

# Miami Dolphins Media Conference

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Miami, Florida, USA

**Mike McDaniel**

Postgame Presser



Dolphins - 21, New Orleans - 17

**Q. Third straight win. What does it say about the resiliency of this team?**

MIKE McDANIEL: I think it says everything. I think it's third straight, 4 of 5. There has been different formulas in the whole process, but you think you have the right type of guys, but you don't know until you know.

It takes a galvanized group of people, talking about from just the locker room and the coaching staff being able to reach those players to be able to pull that off, and I think it does say everything about the guys that we have on this team because it's easier said than done for sure.

You try not to -- especially when you're preaching, for me, conviction over perfection to the nth degree to the team. You try not to get caught up in the style of victory because these are the ideas in the game, in the stadium, with more points than the opponent, and winning football games, you have to learn how to do it a multitude of ways.

So when you're able to win, you learn from the negative, the positive, and the bottom line is we have more reason to stay together, more conviction, more belief every single time that you're in the victor's column.

I'm very proud of the group, and I think it does say everything.

**Q. One constant, it seems, is De'Von Achane, and now he has 1,000 yards in 12 games. Can you put into words what he's meant to this team?**

MIKE McDANIEL: We were relying upon him to not just be a good player, but to take a step in being a leader, and I think it's not just his play, he's much more vocal. We align him everywhere and ask him to do a ton of jobs, and he takes pride in being very, very on top of all his assignments, and that allows you to do a lot of different things and keep people off of the scent of how you're using

him.

He also does a lot of work without the ball. We send him on fake jet sweeps a ton to get other people involved and understanding where he receives a lot of attention.

I think the thing that makes De'Von great is that he's not satisfied. He is confident, but he was frustrated he didn't have two touchdowns with that pass in the second quarter, I think, and that's what you need from your best player.

So I think he's taken a huge step forward in his game. He was already a dynamic player, but I think you're seeing a lot of confidence in him. He's making players miss a ton, but he's also getting some dirty yardage driving the pile, which is a big part of winning football.

I can't say enough great things about Von. He's a very talented player, but more importantly, he's a hard worker with that talent. So you're seeing the residuals of that.

**Q. In that same vein, how have you and your staff really emphasized establishing the run over the past, let's call it, month, I think. In your four wins, you're averaging like 170 yards per game on the ground.**

MIKE McDANIEL: It's something that we've always wanted to be able to execute, but there's a difference in want and being able to execute it. I think a big -- a gigantic part of it is the tonality with which our offensive line is playing. They're really attacking people and giving us opportunities to have some space for the ball carrier.

They are doing a very good job at not wavering in confidence, playing all sorts of really good players. That's a salty veteran defense that plays a physical style of football, and particularly in the last month, I've seen the most physical football that we've had since I've been here, and that's resulted in more opportunities and more yards on the ground.

I think it's something that you're always -- I think the Saints had a really good plan. They were very pass committed, and I think they had reroutes on Waddle every single snap, but when you do that, you're removing a run defender. So

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it's important that, when guys get a ton of attention, that you make them pay. Guys did a good job staying true to that, which accounted for some yards.

We have some things to clean up, as you always do, but particularly we do have things to clean up in the run game situationally. We started better at the beginning of the season than we've had. So guys are hungry because they want to be able to end the game with the ball, and you've got to do that running the ball a lot of times.

Good and bad, but overall the offensive line and the backs have -- and really all the core blockers on top of we've gotten some really good receiver blocking as well in the last month. So that all plays into it. We'll look to continue that against a team that will try to stop it.

**Q. Minkah's two points proved pivotal. Without them, the Saints could have tried for a long game-winning field goal after the onside kick. Your thoughts on the madness at the ending between that and the on-side kick?**

MIKE McDANIEL: We talk about it. It's been a while, maybe a month or two, but the rare pick safety on a two-point is -- it was the second time that I've been a part of it, but the first time I was on the right side of it. We had one 2016, where Eric Berry took one in a critical moment that proved the biggest differential.

So it was gigantic, especially after he took an unbelievable undercut angle. This is -- he was doing it from the slot position, where nickels usually play. So it kind of speaks to who he is, competitive greatness, being your best when your best is required. He took an undercut angle, utilizes his great ball skills, and he didn't hesitate for one second, which has really helped after the onside because they had to get in the end zone and that changes everything.

So big time players make big time plays for your team, and he came through for us.

