

Miami Dolphins Media Conference

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Coach Mike McDaniel

Postgame Presser



Dolphins 30, Jets 0

Q. What let you know this team wouldn't have consecutive letdowns?

MIKE McDANIEL: I don't know, just having my eyes open for the entirety of the season. It's one thing I mentioned to the team last night, what's given me confidence is how they've responded to adversity throughout the season. We've had four losses, and it was just a point of emphasis from the year previous where our losses came in streaks.

We've had four losses the previous three. We're one-game losing streak.

There's a lot of character in the locker room. There's a lot of character just in the organization. They've been really going after it. The players, coaches and support staff, every day, treating it like it's the most important day.

Football is not a game of avoiding adversity or it's not a game of you go through a season and you don't have things happen to you. It's actually quite the opposite. You need to have things happen to you to grow and be able to handle some of the moments that come in December.

There's a litany of individuals in that locker room and beyond that gave me absolute confidence that they would come and compete today.

Q. You brought a running back with you from San Francisco, Raheem, who his career high going into the season was eight rushing touchdowns and now he's breaking all sorts of touchdown records for this club. What are you seeing from him?

MIKE McDANIEL: Well, it's the same thing that got him in the position to be on this team. There's a lot of people on the team that have been told that they couldn't, and there's certain types of people that really thrive in those type of scenarios.

Raheem was told he shouldn't have an NFL career from his first draft day. You go undrafted, that's something that people don't really pay attention to, but that's a heartbreak. Then you're cut from a multitude of teams.

He's one of the strongest-willed people that I've ever been around. By the way, he's a unique athlete, one that I think -- second to Tyreek and 16, he's the only other player to ever go 23 miles per hour and he did it when he was like 28 or 29. That's a different type of athlete with a different type of mindset, and just very happy for him, and the first thing he said to me after the game was, yeah, I know, I've got a game bowl for setting a franchise record for touchdowns, and he immediately came to me and said, every single player on the offense should get one because he understands that for him to exhibit some of his unique traits, each and every play people really have to grind for that to happen.

I think a lot of our guys totally understand that at this point in the season, which is why you see inspired football. That's really fun to watch.

Q. Your defense did some impressive things today. What was the most impressive thing that the defense did today?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think it was -- it was really the whole team. The whole team -- I can't overstate how -- I don't know, it was a punch to the gut last week, and I think in a situation where it wasn't because of lack of effort or attention to detail. So to be able to go into a game and to have so many different question marks all week, for no one to bat an eye and for guys to go have fun playing football without the anxiety of what's induced from last week, it takes a special unit of people.

I thought that Eli Apple did an awesome job, really jumping in the ring. I thought Bradley Chubb was phenomenal, obviously, but guys like Brandon Jones who had to learn the system during the year as he was recovering from a season injury last year. There's a ton of guys on defense. Then you have some of your -- Christian makes a great play on special teams, and then you have Jaylen Waddle really rise to the occasion when the team needed it.



Collectively that's what I was impressed with was all three phases being unfazed with such a disappointing end to a game that was important to them last week. So you can't do anything about the past and the future doesn't exist. They really leaned into the day each and every day this week, and I was very, very proud, as proud as I've been of any performance from this team since I've been here. I was extremely proud with the resolve and just that -- I was happy that everything that I've seen behind the scenes came to fruition, because it doesn't surprise me.

Q. (Indiscernible) three sacks today. He has been hard on himself. He came here last season. You said he started to exorcise those pressure demons?

MIKE McDANIEL: Absolutely. Every so often you are trying to take yourself to another level, and you're inspired to take your game to another level, and you kind of have to realize that it's the work that you do day in and day out, and nothing has to change on game day. You have to be yourself. Yourself is absolutely good enough. You don't have to try and go above and beyond. You just have to be diligent and play with your teammates.

He's one of my favorite players on the team simply because of how important it is for him to do right by his teammates, and as you can see, him being him is plenty good enough. He was really, really hard to block today.

Q. You mentioned players this week who were wondering could you do it without Tyreek. How do you think Tua did today?

MIKE McDANIEL: No, I think him -- it's not like we talk about that, but noise is loud. You embrace adversity for the opportunity that it is.

