

New York Giants Media Conference

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Mike Kafka

Press Conference



Giants 34, Cowboys 17

MIKE KAFKA: All right. So just a couple minor things. Nothing too serious. They're getting looked at right now. Normal guys that were in and out. Obviously, Dex battled through for us with the illness. Primarily third down role, but did a nice job when he was asked to go out there, had an impact.

Q. Mike, with everything that's happened this year, what does a two-game win streak mean for you all?

MIKE KAFKA: I'm just really proud of the players and the coaches for hanging tough, putting in the work every single day, every single week. They never wavered. They never wavered. I know the results weren't there, but the process was right.

The way they went about it, the competitive stamina, they went about it to turn this thing around the last couple weeks and make a statement in terms of how they played and how they prepared, how they practiced. Just really cool. Really proud of them.

Obviously, seeing these guys in the locker room, the smiles on their faces. The season wasn't what we wanted, but they finished it the right way.

Q. What do you say to Gunner in terms of not getting his second touchdown pass?

MIKE KAFKA: I'm sure he wants it back. I'm proud of him. 100 yards receiving today, stepped up in the role when Wan'Dale goes down, one of our premiere receivers. He steps up in that spot and has production. Huge critical third downs. Big plays down the field one-on-one. They played a bunch of man coverage, and Gunner took advantage of it.

Q. Mike, what are your emotions as we come to the end of the season? You don't know what's going to happen next.

MIKE KAFKA: I'm not thinking about that. I'm thinking about the great win we just ahead and enjoying it with the players and the coaches and family. We had a bunch of family in town as well today so I'm looking forward to enjoying that tonight.

Q. Mike, did it mean anything more to you? The first couple weeks after you took over, it didn't go so well. You got the win against the Raiders and get this one too in front of the fans, your family in attendance. Does it mean something to you?

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah. All these games are so important. They mean a lot because we put a lot into it. We spend a lot of time at the facility, spend a lot of time away from your family, spend a lot of time studying and having to figure out and have problems and find solutions. You spend a lot of time talking about it. It ends up being this is a people business so you've got to work with people and find solutions that make it the best for what those players are and what's best for the team.

So you have those conversations. Basically, the entire day all you're thinking about is the players, the team, the organization. What puts these guys in the best position.

So, yeah, absolutely, these mean more because there's people that are involved. There's families that are involved. You want to do the best for them.

Q. Mike, Jaxson got off to a little slow start but picked it up. What did you see in him?

MIKE KAFKA: I thought offensively, we just had a couple drives early in the game that we could have executed at a higher level. I think there was a couple calls I'd like to have back as well. Just not finishing in the red zone, I thought we could have taken more control of the game earlier if we'd finished some drives in the red zone.

We took some field goals, which was still good. Kept us in the flow of it. But there was a couple missed opportunities, whether it was penalties or whether it was poor play call, which I thought I had a couple of those I want back. I'll go



back and look at it. I'd say the early start of that, I could have helped Jaxson out better.

Q. What does it mean for Tyrone to get over 100 yards today?

MIKE KAFKA: It was great. He became the third back in Giants history to have 1,000-yard back-to-back seasons so that was a cool milestone for him. You weren't in the locker room, but he gave a lot of praise to the offensive line, the tight ends, the coaches. Those are the guys. He understands that. He understands it's an 11-man operation and those guys make it go.

He has to make plays as well. He did. He had opportunities today. He knew he was close to the milestone. It was cool for him to get. It was a pretty big deal when you talk about the history of the Giants, and he's the third player to do that. That's pretty cool for him.

Q. Can you talk about the emergence of Ben Sauls today?

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, Ben has been lights out. He's done a good job. He had opportunities with the extra points and field goals early in the game to keep the us up, and he was nailing them.

Q. What was your message to the team postgame today?

MIKE KAFKA: Postgame, told them how proud I was of them for competing, for finishing the right way. Throughout the week, teams can go one of two ways. These guys kept on staying on it, kept on preparing the right way, giving themselves the best opportunity to get out here and get a win.

Then they came out and played it the right way. They had a great mindset. They were tackling and running and blocking. And then they were making plays, which at the end of the day, that's what it's about. Your best players making plays. You had Bobby Okereke with a huge interception on their side of the field that set us up for the touchdown.

Then you have players like Gunner who steps up and are making plays down the field. Ben Sauls, early in the game, we sputtered in the red zone, he steps up and makes a play for us and hits the field goal. Proud of those guys for stepping up.

Q. Was there a point when you were named interim coach, how long did it take you and the staff to get into the rhythm you wanted them to have?

MIKE KAFKA: I wasn't concerned about, like, when we were going to get into a rhythm. I think very early on, myself communicating as clearly as I can the standards and how we're going to operate. That was, on my end of it, reinforcing that, what I thought was important and giving it to them.

These guys are a great coaching staff to work with. They're great coaches. So we've been on the same page. I've been working with them all year, all season. Now it's in just a little bit different role. Just being clear with them with what I was expecting. If anything ever came up, we communicated, collaborated, and got it fixed.

Q. You talked this year about Jaxson's growth. Two rushing touchdowns last game, two passing touchdowns, discipline with running more. What can you say about his growth from when he started the journey to now where he is at the end of the season?

MIKE KAFKA: He's a young quarterback. You're going to go through ups and downs. That's normal. So we felt like there might have been a little bit when he had a couple rough games, like it's going to swing. Oh, he's this or that.

I think Jaxson has done a great job of staying with the process, going through and continuing to ramp up his communication with the players and continuing to work his tail off to get the little things cleaned up, the details, his footwork, the mechanics, his eye progression.

I thought Jaxson blocked out all that noise. You see as a player continuing to grow and continuing to learn. The more reps he's getting, the more information he's going for bank. Now you can springboard that into the off-season where he'll continue to grow and learn.

All those things that we kind of went through the first time around, now he's seen it two, three, four, five times now. That memory bank's going to kick in for him because he rarely makes the same mistake twice. This is going to be a great off-season for him. It was a great way for him to cap off the season.

Q. What did you think about the way he bounced back these past two games? He seemed to hit his stride. What did you think about his ability to brush that off and bounce back?

MIKE KAFKA: These are the qualities we saw very early on with him in the draft process. After an interception or bad play, what does he do the next play? You study and look at it. We're stepping up, he's throwing a big-time shot. Or he steps throws a touchdown, runs and scrambles and

gets a big play.

So he has a quick memory in that, sense and that's a good quality to have for a quarterback. When things go wrong, you flush it, you move on, you get back on track and get on the attack. I know Jaxson has that mindset, that aggressive mentality to do that and has shown it.

Q. Going into the off-season, now is when you develop and put plans in for the team. Given the interim status, how do you approach that?

MIKE KAFKA: I haven't looked that far ahead. We'll enjoy tonight. We have plans laid out. We've had those conversations. Now is a great night to enjoy it with the team, with the staff and the families.

Q. Mike, John Mara has personal stuff going on. We know that. Not going to get into it. How important was it to win the last game and put a smile on his face?

MIKE KAFKA: It was great. It's great to have him around, to have him around the facility and the players and the coaches. He brings it that energy to the locker room. He was there today. We presented him the game ball. Talk about toughness and resiliency, he's the poster child for that. Coming up and continuing to lead our organization, very happy and very proud and fortunate to work for a man like that.

Thank you, everyone.

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