

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Head Coach Mike Vrabel

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee - 20, San Francisco - 17

Q. The '9ers had been 18-0 under Shanahan when leading by 10 or more points at the half. (No microphone.)

MIKE VRABEL: You know, we're going to believe. There's times we're going to believe. We talked to them about that at the beginning of the game, You got to be willing to take some shots and willing to bleed and be able to taste it and come back swinging.

And that's why it's an honor to coach this football team. The guys care, do whatever they can do. It's not always perfect.

They took care of the football, complementary football. Defense played great in the second half. Everybody played great in the second half. We did just enough the interception.

You know, the interception by Rabbit was critical. You know, we were running out of steam there. We were flatlining. And he made a huge play for us.

Q. What did you say to the guys at halftime for them to come out and be able to have the type of drive that they did?

MIKE VRABEL: That's on them. There ain't no special words just other than saying, You know, we're close. You know, we're close. And, you know, defense got to get some turnovers.

And we did. You know, we dropped an interception. We were trying to hammer the football and it bounced back in their hands or whatever it may be.

The quarterback said it was in the grasp. But, you know, just kept doing things we were doing and, you know, had a breakthrough. And it was complementary. It was huge.



Q. (Question concerning A.J. Brown.)

MIKE VRABEL: I mean, A.J. is fantastic. We expect those things from A.J. But, you know, the guys; Aaron Brewer, Dillon Radunz, you know, this is -- you know, that's special.

And to be able to see guys walking up the ramp after the game and Dillon just being excited that he did some things to help his team win. And they battled. And D'Onta, and our runners, you know, all those guys.

But, you know, we got six conversions of third and 10 or more. You know, unfortunately, that's a lot of our own doing to get in that position.

But, you know, we can eliminate some of the mistakes, you know, early on in offense. We can still do some things. I thought the staff did a great job, as well.

Q. One of the things was a free play. How crucial was it Ryan recognizing what he had there?

MIKE VRABEL: Well, it starts with Todd, you know, getting him on the ball. You know, and then Ryan executing it. And then, obviously, everybody else executing.

And that's something that, you know, we maybe -- not having taken advantage of here. You know, Ben snapped it, nobody moved. You know, A.J. went up and made a play.

Q. What was the deciding process to put Dillon out there when you find out Kendall was out? Was it the first thing you thought or --

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, no Dillon was the -- Dillon was going to -- you know, he was going to be the swing tackle for this game. That's how he prepared all week -- the entire week.

You know, and then when we got the news and, you know, told him. It was a quick conversation. He had the big smile on his face and he was excited. And it was cool.

Q. What changed in the first half from the second half?

MIKE VRABEL: Just not having first and 20, second and



12, you know, some of those things. Penalties, you know, we probably were a little better.

Q. How big was it for Ryan to have a clean game? (No microphone.)

MIKE VRABEL: I mean, we protected him. There were times when the pocket came in on him. But it felt like we did a good job of protecting him.

I feel like the offensive scheme was good and it was well executed. It was something that I think kept them off-balance a little bit.

It was able to allow us some extra time and, you know, Ryan found some guys in the middle of the field on those third-and-longs.

And, you know, catch and run with Firk, and then was able to find A.J. I was just trying to go through my head in all those situations.

Q. What's the feeling for a head coach when Bullock's kick goes through?

MIKE VRABEL: I mean, it's just, like, you sit there and figure out if we're going to overtime or going and win.

Q. (No microphone.) How big was the defense to step up in those moments?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, it's just they played better. You know, we made some adjustments. It's a good scheme. They got a good scheme, but they got really good players.

And, you know, their skill players are really good. And a lot of moving parts. And just a really, really good second half performance.

I know that, you know, it would have been dominating had we not given up, you know, the long one. Unfortunate, but, hey, hold that team to 17 points, I think, is doing good work.

We said that we had to get some turnovers. We weren't able to run it 40 times. But we held them to 17 points or less.

