

Indianapolis Colts Media Conference

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Cleveland Browns

Coach Kevin Stefanski

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Browns - 39, Colts - 38

COACH STEFANSKI: Alex Wright is in concussion protocol. Deshaun took that big hit on the shoulder. He cleared concussion protocol but I just did not want to put him back out there. I wanted to protect our franchise quarterback. That was my decision.

That's what it was. The game itself, this is a team that fights. We knew that this was going to be a game that could come down to the wire, and it did.

A ton of big plays individually. Obviously Dustin coming through was unbelievable in that game, I think a long of 58.

Myles wreaked havoc on defense and blocked the field goal on offense -- excuse me, on special teams which we turned into three points, which was a six-point swing. In a game that's that tight, to make plays like that was unbelievable.

And a bunch of guys just fighting like crazy. Kareem Hunt jamming it in there on that last play on fourth down.

But really proud of those guys. We knew it was going to be hard. Good football team, good AFC football team. So it was good to come out of here with a win.

Q. Could you explain more about the decision to not put Watson back out there? What does this mean going forward. Was there any re-injury?

COACH STEFANSKI: He's our starter moving forward. He's our starter in Seattle. It's always going to be my decision to protect our players.

Q. He'll practice this week?

COACH STEFANSKI: It's Sunday. I'll update you guys later.

Q. You don't think he hurt it any worse?

COACH STEFANSKI: We'll evaluate all those things like we do. But we'll see.

Q. How did you think he threw the ball when he was in there?

COACH STEFANSKI: He was in there only a few plays. Hard to say.

Q. What do you think enabled you guys to -- you lose Deshaun. Seems like a lot of bad stuff is going on.

COACH STEFANSKI: It's football. You've got guys are in and out. Things don't always go your way and you've got to fight.

And you've got to -- in the fourth quarter if you're down you've got to go on an 80-yard drive. That's what this game is. They're not a lot of blowouts in this game. They're close. Gotta win those close ones.

Just proud of those guys. Getting a road win was important for us. I thought the guys did a nice job.

Q. Have you ever seen anyone do what Myles did on that field goal?

COACH STEFANSKI: We have all seen it across -- guys have done it before. We had it in this week. Thought that Bubba did a great job. He thought it was there. And then Myles did a great job executing. Got to be careful not to leverage, as you know. But if there's anybody on the earth that can do it, it's Myles Garrett.

Q. On that first pick of Deshaun's, did that give you the knowledge that perhaps he didn't have the velocity on the ball?

COACH STEFANSKI: No. I didn't feel that at all. No.

Q. Looked like during a break you went over and talked to him on the sideline. Did you have to explain

your decision or talk about it?

COACH STEFANSKI: Of course. Listen, as you guys know. My job to make tough decisions. I felt I wanted to protect him. I did not want to see him get hit. He was hit hard. I know he cleared all that, but I have to protect him.

Q. What about the way PJ showed so much moxie on that final drive?

COACH STEFANSKI: Yeah, we needed moxie. We needed guts. We needed grit. We needed it all today. And PJ's done that. As you guys know, we talk about -- backup quarterbacks, I don't care, backup anything -- you've got to be ready to go.

Sometimes you get the rep, sometimes you don't. I thought he performed admirably and got us in the end zone there in the end.

Q. Did you have that game plan going in if Deshaun takes a hit like that, we need to re-evaluate?

COACH STEFANSKI: I wouldn't say we have a game plan, per se, but you're always looking to protect our quarterbacks, period.

Q. Is this going to be touch and go going forward, or is it just one-game situation?

COACH STEFANSKI: It's Sunday. I can't speak past anything, but I'd expect Deshaun to be -- if everything clears, he's ready to roll, he's our starter on Wednesday.

Q. When third down goes incomplete, right away do you make the call with Kareem? What's your thought process there?

COACH STEFANSKI: Thought process was I didn't want to run it before fourth down because I just didn't want the clock to be ticking and trying to line up, and it's hard to do that in certain personnel groupings.

So the guys were begging for a run. I told them it's coming, just hang with me. That was always going to be the call on fourth down.

Now, if we could have gotten it in there without taking some time off the clock, that was also our goal. But there was method to the madness.

Q. Back to back weeks your team coming out with gutsy performances, hanging in there and pulling off two wild victories, what can you say about it?

