

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

Saturday, January 4, 2025  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Coach Mike Tomlin

Postgame Press Conference



Bengals 19, Steelers 17

MIKE TOMLIN: We certainly had our opportunities to win the game, but we didn't. We got to own that. Not enough routine play make. Routine things routinely is a signature of high-floor football. I thought particularly on the offensive side we didn't do enough routine things well to move the ball with fluidity, to possess it, to score, and so the game was touch and go because of that.

Obviously that sequence at the end of the first half, missed an opportunity there to maybe get some points and bookend the half. I thought that was significant.

From an injury standpoint, Najee was evaluated for a head injury but he was cleared and came back in the game. Very late in the game Mason McCormack injured his left hand and is being evaluated as we speak.

Have more information the next time we get together.

Questions.

### **Q. How disappointing and concerning is it to end the season that way?**

MIKE TOMLIN: It's disappointing, because we play and play to win.

But it's neither here nor there. We are in a single-elimination tournament now, so we better turn our attention toward playing good football and better than we have particularly in recent weeks.

### **Q. Mike, at the end of the first half, why do you decide to go for it?**

MIKE TOMLIN: We had timeouts; they had timeouts. Didn't want to give the ball back to them. I like to be aggressive in those moments. If you can't get a yard you don't deserve to win, and so obviously we didn't.

### **Q. Why only 12 pass attempts through the first three quarters?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Again, we weren't doing enough to possess the ball, so you can talk about passing attempts, rushing attempts, they had the ball for I don't know how many minutes; we didn't.

It's all a culmination of not winning enough possession downs and possessing the ball, and they did. So we are going to be short whatever way you cut it.

### **Q. Also a first down issue, too?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Yes, again, third and 8 plus a lot and so, yeah, certainly reflective of what we're doing on first down football.

### **Q. How do you put the past four behind you and go clean slate as you mentioned...**

MIKE TOMLIN: I don't know that you go clean slate. You better learn from these lessons, you know what I mean? We're a mentally tough group. It's okay to learn from these lessons and remember the things that created this.

Nothing mystical about it. That's going to be my mentality and I'm going to relate that to the guys as we move into next week.

### **Q. Did you think it was prudent to bring Najee back when he was nicked up? Maybe could have brought in Jaylen?**

MIKE TOMLIN: What is your question?

### **Q. Why did you bring Najee back?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Because he was medically cleared to come back into the game.

### **Q. What tells you this group is mentally tough?**

MIKE TOMLIN: I'm around them every day.

### **Q. Justin was listed as healthy. Was he available for**



**those short yardage situations?**

MIKE TOMLIN: He was.

**Q. Why stick with Russ when the offense wasn't able to move anything? Did you consider inserting Justin?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Not really, no, because our failures were collective. I think at this juncture the most prudent thing for us to do was to stick with those that were on the field and work through it.

**Q. What were the Bengals doing to keep the sticks moving?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Talking about offensively?

**Q. Yeah, their offense.**

MIKE TOMLIN: They were throwing rhythm passes. They're going to make some plays; we're going to make some plays. They did what we expected them to do. They had to neutralize our rush, and particularly early on they were getting the ball out quickly.

Once we started batting passes and throwing some of that off rhythm, it settled into a flow they were comfortable with defensively.

**Q. You guys had over 500 yards on offense the first time you played this team. What was the difference tonight?**

MIKE TOMLIN: We made plays in that one; we didn't make routine plays in this one.

**Q. Coach, as far as time of possession, Cincinnati had the ball 16 more minutes than your team. So what can you do for -- the last few games the time of possession has meant a lot. What can you do to change that?**

MIKE TOMLIN: It's the same discussion as when she was asking about the 12 passes. If you're not converting possession downs and they are, it's going to get skewed. They possessed the ball; we didn't. We didn't make enough routine plays. We were not in third and manageable. Particularly early on we were this third and longer and they had a heck of a lot more snaps in totality than we had.

**Q. They scored on the first two possessions the start the game. First two in the second half. Those are always key moments for you. What's been going wrong?**

MIKE TOMLIN: I'm not going to define the game by that. They scored a touchdown and a field goal on their first two possessions. We scored a touchdown. 10-7 ballgame. A lot of ball to be played.

**Q. I think it's six straight games to have a three and out in your first drive on offense. Why has this been so difficult to get going early?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Again, as I mentioned we didn't make enough routine plays throughout the game, early on, middle, late, however you want to describe it. We got to get back to making more routine plays than we have at this juncture.

**Q. You came out throwing against Cincinnati a month ago. Why did you change to this time around?**

MIKE TOMLIN: Again, I'm not comparing it to the last outing. We formulated a plan we thought was appropriate for this environment and this game this week; didn't work out the way we would like.

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