

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Monday, January 11, 2021
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Mike Tomlin

Postgame Press Conference



Cleveland 48, Pittsburgh 37

MIKE TOMLIN: Not a lot to say. We didn't perform well enough tonight. Not coaching, not playing. You can chalk it up to the turnover game. But we weren't good enough in a lot of other areas, communication, in terms of detail. Just not a good night for us.

In the single elimination tournaments, when you don't have a good night, you go home. We understand that. Tip our caps to those guys, congratulate them. They did, we didn't.

Just hurt for the guys in the locker room. Not only put forth a great effort tonight but put forth great effort all year, not only in terms of the ball but the things that came with the ball, the things we asked them to do, the things that the present circumstance asked them to do in terms of COVID protocol, all that. Just can't say enough about the efforts of the guys.

But there's pain associated with where we are right now. Ain't no running away from that. That's football and that's life.

One injury in the game maybe to speak of. Alex Highsmith had a high ankle. Other bumps and bruises associated with play.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You had a fourth-and-short midway through the fourth quarter. Your team had some momentum. What went into your decision?

MIKE TOMLIN: We had some stops, wanted to pin them down, maybe provide the short field for our offense. We had maybe two or three consecutive stops. I just wanted to keep the momentum going in terms of field positioning. But we weren't good enough in terms of doing that.

Q. When you evaluate players, coaches, seasons,

everything you get into now, is it always a body of work thing or does sometimes one game become definitive? If so, might this game be it?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, it's always a cumulative body of work. One performance can put an exclamation point on decision making and things. We also assess the cumulative.

Q. When you mentioned assessing the cumulative, Ben Roethlisberger, Pouncey are the last two coming off the field sitting together. When do you start having the conversation with Ben about his future, where he goes from here?

MIKE TOMLIN: Hadn't thought about that, to be honest with you. We've been in this play mode, in this compete mode. Those discussions and decisions regarding personnel, wrapping a ball around the season, getting an eye toward what the future looks like, those things will begin happening in the upcoming days and weeks.

Q. This is three straight seasons now, plus the Jacksonville playoff game, where things have not gone well down the stretch. How should you be held accountable for that?

MIKE TOMLIN: It is what it is, man. Our record is our record. Our performances is our performances. Don't run away from that.

Q. When you get behind right away on the first snap, just unravels like it did in the first quarter, what did you say to the guys? How do you try to keep them focused to come back?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, I wasn't worried about them being focused, trying to come back in terms of our urgency and things. But it does change the climate of the game in terms of opportunities, opportunities for splash, the nature in which they play, the nature in which we have to play.

You lose balance, you miss opportunities for splash from the other side because they hide the ball, et cetera. It doesn't bode well when you spot people points, particularly the way we did it tonight. It made the journey a difficult

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one.

Q. The turnovers are one thing, but the defense, they let them go down the field and score after the turnovers. I don't think they got a sack, a turnover, which is not indicative of their performance. What was Cleveland doing so effectively that you were not doing?

MIKE TOMLIN: That's what I mean. When you spot them points, man, you miss opportunities for splash. It changes the climate of the game, if you will. They have to take less risk. It's all rolled into one. It's multi-layered.

Q. What did you tell your team after this game?

MIKE TOMLIN: That I was appreciative of their efforts not only tonight but throughout the whole journey. It wasn't a lot to say. Our performance speaks for itself, as it has and as it always does. Really that was it.

Q. That two-week period from Thanksgiving when you played the Ravens, Washington and the Bills, seemed like you never recovered from that. Do you think you will reflect back and think that's a point where things kind of changed for you guys?

MIKE TOMLIN: Sure. In terms of winning football games, no question.

Q. You started the season 11-0, you end up losing five of the last six. What do you feel is the biggest difference between the team that finished the season compared to the team that started it?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, we didn't do enough. We didn't position them in enough good circumstances. We didn't make enough plays, particularly in the critical moments. We were a group that died on the vine.

Q. You had several calls to make on extra points. What went into those decisions down the stretch? Was it analytics, feel for the game?

MIKE TOMLIN: Whenever we were more than 17 down, we were trying to cut it to three scores, two touchdowns and a field goal. So that was the mindset. A couple times we were down by 19, trying to get to 17, just trying to reduce the number of possessions.

Q. What went into the decision of Fowler and Spillane?

MIKE TOMLIN: We were comfortable with the work they provided us during the week, not only in terms from a

health standpoint but just in terms of performance. We made a lot of plays with those guys. We were excited about getting them back in the lineup.

Q. Ben sat on the bench alone out in the field for a long period of time after the game with Pouncey. What was their mindset during the game? The game just ended...

MIKE TOMLIN: Their mindset was no different than everyone else's. We were singly focused on winning and we didn't do that. There's disappointment associated with that. I'm sure what you witnessed was something relative to that.

Q. You like to call a lot of the defensive signals. Did you start doing it when you got behind or did you do it the whole game?

MIKE TOMLIN: We functioned the way we normally function tonight.

Q. Roethlisberger threw for 501 yards, four picks. Not related to any kind of decision he may or may not have to make, do you think he can still play at a high level?

MIKE TOMLIN: I do.

Q. You did have another slow start tonight. Been something that's plagued you guys throughout the season. Will you look back and see if there's a commonality in those things or is there something that was consistently going wrong with those slow starts?

MIKE TOMLIN: No question, it will be investigated.

Q. Did you consider kicking onside earlier in the game?

MIKE TOMLIN: I'm sure I did, but I didn't until obviously I did later in the game.

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