

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Frank Reich

Postgame Press Conference

Pittsburgh Steelers - 28, Indianapolis Colts - 24

FRANK REICH: Start off with injury update. Khari Willis with the concussion, Will Holden with the ankle. And then Michael Pittman is still being evaluated. All right. Difficult loss, tough loss on the road. Tough to swallow. You know, when you come out in the first half and play the way we did, good in all three phases, except for the turnover, played a dominant half of football in the first half and went out to a nice lead, we were able to mix it up, run, pass, really played good on defense as well. Just gave them the short field one time that they took advantage of. And then the second half we just didn't have any answers. On offense we got backed up one time on our one yard line and couldn't do anything with it. We've been especially good in that area of the field all year and failed when we needed it most. And we come out the next series after they had gone down and scored, or threw the long touchdown pass and we take a sack on the first play, get behind in the sticks. And so we got in a rut on offense in the second half, to say the least.

Defensively, in the second half, just too many big plays. Make go the long route. They got big plays and obviously big penalties, and the big plays just weren't all completions, but a couple of penalties in there. And at the end of the day we lost the turnover battle. We lost the turnover battle with the two, and we weren't able to generate any turnovers. You know that's going to be a big deal in a late December game with two good football teams, the turnover battle is going to come up huge. If you look at what we did, overall ran it a little bit, were able to throw it, helped stop their run. So in many regards checked off some boxes. But can't make the mistakes we made with the penalty, the turnovers, and that's really ownership by coaches and players. That's what's most disappointing. So what we just talked about was we no longer control our own destiny. But all we can do is take care of our own business, and that means learning from this film, having a good week at practice and then finishing up the regular season with a great performance, and then hopefully we get some help. All right. I'll open it up to questions.



Q. Frank, I know what just happened, don't know how much time you've had to think about it. But you're up 24-7, what do you think of the offense, your play calling from that point on?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, wasn't good. Wasn't good. We got backed up on our own one yard line. I called a run, got nothing. Then we took a shot, and then we were just trying to gain a few yards to give ourselves room to punt. And we come out in the next series, called play action pass, they got a pressure on. And in hindsight I should have anticipated the pressure. I should have anticipated the pressure on the first play of the series, after they had just scored. So the play action pass couldn't pick it up, yeah, but should have called something quick. They pressured a little more in the second half. They were playing a lot of base defense to our sub O. We called a few runs, not many. But just felt like we couldn't get that going. And then, secondly, the pressures that they were bringing, they were bringing base defense against our sub O. So some of it we had to go to a couple pass checks a few times that runs were called. Probably had three or four runs called that we ended up having to check the passes because of pressures that they were bringing. So, yeah, wasn't good enough play calling on my part.

Q. If I can add a second one. Defense, too, normally second half your defense, you guys out-adjust the other team. This time did they out-adjusted you or did you all just stop playing the way you did in the first half, go prevent and it cost you?

FRANK REICH: I didn't feel like we went prevent it, necessarily. Many of the same calls we had in the first half, they still didn't run it on us, but we got a future Hall of Fame quarterback over there and he got hot. They had the momentum. He kept finding completions. He just kept finding completions and keeping drives alive and then found ways to create a couple big plays. So he was keeping them alive with some think and dunk stuff, find ways to create big plays, and then they created big plays with some penalties that they got, some pass interference. We knew coming in -- we get a scouting report on everybody, including the officials, and this group, we knew coming in that they call it a little tighter on the back end.

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This group calls it a little tighter on the back end. We knew that coming in, so we just needed to play a little bit better there.

Q. Frank, going back to the play calling, I think Jonathan just two carries in the final 25 minutes. Do you feel like he should have been more involved?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, I would have loved to get him more involved, you know. Like I said, we got backed up one time and called a run, it didn't work. The next time we called a play action pass on first down and lost eight yards on a sack. And then we had, like I mentioned, several other runs called, probably three or four other runs called that they were bringing pressures, and if we run into the pressure, it's going to get blown out. So we got an experienced quarterback to get us in the right play. And when they're taking it away, they were forcing our hand. They were forcing our hand, and normally what our mode is, hey, if you're going to force our hand and run some pressures or play certain personnel group on defense to take away some runs, then we're going to hurt you in the pass game, we're going to hurt you in the pass game. And we just weren't able to do that. When they forced our hand into the pass game, all's it takes is to hit it one, two, three times to get them out of some of that stuff, and we just weren't able to get that done.

Q. We know what Castonzo and Braden Smith mean to your offense and how it changes the way you called the game. How did it impact the game today the way you called it without them out there and did you feel you guys did enough to combat their pressure?

FRANK REICH: Yeah. We were trying to help the tackles when we could, particularly on 90. Unless it was a short, quick rhythm throw. The one sack early, the sack fumble that led to their early touchdown was a play we've run a lot. It's a short crossing route, and I give them credit defensively. They schemed something up. They anticipated it. They dropped guys out in coverage where we normally just kind of get that ball out real quick. And they dropped guys out in a zone drop trying to coverage, a blitz zone kind of coverage and had us covered, and Philip was just trying to buy a little time. I thought the guys -- you know, I know we gave up five sacks. I gotta look at the tape. I gotta look at the tape obviously, but I felt like the guys, the two tackles just from watching with my eye during the game, did fine. And as far as how we mixed it up, like I said, it was a mix of thumping the guys, trying to throw some quick rhythm stuff. They pressured us a lot, and then they beat us on a few pressures, but obviously not good enough coaching or executing on offense as far as their pressures were concerned.

Q. Why has the secondary struggled some here in the second half of the season for halves at a time?

FRANK REICH: You know, I would say that, you know, obviously really happy with how we played in the first half. And then in the second half, part of the answer is you're going up against a future Hall of Fame quarterback. And you give him enough attempts he's going to get completions. They have great players. He's really hard to sack. He's the least sacked quarterback in the NFL. And he's good at finding completions. And so he did that. That was, I think, more the answer than anything today.

Q. I was trying to sort out what you were saying about they take away the run game essentially and forced you guys to pass and that's okay. What I guess went wrong, what were some of the other things they did, or I'm asking did they do to take away the passing game that was working in the first half?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, we obviously need to look at the tape, but what it felt like out there is either on some of the blitz zone stuff that they played, they covered us. Or they got to us with the pressure. And so, you know, without going into the details of how we philosophically think and what we do in those kind of situations, the bottom line was we just didn't execute well enough today. And when I say execute well enough, that means as a coaching staff, you know, we didn't give our offense enough answers. You know, we didn't have enough answers to combat what they were doing. When I normally feel like that's when we're at our best between coaching and playing it, today we were not. So we gotta take ownership of that, starting with me as a play caller, and then as offense coach, but really, our whole offense, our whole offensive staff. And as players we gotta take ownership of executing a little bit better as well.

Q. Coach, you mentioned that you talked to players about losing control of your own destiny. The mental attitude and that part of the game has obviously been a big part for this team. Is this a big challenge now overcoming a setback like this adversity like this is today?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, I feel very confident in how we'll respond. That's what we talked about in there just for a minute was, hey, very disappointed about what happened today from all of us, that when we had everything to play for, we just didn't have the answers coaching and playing that we needed in the second half to win a very important game. But, you know, you can't take away all the positive stuff that we've done this year, coaches and players. So I'm not doubting, I'm not doubting us. I'm not doubting our coaching staff. I'm not doubting the players. I'm not

doubting what we're doing and how we're doing it and who we're doing it with. We had a bad game, or bad half. And we weren't able to finish it off. So we gotta learn from it, get better for next week and take care of our business next week and finish the season off the right way and then hopefully get some help.

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