



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

*Head Coach Kevin Stefanski
Cleveland Browns at Cincinnati Bengals Postgame Zoom Interview
Week 7
10-25-20*

Head Coach Kevin Stefanski:

Opening statement:

“We will start with injuries. (WR) Odell (Beckham Jr.) got his knee there. He will have an MRI in the morning, and we will know more. Disappointed for him. He wanted to be out there very badly.

“Obviously, a great win for the team. It is important to build off of these type of wins. It is important that we make sure that we are continuing to do the things that help you win in this league. I think we have a lot of examples of us doing that. You are going to have to go win the game and a two-minute drive. That is what happens in this NFL. That is what good teams do. To see the way the quarterback (Baker Mayfield) responded in this game, early we were not doing anything – the plays were not very good and we just could not get a completion – and he rips off 20 straight [completions] so I just could not be more impressed with how he played, including that last throw there. The story of our season, guys stepping up, and you saw (WR) Donovan Peoples-Jones step up, and (WR) Rashard Higgins has done it every time he has been out there. Guys making plays. Defense fighting their rear ends off. It is not a fun outfit to have to play in that type of game, and they just keep coming at you. Credit to them, but again, a great team win.”

On what changes QB Baker Mayfield made after the first quarter:

“I do not know. If I knew, I would have made sure I had that talk before the game. He is such a competitor. He does not give up. That first throw, we wanted to take a shot there. They made a nice play, a credit to them. He did not back down, and every time I looked at him on the sideline, he had that steely look in his eyes. He was not going back down. I think that is the story of Baker. There is nothing coming his way that he has not seen before. Really proud of how he responded.”

On TE Harrison Bryant, WR Donovan Peoples-Jones and WR Rashard Higgins stepping up and making big plays at big moments today with TE Austin Hooper out and Beckham leaving the game early due to injury:

“That is right, and I think that is a credit to the players. Those guys, whether they are getting the reps, they have to know what they are doing. Odell goes out early, and those guys have to know where to line up. It is a credit to the players, and I think it is a credit to the coaches. (Pass game coordinator/wide receivers coach) Chad O’Shea does a great job with those receivers and making sure that they know that when we need them, they have to be ready. I think that is what those guys proved today.”

On if this win does more for the team, given the way they were able to come back in a close, competitive game:

“You are going to play in these type of games every year in the NFL. You are going to have to come and win a game in a two-minute drive. I told the team last night, ‘You might have to go win it on the last play of the game.’ It has to be your mentality. To see them operate situationally was very impressive. Can we build off of that? Absolutely, there are a ton of things we can build off as long as we make sure that we are cleaning up in the areas that we need to clean up.”

On his message to Mayfield before the game-winning drive:

“Just in those situations, you speak very matter of factly to each other. We talked about the situation – how many timeouts we had, which was none; how far we had to go; some passes we had coming up and just giving him some reminders on the drive. He was ready to operate.”



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On how impressive it was to see Peoples-Jones come up with big receptions and the game-winning catch at the end of the game, given Peoples-Jones had zero catches and limited offensive playing time entering the game:

“Rookie in his first extended action, pretty impressive. He has had to go in there, back to Dallas when (WR) KhaDarel Hodge went out during pregame, and he did not miss a beat. He went in there and lined up everywhere we wanted him to line up and did his job. I appreciate a lot of the guys on this team. They just do their job and do not say anything and just go about their business. Donovan definitely fits that to a T.”

On if it is significant that Mayfield showed trust in Peoples-Jones with the target on the game-winning TD:

“Yeah, and I think Baker has great trust in all these guys. I think we spread the ball around. You saw Harrison score a touchdown down there, and David scored a touchdown. I think he has great faith and all these guys.”

On Mayfield playing through a cracked rib and his toughness and performance today:

“We have been talking about it last week and talking about it this week, he is gutting it out. He is a tough, tough kid. I think all of you guys know that about him. That does not surprise me that he is able to push through. It is not easy. He works hard at it. He grinds through it. Again, that tells you the type of person we are dealing with here.”

