball back, defense did a tremendous job of getting us a stop and getting us a two-minute drive. And then for us to go down and get a touchdown before the half was huge, huge momentum for us as a team. And so, to finish that drive the way we did, overcome the false start the play before and put the ball in the end zone was huge. He did a great job. Obviously, adding onto a historic day and a historic half, especially playing through injury. Man, that guy's a fighter. And definitely happen to have him on our side.

Q. You're the starting quarterback of the Minnesota Vikings. Have you pinched yourself yet?

A. I think I did, like, on Friday leaving the facility. I'm just -- I just moved out of the hotel. So we're making strides off the field. But I did pinch myself. It's been really cool just being able to take it all in. The fans' support has been absolutely tremendous, you know, around the city. And so, yeah, you know, I'm taking it in stride. What I like to say is I'm exactly where my feet are. I'm not thinking too far ahead, thinking in the past, I'm thinking right here. I'm taking it in one practice at a time, one meeting at a time, one day at a time. Because this is a lot of fun. This is definitely a lot of fun and I'm enjoying every single second of it.

Q. What about Friday that made you pinch yourself? Was it because you moved out of the hotel?

A. A little bit. So, I came back from the facility, like, late afternoon on Friday and just seeing all the legends in the hotel, man, and seeing all the guys that have come before us as players and just feeling their vibe and energy. Like, I was on the elevator with a couple of them and they were, like, "Oh, you're the quarterback." And they were so excited just to be here in Minnesota, be back around, you know, football and back around the facility. And just feeling that energy, man, and feeling that recognition from guys that, you know, have played a lot more snaps than I have, have had illustrious careers. And just to see that excitement, it meant a lot to me. And so, yeah, in the moment it was a cool moment just to be able to take it all in and enjoy that quick fellowship with them just as football players. But also respect the position that I'm in.

Q. Any of them that you chatted with?

A. I didn't get any names. Because it was on the elevator. It's seven floors. It's pretty quick, in and out. But just the energy really meant a lot. There and in the lobby and in passing, it was really cool to see.

Q. Do you know all your teammates names yet?

A. Yes. But I'm not getting a test from you guys. No, it's been good. It was cool spending time with the O-line men after practice on Thursday. They do a good job with their chemistry building. So they were at my home in the hotel eating downstairs, so I got to stop by and crash their dinner. So, yeah, I'll continue turning over every stone to be around my teammates, continuing to get to know them, both football-wise but off the field. I'm enjoying and taking advantage of every opportunity and enjoying every second of it.

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Vikings Running Back Ty Chandler

Q. What did you feel like when the snap was coming to you?

A. I felt like, 'man I better get this ball in the endzone.' Grateful I got it in there though.

Q. The second time you got in the endzone you got called back, how did that feel?

A. It's a part of the game. It happens and we keep striving, keep pushing forward, and hopefully get it back.

Q. It's like you're a cannon out there, how much confidence do you feel when the ball is in your hands?

A. That's what I try to do, I make the most of the opportunities every time I get the ball in my hands and I just want to be able to bring that spot to the offense, and I just want to be able to add to that.

Q. The wildcat run, how many times did you practice that and was that specifically for you?

A. We repped it a time or two and I'm not going to say it was specifically for me, we've got a bunch of great running backs, and anybody in our room could've run that play. I'm grateful for the opportunity and that I was able to execute it.

Q. How important is Christian Darrisaw on that play where you scored?

A. CD's a great guy, great offensive lineman and I'm grateful for those guys up front. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be able to do what I do.

Q. How well did you know Josh Dobbs given the Tennessee connection?

A. I've met Josh a time or two when I was getting recruited to Tennessee. He works out in Nashville so I got an opportunity to throw with him when we were down there. Great guy, glad he's here, and glad he's leading us too.

Q. When you met him, what was your impression?

A. Just a great guy. Smart dude, so hopefully he can teach me a little something and I can go to space with him.

Q. Are you impressed how he can escape?

A. Oh yeah. That's a great aspect of his game and I'm glad he's able to utilize that here. Something we've seen in college so, like I said, I'm grateful to have him be a part of this team and great player, great leader, a real blessing to have him here.

