

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Monday, December 15, 2025

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Mike McDaniel

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Steelers 28, Dolphins 15

Q. Eliminating this team from Playoff contention, what did you tell your guys in the locker room?

MIKE McDANIEL: I talked about this game. Supremely disappointed in the outcome. I think it does a disservice to really the objective, the work that we're doing on this opponent. Flat out their team was better than our team, so...

Focused on that and what we have to do for the upcoming next 48 hours as we get ready for Cincinnati.

Q. Early in the game your defense looked like they were playing extremely well, tackling, doing the things they needed to do. They couldn't get the offense in gear early on. What did you see on that side?

MIKE McDANIEL: Well, they had a good plan. I thought we went into the game wanting to be the more physical team. I thought there was some good physical play, something that we've been emphasizing, that we've been focusing on a ton. We fell short again coming out of halftime.

I think I look at that as there's unlimited things that you can do as a coach. I need to get the team better at coming out of halftime. That really hurt us with a 7-3 score opening drive touchdown, three-and-out, I believe. We just got behind the eight ball.

I think offensively we could have really used, based on their tempo in the first half, some third downs, some execution on that, and some conversions. That was a real critical part of the game where defense was getting stops and we weren't scoring points.

Q. How did you think the team handled the cold?

MIKE McDANIEL: I don't think the weather was a factor. I think their team out-performed us in critical situations, that

we lost the turnover battle, which we were 6-1 winning it. They were 6-1 winning it, as well. We knew it would come down to that.

I don't think that played a part.

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE McDANIEL: Ultimately I knew based on the amount of possessions we needed that we were going to have to convert at least one on-side kick. The major focus to me was getting the ball in the end zone.

If the possessions don't time out, and basically you know that you're going to have to on-side it with a three-score differential, that was kind of my focus, which was trying to get the ball in the end zone.

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE McDANIEL: I'll find out more. I think the first thing was that he hadn't had a calf injury before. It really scared him. We'll find out more as we get tests tomorrow.

Q. Now that the Playoffs are out of the picture, is there any consideration to possibly (indiscernible)?

MIKE McDANIEL: Yeah, I think it would be very rationed, shortsighted if I even tried to tackle that option. I think I have to look at the tape. I'll move on from there.

But realistically I'm just supremely disappointed that we couldn't come out with a win here. We had high expectations, and fell short.

Q. It's hard after the game to dissect what went wrong. In terms of the passing game, what has held it back? Why is it not as smooth as we've seen it?

MIKE McDANIEL: I think there's multiple things at play. I think ultimately everybody has to do better. You have to coach better. I think passing, a lot of times people squarely put focus on the quarterback.

I think there's several times tonight, one in particular stands out, where I think he was about to make the right read, and

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we had our eligible fall over. It's been a multitude of things, the way I look at it.

It has to be better for us to be able to win games when you're not owning time of possession or controlling the game on the ground. That limits you a ton. It's not up to standard.

I thought Darren made a ton of plays at the end. Should have got him involved earlier. There's a lot of things. Ultimately it hasn't been good enough. I think that hurt us tonight.

Q. The play design on Tua's interception, was there supposed to be an eligible receiver in that area?

MIKE McDANIEL: No. Kind of got caught up in protection. I think the Steelers had a good plan and early they knew where we were trying to attack. I think Tua lost sight of him, which is a big deal. He didn't see the hanging corner. He threw it to him out of the break.

It's not the ideal play that matters were made worse by the throw to the opponent.

Q. Your thoughts on the big swing that the Steelers scoring early made?

MIKE McDANIEL: It was gigantic. It's something that we were very focused on. We have been very focused on in the last month in particular.

I think as hard as we tried, that was a little too deflating because we knew that was an important area of focus that we really wanted to be good coming out of that third quarter. It was a one-score game.

I thought that was a gigantic momentum swing. Had a couple opportunities on that drive and the following plays to make the plays. We didn't make the plays, and they did.

Q. Why not lean more on tackling early in the game? It had been going well for you earlier in the season.

MIKE McDANIEL: I think so much of that is I think the run-pass ratio was similar the previous game. You come out making sure that defenses have to defend the field. You're trying to balance it.

You're at risk if you don't get first downs on first and second down like we did last game, for instance, where we were mixing up run and pass in the first 20. Then you have to convert on third downs. It's hard to get in a rhythm running the ball. It's very much a ratio that you have to earn.

I think last week was an example of us executing in both run and pass. Then you get the momentum of the game. You can run the ball and avoid third downs if you're doing it right.

The plan was to run it as many times as we did last week. It just didn't work out. You're also counting on execution in both phases early to do that.

In hindsight, we always want to run the ball. It's tough when you aren't getting the first downs and staying on the field three-play drives, four-play drives, five-play drives to get that rhythm and work that line of scrimmage like we wanted to.

Q. You have been about the process and not looking forward to Playoff hopes. How much does that help put your best foot forward your final two games?

MIKE McDANIEL: My expectation is that our locker room fights for this team. That's what they have been doing. I think it's important that we weren't chasing anything but putting forth football that we're proud of. I think that's why this loss is so tough. Guys were really confident going in. But the focus has to be the same.

You're probably right that I think it fits this team to put forth a valiant effort because we've just been focusing on one opponent at a time and shutting out the noise. We're going to have to do that, as challenging as it may be.

We have three opportunities with this team. I think really the character of the locker room has been tested all year. My expectation is that we're going to bounce back regardless of how much it hurts.

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