**Q. You touched on the Saints' game plan, but what made it difficult for Tua today? Then also the second half, what was the reason for the dropoff in the offense?**

MIKE McDANIEL: Again, you're not going to have -- ultimately in the pass game, there were some plays that weren't made that I wouldn't say Tua played his best game. There was some stuff that was him, like the pick. He could have thrown it to Darren Waller, but he also had what De'Von would call a very catchable touchdown pass that he dropped. We had another drop, I think Julian had one. These are big time plays that you got to come up with.

The guys know that. I did feel in the pass game, unlike the run game, I felt the bye week a little bit. That was a little frustrating, but we've got to get -- you know, the whole point is you hope to have your improvements found in a win or hope to find the things that you need to improve on in a win.

I think there was a multitude of herky-jerky. I think we had a good drive in the third quarter -- or was it the fourth, I can't remember, where Tua hit number three in progression on continuous -- or back-to-back plays, and then we missed Darren in the end zone.

I haven't seen -- I just saw it live, and I'm 60 yards away, but I can't even attribute that directly to the necessity of the later ball or if Darren should have been able to field that and kept his feet inbounds.

So before I see the tape, I just know it was a little herky-jerky in the pass game. There were some plays made in the second half by Tua, but there were some plays that we'd like to have back. That's a collective for sure. There will always be plays that you want to do better on.

The key is that we continue to work and get the best concepts for him that he's convicted and then being able to build on some of those progressions that we had in the second half so that we can have -- at some point we're going to have to execute in the near future because in the NFL you have success in a phase or success in running the ball, and people will overcommit, and you'll eventually need to pass to win.

I think that will be a big thing that we'll be working on this coming week.

**Q. Are you aware your defense on that two-point conversion, they didn't get the call in because there was some issue with the headset?**

MIKE McDANIEL: I was aware. I was going down to call timeout, and then the conviction of T-Dod, the coaching staff thought he did ultimately get the call. There were some headset issues at the end of the game. That wasn't the only snap.

But I was aware of the trying to get the call in, and then we all interpreted -- I think it was on the false start. The interception, yeah -- the interception, that we were convinced -- I was about to call a timeout, and then at the last second a couple coaches on the headset said, no, he got the call. He got the call. So I walked back.

I was aware of the issue. I was not aware that T-Dod

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called his own defense. I think realistically, like we've said from the beginning, it's not -- it's less about the play call, more about the conviction of the entire group on how you're playing it. So that's a mike linebacker that's prepared and a defense that believes in him.

**Q. You held them to under 100 yards rushing today. What did you like out of the run defense?**

MIKE McDANIEL: That was one of the keys to the game for us defensively. We knew there had been a lot of very tight games that they either won or came -- were within one score or 10 points as a result of bleeding the clock out and committing to the ground.

We knew that they hadn't won with less than 100 yards rushing. So I'm happy with the guys -- you could see the intent. You could see the ownership of gap responsible football, and guys were hitting. There was probably, outside of the third quarter, I think it was the exact picture of what we were trying to execute going into the game.

**Q. (No microphone)? How do you assess practice habits have evolved the past few weeks contributing?**

MIKE McDANIEL: That's easy. We have every inch that we've gained as a football team has been done with an urgency that has nothing to do with feeling ourselves. I think the confidence is beneficial for sure, but I don't see guys really having their work flow affected because that's what has created the momentum in and of itself.

You get a little more worried about win streaks at the very beginning of the season because you don't know the gravity and despair of multiple losses like you do when you start behind the eight ball. So I think that's the main thing is guys through the leadership council and the captains not wavering at all. That will be emphasized, but generally this team responds to points of emphasis.

Then the second question?

**Q. About the practice evolution forming habits?**

MIKE McDANIEL: And that's been the main thing that gives me confidence with that because guys have really gone above and beyond. We've always been a hard practicing team, but with the intentionality to the details of things that decide winning and losing -- you know, penalties, I think this game we had three. That's a result of preparation.

The conviction that we had both pre-snap and post-snap and the communication, all those things have really -- it's probably the reason why we're standing here talking about

4 of the last 5 or a three-game win streak is because of those habits.

So I look for those to continue to gain momentum as we go down the stretch of this season with five games left that are guaranteed and one opponent that I know of, which is the New York Jets coming. That first thing when I wake up tomorrow morning, it's the only thing I'll want to talk about, but I'll give the rest of the night for family time and victory Sunday.

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