

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Sunday, November 15, 2020

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Coach Zac Taylor

Bengals Postgame Press Conference



Steelers 36, Bengals 10

Q. Coach, obviously having minus 2 ratio in the turnover department and going O-for on 3rd down are two things you couldn't afford to do against this Pittsburgh Steeler team.

ZAC TAYLOR: No chance. You lose the turnover battle, especially early on. We got a big stop on defense to start the game and then turned it over and started to get some momentum on offense at that point, turned it over. Those were killers in the first half, and then to go 0 for 13 or whatever it ended up being on offense, you're not going to -- you've got no chance. There's no chance.

We were not good enough in any area today, offense, defense, special teams, and we really weren't good enough coaching, and that is with me 100 percent. I feel like I let these guys down today, so it all starts with me.

Q. Defensively it looked like you played the run pretty well, but it looked like the thought was to rush Ben with three, no more than four and play coverage and make him earn it, don't give up any explosive plays, make him earn it, but he more than earned it, I guess.

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, he does a great job. I mean, he extended some plays. We got some rush on him, got outside the pocket and completed some balls like he does, and sometimes the coverage was there and guys were pursuing him outside the pocket and he just made some plays. He did a nice job.

Q. Have you ever been a part of a game where you did not convert a single 3rd down, and what was the reason behind you guys' struggles in that part of the game?

ZAC TAYLOR: We just never found a rhythm, and that starts with me, getting us into a better place to be quite honest with you. They did a nice job; you've got to give them credit. The defense is obviously playing well when

you go 0 and 13. But that just starts with me. I've got to do a better job with some of those play calls.

Q. What was Joe's physical situation? It looked like he was hot in the second quarter, he got pushed out of bounds, looked like something happened to his ankle and he was never really right. Do you think that's an issue going forward?

ZAC TAYLOR: I mean, it looked like he got hit out of bounds into the bench and shook it off at halftime and then came back and I thought it was affecting him the second half health-wise.

Q. Is he okay? I know he limped off there at the end.

ZAC TAYLOR: I think he'll be fine.

Q. What was the thought process leaving Joe in that last drive? He took a couple of hits. You're down 36-7 or whatever. Do you think about taking him out?

ZAC TAYLOR: You know, we tried to manage it some with the runs. We wanted to get some points, get some momentum going, to be honest with you, and we left him in there.

Q. How do you balance that in that situation because obviously you want to get Joe reps against a division rival in that situation and maybe build some confidence moving forward, but at the same time his physical status, all of those things, how do you take that into consideration and balance it?

ZAC TAYLOR: Well, it's just we want to move the ball and put some points on the board, and we felt like we shot ourselves in the foot a lot. Obviously they did some great things, but we just felt like we kept shooting ourselves in the foot. We could get some drives together put some points on the board, get some momentum going, it just didn't turn out that way.

Q. It seemed like in the bye week there was a lot of confidence in what you guys had done against Tennessee. How do you make sure this isn't a game that shakes everybody's confidence back to square

one?

ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, we just talked about it in the locker room. We don't overreact to this. It was not our best performance. We went on the road. We didn't really win in any phase, any statistical category in terms of the turnovers, the penalties, the explosive plays. We didn't win any of them. So you go on the road, there's no way you're going to win a football game doing that way against a good football team, so we know what the reasons were. We know that we could have played better, and we've got to put this game behind us quite frankly and move on. That's the biggest key because we've still got seven games left, a big one next week at Washington. We can't let Pittsburgh beat us twice. That's the biggest key. And again, it's disappointing because this isn't how we thought we were going to come out and play, but it's what happened, so we've just got to take it like a man and move on and go focus on the next game.

Q. This game has always been seen as kind of a measuring stick for this franchise. Given what happened today, where in your opinion is this franchise now in relation to where you'd like it to be?

