

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Head Coach Kevin Stefanski

Visitors Postgame Press Conference

Pittsburgh - 26, Cleveland - 14

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Obviously -- I'll start with the injuries. Greedy has a shoulder injury. Takitaki shoulder, and then Denzel, groin.

Very, very frustrating, very disappointed. Got to play better than that. Guys played hard, but tip my cap to them. They did a better job. So really frustrating. But it's where we are. Take any questions you guys have.

Q. Yeah, Kevin, I was asking you to kind of go through what the offensive game plan was tonight.

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, score some points. Obviously, just whenever it was, Jake, it didn't work. It wasn't good enough; run, pass. Just wasn't good enough.

And, you know, got the quarterback sacked too many times, didn't convert on third down, didn't get into a rhythm. So it was not good enough.

Q. It was noticeable in the first half how seldom Nick Chubb was used. I think he had four carries at halftime. Didn't seem like he was injured. So what was the reasoning for using him so little in the first half, especially in the passing game? It was kind of becoming a disaster there.

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, he -- early on, he got a little banged up with a rib injury. He was able to play through it, but he needed some rest.

Q. What went into the decision --

KEVIN STEFANSKI: I'm sorry, can you start over? I didn't hear you at first.

Q. Sorry about that. What went into your decision tonight to start James Hudson there at right tackle



over Blake Hance?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, James had good moments for us this season. Felt like he was getting better. Obviously, I know what the stat line looks like, but, you know, I'm not going to put all that on him. But he's a young player that we expect to continue to get better.

Q. Was there any consideration in the game as it went on and you saw that struggle building up against T.J. Watt, especially maybe to switch it up, get Blake Hance in there or what was the game plan?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, we talk about those kinds of things, Cam. But it's, again, not on one person in any way there. We just have to be better.

Q. My question is: When everything went down yesterday, you guys got eliminated, did you deliver a message to your team? And how did you guys deal with that?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, I think the guys, obviously, understood what happened yesterday. But, you know, we came out here to get a win. That's why we came out here and fully recognized how everything -- what changed yesterday. But the effort was there, we just didn't come through here.

Q. Hey, Kevin. Just to kind of follow up on Dan's question there. I mean, after, like, the last 24 or so hours and then a disappointing loss like this today, I guess where do you guys go this next week, where do you guys go from here?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, Ashley we'll talk about those kind of things, obviously, tomorrow and next week. But we got another game on the schedule. And we got to make sure that we compete against Cincinnati next week.

Q. Hey, Kevin. How would you describe Baker's night? And what was with all the batted passes?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, you know, obviously, they batted a bunch of balls. We got to -- it's one of those things you got to -- as a quarterback, you know, you got to



always be thinking about your eyes and those type of things.

And then if the guys jump, offensive line-wise, we got to make sure that we keep their hands down and hit them when they jump up and that sort of thing. But they just seemed to make a few plays there.

Q. Hey, Kevin. Did the fact that Nick was banged up early change your game plan or was the game plan to come out throwing as much as you did?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, it was a factor in some of those things. I don't want to overstate that either, though. We just could not sustain drives, staying on the field, those type of things.

Q. I mean, the question is because we talked during the week they had the last ranked run defense. So why wasn't that more of a priority coming out of the gate?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, we just felt like we had some opportunities, Scott. Then we kind of got behind in the down and distance there a few times behind the chains.

Q. Yeah, Kevin, at any point with Baker getting sacked so many times, did you consider taking him out or, you know, giving him any kind of a break, worried about the shoulder and that kind of thing? And will you think about maybe resting him next week, once again, mostly because of the shoulder injury?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, I'll deal with next week kind of next week. But, you know, he was battling in there. Again, that's on me to -- that many sacks, that's on me.

Q. And did you just feel like he would have a chance to pull it out, just leave him in there and try to let him play through that?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, obviously, constant communication, making sure he's, you know, healthy enough to play and those type of things. Obviously, you get sacked eight times, I'm sure that, you know, doesn't feel great. But he was healthy enough to play.

Q. Yeah, Kevin, I was going to ask you about Baker next week. Let me ask this question. You know, Baker's confidence right now, you know, four interceptions last week and then, you know, taking that many sacks tonight, you know, what do you make of it going into the final game of the season?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: What's -- I'm sorry, Jake what's the question?

Q. Yeah, Kevin, I was going to ask you about next week with Baker, but I'll ask this question instead. You know, after four interceptions last weekend, taking that many sacks tonight, the way the offense went, you know, what do you make of Baker's confidence right now heading into the final game of the season and, really, more importantly, more into the offseason?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, you know, obviously, I'm sure he's disappointed like we're disappointed in the outcome tonight. But it's one of those things we're going to continue to control what we can control and try to find ways to get better through this whole thing.

Q. Kevin, how much talk was there on your end -- your staff and your players about Ben Roethlisberger's last game here and the chance you guys had with the playoffs out of the picture, a chance you guys had to kind of spoil his party with -- of something that you guys were trying to get fired up about?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, you know, I think the whole thing, Nate, was trying to go out there and compete. Understood what was going on, you know, with their team. But, really, for us it was -- we had to go play well and try to find a way to get a win and we didn't get it.

Q. And, Kevin, I want to just ask you about Clowney's penalty. Because I've never seen that. Have you ever seen a guy throw a cleat like that and what do you tell him?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, I mean, it's -- you can't do that. I mean, you're hurting the team. It's crazy. Not smart. You know, he felt like he was just -- I'll let him answer it.

But, you know, obviously, he didn't feel like he was throwing it away or whatever. But those are tough penalties in those situations.

Q. Yeah, Kevin, just wondering: You've suffered bigger losses by points. But is this the low point?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: I'm sorry, one more time, Tony. I'm sorry.

Q. You've suffered greater losses by point margins. But would you consider this the low point of your two years?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Honestly, Tony, it's hard to think about it that way. I just got to think about tonight and we weren't able to get it done and think about the reasons we weren't able to and turn our attention to Cincinnati. But

short of that, I can't really think about it in those terms.

Q. Kevin, when you talk about blaming yourself for the sacks against Baker -- what about not giving James Hudson more help?

KEVIN STEFANSKI: Yeah, all the above. Truly. We just have to be better. But that's really frustrating.