Q. The third and long conversions, I guess that's probably on everybody. The line --

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, it is. I thought the scheme was good. I thought the players executed it well, you know, being able to add extra guys into the protection.

And, you know, receivers, allowing them to get down there and get the spots where they were in zones. And, you know, I thought Ryan really looked sharp on that first one. He ripped it in there to Nick. So...

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, I mean, that was early. You know, I thought that was a good adjustment, switching up and going to some man there on early downs. And it paid off.

Q. (Question concerning the field conditions.)

MIKE VRABEL: You just try to play with shoes that work. And, you know, what happens, it's warm during the time day, it gets cold at night, and the field gets slick. I mean, you never blame the field. I mean, we know what the field is going to be like.

Q. Last week against the Steelers, you had -- excuse me, there was some turnovers --

MIKE VRABEL: Come on, Jack. Don't write the question down. What do you want to talk about?

Q. How important was it to take advantage of the turnovers, score the touchdown --

MIKE VRABEL: It was huge. Yeah, the complementary football, right? We got a turnover, scored a touchdown, got a fourth down stop, and we took care of the ball. And that's what it comes down to.

We can say that everything is broke and this guy sucks and, you know, fire the coach because that's the easy answer, right?

The hard answer is getting in there and coaching and teaching, and getting guys to understand what's going on, making sure they know what to do so they can go out there and play aggressive and physical, and take care of the guy with the football.

And, you know, we weren't able to run the football as well as we had been in the past. But a lot of that is a product of not getting in drives and not being able to wear on them.

It was too quick of a drive earlier in the game. And then third down conversions were huge, and then being really good in the red zone. We ran it in.

Q. How good is it seeing -- you said how you, you know, expect these things from A.J. But for him to respond like that in his first game back, what does that say how he maybe prepared himself?

MIKE VRABEL: I mean, he worked hard. He worked hard with Todd and Frank. You know, again, everybody else that wants to fire the conditioning coach and the trainer because guys get hurt, they're also responsible for getting guys ready to come back.

But it's on A.J. We understand how important he is to our football team. You know, love him as a person. And, you know, glad to have him back.

Q. How different is this team on third down with A.J. in the lineup? And I ask that because he had eight receptions on third down. That's the most in the last 30 seasons.

MIKE VRABEL: Quarterbacks throw to the guys that they trust and the guys that are open. And played -- you know, when it was zone, he sat down in zone. And when it was man, he was able to create some separation.

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE VRABEL: Try not to panic. Try to make sure that everybody is prepared and ready to go when they come in at the beginning of the week.

It's the same thing. You come in and you show up Monday, especially a short week. Guys, you come into this meeting, you better be prepared as you work your way through the next couple days to play in the game, because anything can happen.

Guys may not be able to recover from whatever they had after the game on Sunday. Or, you know, in our case, having a couple guys that ended up being put on the COVID IR. And I try not to panic and so that the coaches don't panic and then the players don't panic.

Q. Mike, what have you been seeing from Dillon? Have you been seeing progress lately?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, I mean, you're just excited for guys that go out to practice early, that work with Sully, you know, before practice and after practice.

You see a great attitude, a lot of consistency. You know, each and every day, I feel like he's the same person. He's kind of there, he shows up engaged in the meetings and continue to work.

Q. You can see how proud are you to coach this football team. To see a team adjust the way they did, get their composure and win, is this about as satisfying as a win gets as a head coach?

MIKE VRABEL: They're all amazing. But I think under the circumstances of a short week, being down -- being down some bodies, you know, against a really good football team.

I mean, we'll figure out where everybody has us after this week. You know, I mean, we were -- we had the funeral for the Titans. You know, it was yesterday or today.

But we're not dead yet. We'll come back and we'll play, I guess, the Dolphins next, right? That's who we got in 10 days.

This weekend is going to feel really good. I'm happy our players can rest and recover after getting a victory.

Merry Christmas, guys. Am I talking to these guys tomorrow virtually? Okay, so in person, Merry Christmas.