COACH STEFANSKI: I don't remember last week. We talk about it. Again, you cannot predict this league. You can't predict the things that are coming. So it's so, so important that you stick together.

I think you have a locker room in there that understands that, that they're going to stick together even when it's hard. It's going to be hard, and it's always hard. Everything you want in this league is on the other side of hard.

Q. Defense gave up a lot of points, a lot of yards. How do you explain that?

COACH STEFANSKI: As you know, our defense has played really well. You knew there was going to be a game where teams make a few plays. We knew -- it's hard to pitch a shutout every game.

They fought, made plays when we had to. We got four takeaways today which was outstanding. That really turned the tide of the game.

Q. (Indiscernible) on the road for the first time, winning back-to-back games?

COACH STEFANSKI: The value isn't, we talked about that this week, you want to be a good team you've got to win multiple back-to-backs. If you want to be there at the end you've got to put streaks together. That's how it works.

You've got to get one and then get two. And if you really focus on just those one games, if you focus on those games as themselves and you pour everything you have into it you have a chance.

I thought that's what we did. We poured everything we had into this one and we needed all of it.

Q. Why wasn't Dorian dressed as the emergency QB?

COACH STEFANSKI: I think all three guys have to be on the 53 in order to use that rule.

Q. With Dustin, the way he's kicking the ball for 50-plus, did you hesitate at all on the 58-yarder?

COACH STEFANSKI: I didn't. Inside, what he's capable of, I did not.

Q. PJ Walker obviously, the gutsiness and competitiveness, give us an idea of his practice habits. What gives him the ability to allow when his number is called like that.

COACH STEFANSKI: I think those backup quarterbacks, they're pros. They know how to prepare. AVP, Alex Van Pelt, our offensive coordinator is a long-time backup quarterback. But he's a good player, too -- it doesn't mean he wasn't a good player.

Those guys, you don't get a ton of reps. Sometimes you're in there in the first quarter. Sometimes you're in there in the fourth quarter. You have to stay ready so you don't have to get ready. And I think PJ certainly embodies that.

Q. Denzel Ward, did he have a concussion?

COACH STEFANSKI: No.

Q. What did you see from the rookie right tackle, Dawand Jones, how has he been able to...

COACH STEFANSKI: The hometown kid. You know, had some really good moments today. Obviously we'll look at it, always things to clean up.

He's playing hard. It's not perfect. He's getting better every single day at practice. He works very, very hard. Loves this game, loves to compete.

Q. I saw Deshaun on the sidelines, cheering people on. Talk about his demeanor.

COACH STEFANSKI: He's the leader of the football team. He's a captain. We always need him. He was a great supporter of PJ today. He was great on the sidelines keeping the guys into it.

Q. Did he push back against your decision at all?

COACH STEFANSKI: It's my job to make those tough decisions.

Q. With Myles, those two strips, it's obviously huge. Going into a game, do you know he has the potential for him to take over for him?

COACH STEFANSKI: I think you go into every game with Myles anticipating you're going to like your matchups. He gets a ton of attention and when he doesn't get attention, when he doesn't get that chip or that running back to his side, he can make a play.

Q. How did you feel about Tony Fields today, the linebacker?

COACH STEFANSKI: I thought Tony -- did he have the touchdown? He's got a knack for that. Tony battled, has given us good reps when he had to go in there. He did a

good job.

Q. Is there anybody else or anything maybe that we haven't talked about or maybe that was a key part of the game, something (indiscernible) --

COACH STEFANSKI: You know, I've got to watch it. But I would just tell you that fourth quarter, the defense, the way they played, special teams came through it. It's quintessential, it's a team game and we needed all three sides of the ball in that fourth quarter as well.

Q. Would you put Deshaun back in if PJ would have gotten hurt?

COACH STEFANSKI: Yes, would have.

Q. What about the heart and soul of your team. How much do you admire all they are giving you?

COACH STEFANSKI: Yeah, I mean, that's this game. It takes all of that. It takes that grit that we talked about. We're early in the season, we're in this thing for the long haul. So you're going to need everybody. But it's a good one to get on the road for us.

Q. Do you disagree with any of the penalties the defense had?

COACH STEFANSKI: Probably. Yeah, there were a couple -- not gonna help me talking about it here.

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