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Vikings Tight End T.J. Hockenson

Q. You toughed it out today, how did you will yourself to do that?

A. I think a lot of it is the people around me. I just want to play for this team. I love these guys in this locker room, love these coaches, love the organization, and just ultimately wanted to be out there with these guys. There was a couple that had me going, but at the end of the day, a win helps everyone. So, I'm just excited to be back in this locker room.

Q. You said the hits had you going, what does that feel like?

A. You get hit a few times, you feel it, at the end of the day you get back up and you want to go back and as much as it hurt, you just want to go back in and show them you can still do this. So, I just wanted to go out there and play with my guys and they held the ball today. Josh [Dobbs] was on a mission and you got to love that from the guy. I've gotten to know Josh real well and just super happy to have him in purple.

Q. Can you take us through that touchdown from your perspective?

A. Like I said, that's a KO [Kevin O'Connell] special. We kind of get an option to freelance a little bit and so I saw what the safety was doing, tried to play outside, tried to lean in a little bit and get separation and Josh and I were on the same page, so it was just a lot of fun. That was a big-time play and Josh put it right over the back, so when you have balls like that it's pretty easy.

Q. Should we be surprised that a quarterback that just got here is on the same page with you like that?

A. Nah, I mean, I've thrown with Josh a few times in the off-season so he kind of knows how I move. Him coming in has been special because he's just been so dialed in, smart as a whip, just dialed every day, he's in it. He just understands and when he starts scrambling, I just try to find him a spot and see what we can do. It's just fun to be out there and continue to win.

Q. What do you guys think when you see him [Josh] moving around and escaping out there?

A. You just keep rolling. It's crazy because with him in the backfield you can't think the play's over. There are times where you're the first read, then you're the second read, so just to be able to go out there and if he doesn't get you on the first time or the second time, he's going to move around. You just try to find an open area and beat your guy – it's a little like street ball which is fun, so you just got to continue to play through the whistle because you just never know what's going to happen.

Q. What do you think about having one of the best first halves a tight end has had?

A. Yeah, I'm going to be honest with you, I kind of blacked out. That was just one of those things where you're just playing. You're just focused on every play and the ball keeps coming to you, and I was reading the defenses real well and just feeling it a little bit. So that was a blast and like I said, Josh and I were on the same page, and it was just fun to be out there. That half went quick though, that's for sure.

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Vikings Cornerback Byron Murphy Jr.

Q. How much of what you guys are trying to do change when Derek Carr goes down and a guy like Jameis Winston with a different skill set comes into the game?

A. It is different. He is going to come into the game and take chances. He obviously came into the game throwing the ball. We knew he was trying to get the ball down the field, so we just stayed on our keys and staying locked in and kept playing aggressive.

Q. When Jameis Winston comes in, do you know he might be a guy who will throw the ball if you can put the pressure on him like you guys did?

A. Yes. The pressure is going to make the ball come out fast, he must get the ball down the field. So, when he came in, we knew those things were going to happen, but obviously he is a vet quarterback and a smart one. He has been in this game and has played. He has a lot of games under his belt. When somebody comes in like that, you still must be prepared like it's a starter and go in and stick to the game plan.

Q. How happy are you that Cam Bynum's wife is here?

A. As soon as he threw the ball, I was like wow that's a good moment for me.

Q. Movie, right?

A. Movie, you know that's a movie.

Q. DB's are called the closers. You are the ultimate closer for this one, can you take us through that play?

A. I knew they were going to try and take a chance down the field obviously coach put me in the right position, and they threw the ball and I had to go make the play. I had to bounce back and close the game out.

Q. You always remember the ones you didn't make, regardless of the big ones.

A. Those always must come first. When you get to the film room, that's what you focus on.

Q. How does it feel that you guys are playing complementary football? How does it feel to see Joshua Dobbs getting the offense moving and making big plays?

A. To see him run around the field and get those first downs, I get to cheer a little longer. He comes in and he is a great leader.

Q. How good are you guys feeling? Five wins?

A. It is a great feeling compared to where we started. We came in every single Sunday and got the job done. We just must keep it going and obviously keep the energy going.

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Vikings Tackle Christian Darrisaw

Q. That third down in the first half, where Josh [Dobbs] scrambled for the touchdown, do things go through your head when he's bouncing around like that?

A. You just know the play is never over. It's kind of like a thing in our room, "finish every play until that whistle blows," and Josh made that magic play with his legs and got that touchdown.

