

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Mike Tomlin

Postgame Press Conference

Houston - 20, Pittsburgh - 12

MIKE TOMLIN: Really a sloppy performance, to be honest with you. It's capable of happening, obviously, in the first preseason game, but not that we find comfort in that. We work too hard to have the results we had tonight, so it's disappointing.

How we work off of it obviously will define us, and we'll have a good rep at responding to negativity. As we push into our next opportunity, we need to be significantly better.

Taking nothing away from the Houston Texans, it's not about what they did. It was about the things we didn't do or the wounds we inflicted to ourselves.

Just looking at it from a special teams perspective, the field position and points standpoint was JV. We had a block in the back on a kickoff return. From a field position perspective, we ran out of bounds without being forced on a punt that provided awesome field position for them. We had a bad snap on an extra point. We muffed the punt that produced seven points.

You can't play football like that and think you're going to be in games. Really it's amazing we had the ball in a one-score game at the end when you consider those things.

On offense and defense, I thought we were JV on possession down football. Maybe 1 of 7 at one point on offense, not good enough. A couple of those were sacks. We had them in third and long several times on defense, and we lost those downs. We gave up a touchdown on the third and long in the safety rotation.

So there's some things that we've got to do better, some things that we've got to tighten up. We went for it fourth and two in the tight red. We spent a lot of time in that area of the field from a team development standpoint. We feel really comfortable being aggressive under those circumstances. We had a guy open, and we didn't finish it.



Those are just some of the examples of the self-inflicted wounds that kind of characterized our night. We'll assess it, learn from it, and roll our sleeves up and get back to work next week.

Bumps and bruises associated with play, we're still assessing some of that. Keenu Benton got poked in the eye and wasn't able to return. We'll have more information about him and maybe some of the others next time we come together. I'll pause and open it up for questions.

Q. How do you evaluate Justin Fields' three series?

MIKE TOMLIN: I thought he did some nice things, but obviously he was a component of the C-Q exchange. From my perspective, that's dual responsibility on the center and the quarterback. It negated a lot of good things going on in those first couple of drives. I think one definitely got stopped by it, went to second and 14.

You get behind the chains, particularly at the early stages before you gain real cohesion and have enough of a menu to get you out of those circumstances, you're a dead group. So the C-Q exchanges were an issue.

Q. Did anybody separate themselves from anybody else in terms of the wide receiver two position?

MIKE TOMLIN: I thought we had some good work done by a lot of people -- Van, Calvin, Scotty. We had good contributions, really kind of in all phases. But as I mentioned in the opening, they were dulled or minimized by some costly errors that were self-inflicted.

Q. Payton Wilson had a lot of snaps. What did you think of his performance today?

MIKE TOMLIN: I thought he did some really good things. I saw he made a tackle on punt there early. He was active on defense, but I think it's kind of reflective of the production we've seen from him in Latrobe. I don't know that any of us were surprised by it. I thought it was a good start individually for him.

Q. I think I heard Beanie Bishop's name called a few

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times. Does it solidify your confidence in Bishop?

MIKE TOMLIN: It does not. I thought he did some good things tonight, but we've got a lot of work in front of us and an opportunities for a young guy like him to really round out his game from a detail perspective.

Q. Fields seemed to get the ball quickly out of his hands going to receivers. Were you pleased with the way that he was moving, getting the ball out of his hands, executing the offense?

MIKE TOMLIN: No question. I thought he and we did some good things, but it was just dulled by some of the negativity. From a rhythm passing standpoint, distributing the ball to people, I thought he and Kyle did a nice job. I don't like the sacks and the one-dimensional possession down moments. We've got to analyze that. But from a rhythm passing standpoint, certainly.

Q. How do you think your young linemen looked?

MIKE TOMLIN: Again, I thought there were some good moments, but we'll analyze it and comb through it over the next 24 hours, and I'll provide better analysis for you after that.

Q. Specifically with Zach Frazier, was he a difference there on that third drive and his relationship with Fields on those C-Q exchanges? They looked a little bit cleaner.

MIKE TOMLIN: Again, I don't know what happened. I haven't talked to any of the parties involved in terms of assessing blame or assessing the ramifications of the center exchange. It's a fundamental component of the ball. We work it every day. We start our practices with it. So it's unacceptable.

Q. Leal had a couple of big plays. What did you think of his and Loudermilk's performance?

MIKE TOMLIN: Leal and Mont Adams, I thought, had some splash plays. Again, much like Payton Wilson, I think it's reflective of their play in Latrobe. I don't think any of us are surprised by the positive contributions of some of the people you mentioned.

Q. Kyle Allen is a veteran, his fourth or fifth team, but he gets in there. What you thought about getting out there and seeing him play?

MIKE TOMLIN: He looked like a guy that's played some ball. That's what you expect from veteran backups. They had one in Case Keenum. Those guys get in the game

late, and their experience usually carries units.

So I'm not surprised by the positive things that he did in play.

Q. Do you anticipate Russ being available next time you're under the lights?

MIKE TOMLIN: I do.

Q. Your first time seeing the game live. What did you think of the new kickoff rules?

MIKE TOMLIN: It was about what I expected. I didn't like the penalty obviously that we picked up, the block in the back, but we dipped our toe in the water. We got some firsthand exposure to it, so we'll build upon it.

Q. Do you think Payton Wilson got tired towards the end of the third quarter there, he missed some tackles?

MIKE TOMLIN: I'm sure everyone did.

Q. Were you surprised with what happened to Markus Golden in terms of his retirement from the NFL?

MIKE TOMLIN: No, I got nothing to add there. Football is a challenging job. You've got to be all in on it. If you're not, he probably made the best decision.

Q. This is the first time you saw Arthur Smith's run game with Pittsburgh. Any ideas or thoughts on how Najee did, Warren did, how they're adapting to it?

MIKE TOMLIN: That component of our development has been really good. I'm comfortable with the trajectory of it, not only in Latrobe, but tonight.

Again, some of the positive things that we had going on got minimized by self-inflicted wounds. You're fumbling C-Q exchanges, putting you behind the chains, you're going to get somewhat one dimensional, and you're not going to get that run game rhythm that you want. Our first two series were affected by those things.

It might not be reflected in the stat totality of the plays.

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