ZAC TAYLOR: I think we're still creating momentum. We felt good these last couple weeks about the direction we were heading but we've got to turn them into wins, and you've got to beat good football teams on the road ultimately to get where we want to be, so today was an opportunity to do that, and we didn't get it done. But again, I don't sit there on the sidelines looking at the score the way it was and think, man, we're a terrible football team. They're this much better than us. That's not how we feel. That's not how we feel in the locker room. We feel like we didn't do the things that we need to do to win a road divisional game like that, and we've just got to make those corrections and focus forward and move on.

Q. How worried are you about Joe's confidence?

ZAC TAYLOR: Not -- that's the last thing I would ever worry about is Joe Burrow's confidence. I can tell you that.

Q. He looked like he uncharacteristically struggled today; what do you attribute to that?

ZAC TAYLOR: I don't think any of us were in a rhythm, quite frankly, on offense. Just me as a play caller, guys making plays when they had the opportunity. Just we were off today, and that starts with me.

Q. You said earlier that you felt like coaching was where it started. What specifically do you feel like you could have done better?

ZAC TAYLOR: Me getting us in a rhythm and just managing the game a lot better. Early in the game when it was 12-0 and then 12-7 and they go score and we got a chance to kick a field goal at the end of the half, and I put us in a tough spot, we took a sack. That was me. And so again, I've just got to improve myself to put us in a better positions because when you're in a hole like that on the road in the first half, you've got to do the things that get you back in the game and create some momentum when you know you're going to get the ball back to start the second half, and I failed today in that aspect.

Q. What was the thinking going with Spain at right tackle? It looked like Adeniji and Spain, they held up okay. What was the thinking going with Spain? I don't think he'd ever played right tackle before.

ZAC TAYLOR: If you have another right tackle, let me know. We didn't have Jonah today. Jonah wasn't ready to go, and so it was next man up. Quinton was ready for it, felt confident doing it. I thought overall those guys did a nice job. I know some hits come. When you play teams like that and they get a lead on you and you're throwing the ball trying to get back in it, there's going to be some hits to come, but I know early on in the first half we gave up one on a 3rd and 12 where they did great job in coverage and we had to hold the ball for a while, and then another one came up in that two-minute -- I think it was the two we gave up in the first half, but I thought overall those guys did a good job protecting him, and then we got in the once second half, those guys got a couple hits there late.

Q. How tough was it at cornerback when Mackensie Alexander left the football game due to the concussion? How tough was it on that back end?

ZAC TAYLOR: Next man up. Those guys don't make excuses, they go up and play. Tony Brown, Jalen Davis, they wanted an opportunity and they got an opportunity today.

Q. With the fake punt, is that an absolute yes or no depending on the look you get? Was there any thought to waiting to unveil that in a game that's a little closer?

ZAC TAYLOR: I mean, every game is different in terms of some of the specialty plays that you run in that aspect. There were no concerns.

Q. Special teams overall, it seems like field position turnovers were a factor but so was field position. You guys were in long field a ton and they had a lot of short fields. That had to be disappointing.



ZAC TAYLOR: Yeah, it certainly wasn't our best effort in any phase. Like I said, it was just a disappointing day overall. It's frustrating. Guys are hurt for the right reasons. You look in the locker room and there's nobody selfish, there's nobody pointing a finger. Everyone knows that they're accountable for a day like today. That's the big positive I do see. You just feel the energy in that locker room and it does feel like, okay, the guys are going to own up to having a down day and we're going to put it behind us because we're a mature football team and move forward, and again, like I said earlier, not let this team beat us twice.

Q. Obviously y'all were down four assistant coaches today because of COVID-19 protocols. What kind of effect did that have, and when do you expect to get these assistants back? Do you have a timeline on what's going to happen?

ZAC TAYLOR: It's just part of the adversity you've got to handle in this league. It can come at you any hour of the night. You know, the guys that have COVID, players, coaches, would be out 10 days and if you're close contact it's five days.

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