On if Beckham avoided an ACL injury:

“I am going to wait for the MRI before we know. I would not speculate.”

On how both QBs battled in today’s back-and-forth game and Bengals QB Joe Burrow’s performance as a rookie:

“Battle is a good word. That is what it felt like. Guys were trading body blows and then went for the knockout punch there. To see those two young quarterbacks doing that, we have a ton of respect for their team and have a ton of respect for their quarterback based on our first game. We knew what type of challenges he would present.”

On if the Browns could have potentially gotten in a hole following the rough start of the game and let the game snowball:

“I did not feel that from our guys. We were not connecting. We had a dropped screen that we really felt was set up well, and we dropped the ball. It is a long game. We know that. We talked about having to play for three hours-plus today. That is what it was going to take. We are not going to get down if we have a couple of plays that do not go our way early.”

On his emotions during today’s back-and-forth game:

“Honesty, I feel like we have been in these game like this. I think we have been down in a bunch of our games. We talk a lot about resiliency, how to act in those moments, how to carry yourself and how to think in those moments. I think that is nothing new to our guys. They understand that this is the National Football League and you are going to have to battle through it.”

On if he altered play calls at all early in the game to help Mayfield establish a rhythm following a slow start to the game:

“I would agree with you, and the play caller needs to do a better job early to get him in that rhythm. I can do a better job.”

On the difference between Mayfield’s performance the first and second quarter and if Mayfield’s injured rib was a factor:

“No, I think we had a couple of plays we liked and thought they had a chance. They did not. We kind of pivoted and went a different way. Again, that is something I take pride in making sure that I get our quarterbacks off to a good start, and I did not do that well enough today for him.”



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On WR Rashard Higgins taking advantage of his playing time and being a key contributor to today's win after being a healthy scratch for a few games early in the season:

"I would not discount him having a great attitude. At practice – he was a healthy scratch and that is how the numbers played out – he just went about his business and did his job. He was on special teams, and he has been giving a look. I think that is such a big part of this, knowing that his number was going to be called at some point. Another thing you can't discount is the rapport between him and the quarterback. Obviously, there is something there. He has a great feel for throwing to Hollywood. Again, I give great credit to the kid when earlier in the season he was not getting the reps that I am sure he wanted."

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***QB Baker Mayfield
Cleveland Browns at Cincinnati Bengals Postgame Zoom Interview
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QB Baker Mayfield:

On his performance after the first quarter:

“I just got back on track. The ball to (WR) Odell (Beckham Jr.), we knew we were going to have a one on one and wanted to give him a chance. I didn’t do that and left it short and inside. I am probably going to beat myself up about that one for a long time. He is a guy who fights for this team, and in doing that, he got hurt. Prayers and hopes for the best. That one sucks. Just had to refocus and find completions.”

On getting into a rhythm following the slow start to set a Browns record for consecutive completions in a game:

“It is just a necessary mindset of doing whatever it takes to win. Having to watch that first quarter – Stop. Drop. Shut ‘em down. Open up shop. Like, oh no. That’s how Ruff Ryders roll.”

On his mindset going into the game-winning drive:

“(QB) Case (Keenum) and I were talking. We said they left us too much time. We got on the field, and everyone was talking about how we had to get to the 30 for a field goal. I told the guys, ‘Screw that. We are going to win. No need to settle for that. Just go do our job.’ Those guys made unbelievable plays. Obviously, Higgy (WR Rashard Higgins) on the contested catch going up the high-pointing the ball. (WR) Donovan (Peoples-Jones) going up to the line of scrimmage and have a vertical seam called. Number 23 Bengals CB Darius Phillips) got me earlier in the game and I had to get him back.”

On if there was a play that he felt helped really get the Browns offense back on track:

“I think when we came out and scored right away. The mindset of what we were doing, everyone was doing their job and next man up mentality. I don’t think there was any one specific play, but if I had to pick, it might be the back-shoulder throw to Higgy on the third down. It was a crucial third down.”