But far from surprised me. I could tell all week there were certain things that him in particular, him and Jaylen Waddle were doing together that I knew they were going to be able to do some explosive stuff, and he really did a great job playing within the play. There was a couple times that there was a shot down the field, I think on the two sacks, if he would have had a tick longer, he probably would have thrown the ball.

But it would have been -- he would have been pressing to do it.

I was really fired up about his sacks, to be honest.

I think what we're watching as a team is a bunch of young players really coming into their own, and he's one of the primary ones, Tua is, because he's learning from

everything. That doesn't mean everything goes well. Again, I think that's fake. That would make me nervous if at this point in the season we hadn't gone through adversity, just because I know what is coming.

I think that it was a great example of him worrying about the right stuff, which is his responsibility each and every play, and he definitely commanded the game entirely.

Q. How close was Tyreek?

MIKE McDANIEL: You know, pretty close. That wasn't the easiest decision. But when you look at what's the best decision for the team and what's the best decision for him, it was a collective decision that when you're faced with all right, do we press forward and just hope or do we do the thing that the individual player and the team needs for the season, it became easier in the moment just because we have the right well-intentioned people that are looking at this as their responsibility to protect players first and foremost.

I think some decisions are hard but easy at the same time.

Q. Tua said you guys came out and threw a lot of short passes early so you could see how the defense set up without Tyreek out there.

MIKE McDANIEL: Yeah, football is about a collective group of people kind of putting together a plan, and there are a lot more -- this is the first time Tyreek hasn't played since I've been here, so there could be extra unknowns disbursed because you usually have an idea of how people are going to be threatened and how they're going to really approach the game.

There was more unknowns than usual because of that, so there was kind of a feeling-out process that was intentional in the opener to kind of get a grasp as to what was going to go on.

Q. You come out there, 1st down you threw a 60-yard -- did you see something that said (indiscernible)?

MIKE McDANIEL: When you watch it, I'm sure that play will make its rounds on the internet because it was more about the flow of the game, what I kind of thought about protection, and there's not many people that could cover the route that Jaylen Waddle ran because there's not many people that are capable of going vertical.

He did a left-right move and then still found an exit angle, which is a very hard thing to do.

We really liked the player, the match-up, and just kind of

the way those two were connecting all week. Yeah, that was pretty easy to call.

Q. Is it a possibility Tyreek may sit next week to have him at his best in January?

MIKE McDANIEL: No. There's people that -- there's no such thing as resting to me at this stage in the season because we're not -- you don't just all of a sudden create a scenario where you have momentum. You have to be playing your best football when you're going against teams that are good football teams that in December there's no easy games really.

I think the -- shoot, all those guys want to be a part of these type of atmospheres, to be a part of these type of games, and to crystal ball and say, we don't need you, I don't think that's fair to the team or fair to them.

I think resting players and just assuming that -- sometimes there's costs at trying to play your best football. The second you let your guard down and start not taking a game serious is the second you lose your edge.

I think really we had a ton of guys really, really do everything they could. I can't say enough about the work that our training staff did this week. I mean, you want to talk about overtime in a lot of ways.

Then there was guys that put some inspirational efforts, Liam Eichenberg is first and foremost the first guy that I gave a game ball to this week for his performance and how he willed his way to make sure that he was the starting center. There's a lot of guys that way.

When you have guys act that -- when you have guys that approach things that way collectively, you can do some pretty cool things like they were able to do today.

Q. When you say you saw some things that Tua and Jaylen worked on throughout the week, is there anything you can share specifically that you saw them doing?

MIKE McDANIEL: Well, I've been talking to the team. It was probably two -- Jaylen had probably the best off-season of -- if not the best, right there with the top three off-seasons of any player on our team, and he came into the season with a lot of momentum or came into training camp with a lot of momentum and then had just some random injuries that he was dealing with.

One of the coolest parts about this season has been watching him progress through those injuries, and then for the last three weeks probably, I thought that he was going

to have a performance like this today, and I think he had his best route running game the week previous against the Titans.

Then he just continued that in the week of practice, so there was some stuff that we had up that I knew our quarterback was supremely confident in because he watched the tape, too, and watched the same progression. So when you have players who are very confident, one running the route and one throwing it to him, you've seen that story throughout your career and you know that's what leads to some special stuff on Sunday for sure.

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