

Miami Dolphins Media Conference

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Miami, Florida, USA

Coach Mike McDaniel

Postgame Presser



Bengals 45, Dolphins 21

Q. How would you assess Quinn Ewers' first start?

MIKE McDANIEL: Yeah, it's a little difficult. There is a lot of venom and anger just towards the resulting third and fourth quarter. As I take a step back and I feel like there was some positive stuff going on with it being his first start. Wasn't too big for him. He had us operating. I think we had no penalties in the first half.

Ultimately it was 17 to 14 out of the first half, and then the second half it's tough to evaluate. Specifically I think there were a couple third downs I was hoping he could make. You know, I think it's a good starting point for him specifically. But, you know, kind of my focus right now, without watching the tape, is I'm just very, very frustrated and angry about this continued third quarter thing where it appears that we let -- we let the circumstances that are outside of our control kind of -- you know, really the damn breaks and all of a sudden we play a different style of football.

The way I look at it is I'm furious because I'm allowing it to happen. It starts with me. While I'm up here after games, you probably won't get much other finger pointing besides I need to get it fixed. We have two games to play that are incredibly important, and we need to look ourselves in the mirror and find out who is a part of the solution, and we will start that as soon as possible.

Q. To your point, you guys were outscored 113 to 27 in the third quarter now, so this wasn't like a brand new thing that happened today. Is there anything that consistently going wrong after halftime?

MIKE McDANIEL: Well, I think, you know, I could go through all the things that we've tried to do and they've been unsuccessful, because it's not like it hasn't been on our radar. This is been something that -- and collectively, those 27 points are probably all in games where the after-halftime momentum is in our favor.

It's not good enough. You have to be able to come out from halftime and adjust. We aren't executing that at all. So back to the drawing board and all things are on the table for that because I could have -- I knew it was a ratio like that, which bottom line is not going to -- you're not going to win more football games than you lose doing things like that or playing the type of brand that we expect from ourselves.

So not good enough.

Q. Will Quinn Ewers remain the starter for next week?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think I have to look at the tape, but that's kind of how I had it in my mind during the game. I thought he earned some opportunities to continue to develop. I was happy how he handled the position. That's not easy. I think that that's what's frustrating, is it would be a lot better if it was on the rookie quarterback.

I don't think it was.

Q. Outside of that big run, Bengals a good bottling up De'Von Achane. What do you think went wrong?

MIKE McDANIEL: You know, a strength of ours is that we gained some momentum, you know, just in the run game in general. You know, for the first time really that I can remember this season, it felt like we had the opportunities to run and we were getting out-techniqued.

They had a good plan. They wanted to be on the finer details a little bit more than we did. I think the space that we're usually able to create wasn't there, and I saw a lot of guys winning pad level and kind of knocking us out of gaps, which is not the type of brand of football that we expect from our guys. They're very prideful.

Fortunately we have one of the top leaders on the team in that room, and between Brew and Austin Jackson, those guys will corral the troops, and my expectation is that doesn't happen to us again next week.

Q. What was the explanation on the field? Penalty,

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seemed like you were irate over that call.

MIKE McDANIEL: Yeah, I was irate, and I didn't -- their explanation didn't necessarily match what I saw, and I just told them that I would prefer to not hear about how was it wrong from the league.

Bottom line, I'm more focused on the -- yeah, the call didn't go our way. I think you guys could tell by what I thought of it live. But the response mechanism from our team when something doesn't go our way is what I'm critically examining for these next two games, because that shouldn't derail the team, and it felt like ultimately it did, where shortly after that there was guys breaking tackles or there was broken tackles or non-form-fitting staple tackles like we had done in the first half, and they got easy yardage that before that call didn't exist.

So that's where my focus is, although that wasn't ideal, and I obviously at the time disagreed with it.

Q. The team will have a losing record now for a second consecutive season. How would you describe the state of the program?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think the program is defined by how the core of the team works through stuff like this. This is not -- you're not avoiding adversity in the National Football League, but you're trying to use, what do we know. We know we're not in the playoffs, so you can gain some momentum.

I thought up until really the third quarter of this game you could make arguments that the momentum of the program, you know, was being carried in the right direction. I think momentum changes swiftly.

I think you get the opportunity to see who people really are in situations like this, but you're really trying to establish who are your core people and where are you leaning on and where do you need to get better when you're trying to get different -- the offseason is -- there is like 45 percent roster ever turnover, so I think -- the biggest thing is the guys need to respond in the way that they've responded all year to situations that aren't ideal.

I thought we responded from a very disappointed second half last week in this first half, but it's four quarters, not a half. So beyond that, I'm going to be focused on our team playing the Tampa Bay Buccaneers who will have a lot to play for, which gives us a great opportunity to see what each and every one of us is made off.

Q. Ja'Marr and Tee are a big part of what they do. How would you evaluate the team's defense on them?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think there was a couple plays that we gave up down the field that I don't go into the game saying those can't exist, because that's the strength of their team. Overall I think beyond the Tee Higgins early one, their down-the-field shots didn't happen so they had to earn it.

The biggest issue is we kind of knew that we were going to have to play light in the box at times, but have to tackle well. They have hard runners that take advantage of the light boxes that show up a lot, and I was just disappointed in the -- specifically the third quarter tackling that we have to go back to the drawing board and get right.

Q. Mike, the decision to activate Theo Wease for the game, was there something else?

MIKE McDANIEL: No, he's been a value adder on scout team, not just offensively but on special teams. He earned the opportunity. He's one the guys that our team was really excited for to have that opportunity. It was a plus that they had experience playing together, but it was more Theo and what -- giving him a deserved opportunity that he had earned through practice prep.

Q. Mike, the NFL Network said they're the PR wing of the league. They said you're expected to be back next season. Just curious has this been conveyed to you?

MIKE McDANIEL: Yeah, I mean, I think like I've said before, the focus for me as a head coach, there is plenty -- as you guys can see, there is plenty to focus on that I don't spend my time thinking about the job I already have. I try to do it to the best of my ability.

I have some work to do to get our third quarters right, and we're not going to have any time to waste because there will be a hungry Tampa team that we're facing in a week. My focus is there.

You know, I think everyone depends on me to have my focus there and that's where I'll leave it.

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