

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Tuesday, January 4, 2022
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Coach Mike Tomlin

Postgame Press Conference



Browns 14, Steelers 26

MIKE TOMLIN: Just so appreciative of No. 7, appreciate everyone's efforts. It was a total team effort. We did what when needed to in all three phases, so we're appreciative. We got a short week this year. We got to go to Baltimore. More AFC North football, and you guys know how we feel about that. We're excited about that opportunity. We'll get singularly focused and go put forth our best effort.

Tonight we just pause and we're appreciative of 7 and his body of work, and had the awesome opportunity to kind of share in this moment with him. He shared some words with his teammates, and just a beautiful thing.

So I'll pause and open it up for questions. Trai Turner had a knee. We will watch him and see how it develops. The rest is just bumps and bruises associated with play.

Q. Is this fitting just AFC North football, had to scratch it out, Ben going out there in victory formation, just a perfect finish for him, if it is indeed his last game here.

MIKE TOMLIN: No question. AFC North football.

Q. Mike, did you just try to business as usual the whole week, or did you use the emotion of the circumstances to your advantage?

MIKE TOMLIN: Like I said several times during the week and I meant it, Ben really did a nice job setting the pace. You know, he was singularly focused. It was business as usual, and so he was easy to follow, and I think everybody got their vibe from him in that way.

Obviously it was an extremely emotional night and all that, but he did a really good job kind of setting the post for that approach all week.

Q. I know Najee had a best production as a pro. Was this his best game as a running back as a pro?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, we will evaluate it from a grading perspective, but obviously I don't know what he ran for, that's probably an easy discussion.

Q. I think Ben had 34 pass attempts in the first half. What went behind him throwing the ball quite so much?

MIKE TOMLIN: We just possessed the ball. We ran it, too. So when you possess the ball you get a lot of snaps, and so you can tell that story.

Q. Did you try and call a time out to get him off the field?

MIKE TOMLIN: I was. I took a shot at it. (Laughter.) Took a shot at it.

Q. Mike, what allowed Najee, was it just blocking, was it the way he ran, a combination of things?

MIKE TOMLIN: They stayed in a lot of two-high safeties. I think they had respect for our passing game and understood the gravity of the moment. You know, they were playing a bunch of two-high safeties, and so the pile fell forward and we did what we needed to do in the run game.

Q. What does it mean that Cam Heyward and Derek Watt kind of let Ben go out there by himself for the coin toss?

MIKE TOMLIN: It was just the tip of the cap, showing respect to a guy that has done it and done it at an extreme level for a long time. Their idea. Awesome thing.

Q. What did you like about your rush defense at that point against their rushing attack? I know you said a lot about good Chubb is at the start of the week.

MIKE TOMLIN: Chubb is special, but we did the job tonight, and I'm appreciative of the efforts. We played a lot of people. That's what have to do at times when you are playing subs, and we played a lot of people and everybody put their hand in the pile and made the necessary plays.

I thought that was just a catalyst for the defensive effort, the fact that we were competitive and consistent in terms of minimizing that component of their game, and it kind of made the things that flow off of it more difficult.

The misdirection pass I think we picked off the first boot of the game, for example, and it starts with trying to work to minimize 24 and his talents. Got a lot of respect for him.

Q. Mike, you mentioned Ben said some words to the team. Was that before the game?

MIKE TOMLIN: Just now, after.

Q. After.

MIKE TOMLIN: Yeah.

Q. Stopping the run, is that what gets your pass rushers in position to have nine sacks?

MIKE TOMLIN: Yeah, they're behind the chains. If you're effectively getting after the run, they're behind the chain and they get in one dimensional circumstances.

That's no easy task. That's a catalyst for what it is they do. They do a great job of staying on schedule, but we were able to get them off schedule and get them behind the chains, and when they get one dimensional, we just felt like we had an opportunity to let our talent show.

Can't say enough about our, about our coverage, because it takes both rush and coverage to produce sacks or picks or what have you. Those guys did a heck of a job tonight.

Q. I know Kendrick was banged up coming into this one. Is that why Casey started, and did he give you guys a little bit of a jolt in the run game?

MIKE TOMLIN: We'll take a look at the tape in terms of evaluation component of it, but he's a young guy that was banked up that didn't have an opportunity to work a lot during the course of the work week, and so we did what we thought was prudent.

Q. Mike, what was going through your mind when you see Ben is saluting the crowd there at the end, kind of taking it all in?

MIKE TOMLIN: I was just appreciating the last 15 years with him. Man, we been through a lot. We seen a lot. It's been a heck of a ride. Been one that's been an honor to be a part of and enjoy, but that's just largely what I was thinking at that moment.