Q. When you see the replay of him [Josh Dobbs] doing that, what do you think?

A. It's sick. I've never blocked for a quarterback like that in my career, college, or NFL, but like I said, he has the ability to use his legs and no matter what the coverage may be on the back-end, he's going to make a play.

Q. How much did you guys practice that Ty Chandler run? How fun was that to put in?

A. Oh yeah, those are the plays we just wait for the opportunity to call them. We probably practiced it one time during the week, and we knew whenever we got the opportunity to call it, it was going to be a big one, and it was Chy guy's [Ty Chandler] first touchdown.

Q. You lose quarterbacks one and two, wide receivers one and three, and now potentially running backs one and two. What does it say about you guys that you've been able to rip off these wins using the entire roster?

A. We stick together. No matter what the situation may be, all eleven, whoever is on the field at a time, we know we just have to execute and do our job, and good things will happen. Hopefully we get these guys rolling back in in the weeks coming up, but however we have to do it, we'll get it done.

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Vikings Cornerback Mekhi Blackmon

Q. What are you thinking and seeing when you see that ball in the air?

A. Our coaches have been telling us all week, "Once the ball is in the air, you are the receiver." I'm not sure you guys saw last week but in Atlanta, one of the plays I tripped up, that should've been a pick as well, but I feel like it was the same situation. We have been practicing deep balls all week and we knew they were going to give us a shot.

Q. The offense is shorthanded, how do you guys keep doing this, using every play on the roster to come in and make a win possible?

A. We have to credit coach KO [Kevin O'Connell], the culture he has been installing in us since the rookies have got here. We just must have confidence and have a next man up mentality. We trust everyone in this locker room from top to bottom. When guys go down, we know we are ready. The vets do a good job with getting the younger guys ready and keeping them calm.

Q. I know it was your first pick in the NFL, have you been thinking about it? It has been several years; how did it compare to the dream?

A. It's still surreal. It probably won't hit me until I see my mom and my family outside. It's still surreal and I am thankful for it.

Q. How challenging was it once their offense got going?

A. We can't get lackadaisical, like we did a little bit. It woke us up a little bit, so we had to put our foot back on the pedal. We can't even let it get to that point; it shouldn't even be this close.

Q. How tough was it when Jameis [Winston] came into the game? It seemed like he was taking more chances than Derek Carr was.

A. We know he is a guy who is going to take risks. Our coaches have been telling us about deep balls all week. We thought Carr was going to be the guy to do it. Sad to see him go down but I hope he heels up fast. When Jameis came in, we all were talking about it, we knew he was going to give us a shot. We just stayed on top and when the ball came, just be able to catch it.

Q. Five straight wins, the defense is coming away with multiple turnovers each game, how good does it feel?

A. It feels really good, but the job is not done, we feel like we still have a lot to prove. We dug ourselves a hole 0-3, we just feel like we finally got our foot under us.

Sunday, November 12, 2023



Vikings Safety Josh Metellus

Q. As that second half goes on, as you guys run back onto the field with each change of possession, are you looking up at the clock saying “Okay, twelve more minutes, seven more minutes, three more minutes?”

A. Yeah you kind of get into a groove where you’re not even looking at the score or looking at the clock, you’re just playing football. Our thing is just making sure we kept the chunks off the table and got off the field. As DBs we want to get our hands on the ball, so every time we get to go out there that’s just another opportunity to make a play and we embrace those moments.

Q. How did you guys manage things without Jordan Hicks in there? What’s different when he’s out?

A. Yeah, I mean IP [Ivan Pace Jr] did a great job. He came in and it felt almost the same as J-Hicks [Jordan Hicks] being in there. Obviously, he’s that green dot, he’s the presence of our defense. But having a guy like IP who has been doing a great job all year and stepping up to the plate is good. We had a bunch of guys surrounding him and helping him out. You know we have TD [Troy Dye] coming in and playing good football, I think it’s just a team effort. It just shows that this organization, top to bottom, is ready to go whenever their numbers are called.

Q. I know how close you are to Cam Bynum, what was it like for him to have his wife here?

A. Oh my gosh, it was amazing. I think the DB room was more happy than him. We’ve been wanting this for him ever since they’ve been together so for her to finally be out here and watch her first NFL game and watch him play, it sucks they didn’t give him the pick, but I mean it’s amazing. I’m a love guy, I love love so stuff like that always makes me happy.