

Miami Dolphins Media Conference

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Mike McDaniel

Postgame Presser



Dolphins - 29, 49ers - 17

Q. Mike, what did this team prove to itself tonight, and what did this team, if anything, prove to you tonight?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think it was important to a lot of guys to collectively have an effort when we knew -- shoot, if you're hanging on to a team because you believe in it as players, this is the time that you find success is in an adverse situation where most may quit.

It's been a long season, but it was probably the validation of why we've really been putting so much into this team and why we've been fighting for it to -- the season to stay alive because I think there's been a lot of learning lessons, tough ones at that, and we've been waiting for a three-phase game that I think we had today.

That's why you get into sports is for a validation of that, and the season's not over to our team. So we live to fight another day and look forward to building upon that against Cleveland.

Q. This is your franchise's fifth straight winning record at home. Obviously you guys have had more struggles on the road. Is the next step to figure out how to replicate what you're doing here and travel with it?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think it's important to -- part of the reason why the team put itself in position to win today is because there's a lot in football that may be correlation, not causation. So all the things that you haven't done, if you really look at it with a finetooth comb that, yes, naturally you have to win in all atmospheres and against all different opponents and different -- but the bigger thing is, when you're trying to play football so that in the inevitable situation that you face every season, that's an elimination game, whether it's to get in the playoffs or it's in the playoffs, you want to be fueled with a team that can succeed or execute in those type of situations.

I think the list is long when you're talking about all the things that this team has to do that it has yet to do, but the formula is the same. You're in a stadium, there's two football teams, and you have to be the best one with the most points that day. I think that mindset, that for all the stuff to go on during the course of the year, for the naysayers to be aplenty, I was just proud of this effort and proud of the guys' effort in general.

And that gives you a chance to win December football. You regardless, unless you're playing in February, you also have to get adept at experiencing that, going through that, having some momentum and then going back and applying it to the next opponent because that's -- no one cares about one win in December or January realistically. It's about the -- it's about accumulating those.

I was happy. It kind of met what I had hoped for. The biggest thing was we played some complementary football, and when we did have an offensive penalty that resulted in a field goal attempt as opposed to a touchdown, we executed on that. When we needed to get a stop at the end of the game, we got a pick. When they got down in the tight red, more often than not, we kept them to field goals. All those things is a winning formula.

Q. Tyreek earlier said that -- when asked about those mental lapses on the drops, the Wednesday reps are starting to show, the rest days are starting to show. From your perspective, what are those pros and cons of giving a guy like that those rest days?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think you're trying to do an imperfect formula all the time. The good news is that you operate -- like the key to all of it is communication between our coaching prep and the player, and you're trying to yield the best performance on game day, and the great news is when a player on Sunday can feel the rest in a negative way, then you adjust.

If that was -- whenever it hits a player and they feel that it has accumulated, then you adjust your plans because the idea is, above all else, executing and feeling as convicted and confident on game day.



There's always pros and cons with any sort of rest. Shoot, I want every player to play 100 percent of the practice snaps at full tilt every week. You have an imperfect formula of trying to figure out how to rest guys and what does best for their body.

I think the adjustment to getting more reps with Tua, that's an easy one. You know what I'll do? I'll say, hey, get more reps, and then they'll do it. It's the communication aspect, and you hate for guys to feel like they're not properly tooled in any sort of situation. So you just adjust off that and make sure we get better from it, not worse.

Q. How are Kendall Fuller and Jordyn Brooks doing? Are they serious?

MIKE McDANIEL: I'll definitely need more -- it will be until tomorrow. We'll see on that. I really didn't have a feeling either way. Sometimes you get a feeling that it might. I really didn't have any structural feel to it as they went into the blue tent.

Then JB was -- he got hit pretty hard in the lower half, but it wasn't any -- it wasn't like a joint or a knee or an ankle. So we'll see how long that takes. It was a pretty good shot, though.

Q. Going against your good friend and coaching mentor Kyle for the second time, winning this one, what was it like playing that chess game against someone you know so well and to beat him this time?

MIKE McDANIEL: I was proud of the fact that I literally thought about it zero percent of the time. The reason why I say proud is because it's not about me, and the second that I'm thinking about any sort of relationship relative to a coach, I'm not thinking about how to best position players for success.

I was really happy for our team to go -- the 49ers are going through injuries. That is a good team that does not quit. So to earn something in that way, I thought our guys deserved it and played the way you have to play and committed the way you have to commit to do that.

But beyond that, there's a lot of relationships that -- I love that organization and the players and coaches that I have experience with, but I honestly didn't even think about it because I would be lashing myself if I was.

Q. You rotated Liam and Isaiah tonight. What was the decision behind that, and could you evaluate each player's performance?

MIKE McDANIEL: I'd have to see the tape first, but I

thought overall it was really good to get Isaiah in. The way he's worked to get on the field, every teammate has watched and witnessed it, and you just kind of careful to not overload someone. So we went into the game planning for Isaiah and Liam to go every two series, which I thought had an effective result.

The defensive line were going against majors in-line changes that were subbing left and right all over the place, so I thought we'd have -- we'd render better results in the run and pass game. I think both of their executions had to do -- were partially revealed -- zero sacks. He had some good rushing numbers and controlled the line of scrimmage the way we wanted to.

I thought they both did a good job, and I will see how it kind of grades out play by play tomorrow on -- is that Christmas Eve yet? No? Tuesday, got it. So on the day before the day before Christmas.

Q. Coach, with Jonnu breaking the team tight end records, how were you and the coaching staff able to unlock this kind of season out of him, and how happy are you with all the hard work you've put in, he's been able to become the most productive Dolphin tight end in history?

MIKE McDANIEL: We go to great lengths to avoid passive aggressive questions at the podium. I was sick of hearing we need to use the tight end more.

No, I think that it's really cool to watch him. It's not like Jonnu started off with a ton of numbers like week 1. I can't remember the first game -- I know his first touchdown was Indy, I believe. But like just getting used to his skill set.

I know he said I gave him one of the game balls after the game. He brought Jon Embree up and said he was the best coach that he's ever had and just watch those guys gel, figuring out different things that -- ways that we can involve him because he impacts the game much like -- he just impacts the game in a unique way and complements the rest of our players so well because guys are trying to cover a bunch of space and/or eligibles and are a little half yard out of position, and Jonnu generally makes them pay.

I think he never blinked at the beginning of the season, whether he was -- and didn't -- just worried about the right stuff, worried about getting better and being his best. As a result, he's been a key contributor week in and week out, and I know opposing defenses don't want us to get him the ball. They'd prefer that.

Cool to see a lot of guys have success that it wasn't just handed to them, they've earned through the course of a

season and not always ideal circumstances.

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