On if today’s win could be a defining moment for the Browns’ season:

“I think this game could have given this offense confidence to realize we can believe and trust in everybody. We always have a chance if we believe in that. It was the most important game to date because it was the next one. Right now, we are going to enjoy it. We are 5-2. We have a great opponent coming into our house before the bye week next week.”

On bouncing back following criticism after last week’s loss:

“What criticism are you talking about?”

On clarifying national media criticism after last week’s loss:

“Sorry, I don’t know who they are.”

On the QB battle with Bengals QB Joe Burrow:

“I have a tremendous amount of respect for him. From the games that I watched him play in college and seeing him in person, he is an incredible leader. He elevates his team. You can see it now. I think he is going to be very successful for a long time. It is always fun to watch a guy like that take over. It is fun to watch. Joe is a great player and a great leader, and I told him that.”

On players like TE Harrison Bryant, Peoples-Jones and Higgins stepping up after Beckham’s early injury:



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“For starters, also (TE) Austin Hooper having emergency appendicitis surgery, and just the mindset of last-minute having guys step in and do things that they weren’t practicing all week. Obviously, Odell going down mid-game is not great, but we had a ton of guys step up. You never want to have to go through that, but this team is resilient, and our guys showed that today.”

On WR Jarvis Landry and him also playing through rib injuries:

“Jarvis and I love the game of football. There is never a moment where we do not want to be successful. We are extremely motivated, and we do everything with a purpose. Jarvis today did not have the stats that probably showed, but he had so many crucial plays that he made. [Beckham] is his best friend and his brother that went down so to mentally be able to have success after his best friend goes down like that and not knowing the circumstances, hats off to Jarvis. He is a true leader for this team and will continue to be, no matter what the production is.”

On if Landry and he were in the hospital together getting their ribs checked out:

“From a safe distance apart, yes.”

On being 5-2 and if the Browns have something special going, following his comments last week about 4-2 never feeling so much like 0-6:

“I think it was the next game is the most important one. I think we will look back at the film and realize that we can do a lot of things better early on and help out our team overall, but there are a lot of things that we did in the second half to build on – critical plays that were made and guys stepping up. That is the most important part. Like I said a few weeks ago, it is always better to learn from a win than a loss.”

On how a QB establishes a rhythm when things are not going well and timing is off:

“Just getting back to the basics. Finding completions. Trusting my guys. Not trying to do too much I think is the most important part for me. We did just that. Trusted our offensive linemen to block and went through the progressions.”

On Head Coach Kevin Stefanski adjusting the play calling in the second quarter to help him find easy completions and establish a rhythm:

“Yeah, I feel that. Trying to get a little spark going where we can get in a rhythm because it does start with just executing, finding completions and keeping the change moving. Yeah I can feel that, but after that, it was just everybody was in rhythm making plays.”

On his reaction after seeing Beckham go down early and if he talked to Beckham after the game:

“First, it sucks. No words. I would be lying to say that I was not beating myself up about it. To go into halftime and see him, and I told him I love him, and he said, ‘Go be great.’ That was what he left me with to open up the second half. That was something I continued to remember throughout the second half.”

On if today’s win can help ‘bring the fun’ back for him and help him realize that this is how he needs to play:

“Throughout this week, I was reminded by some very key people and very important people in my life that I have support from them no matter what. That was extremely vital throughout the day. Knowing that we were going to out the second half of play for O also goes with that. Keeping the faith and keeping the belief is extremely important. I have made it this far because I had people supporting me along the way, no matter the circumstances. Just to believe in that and know that I have their love and support is always play confident.”

On if he has ever had 20 consecutive completions in a game:

“I do not know. Maybe. I do not know. Not real sure.”

On what consecutive completions do for his confidence:

“That is mentally where I am used to being – I can make any throw, just getting into a rhythm. It starts with protection. Those guys making a ton of plays and protecting the ball so we can make those plays. We have



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great skill players. It is just all about executing. That is all that matters. This was a good team win. It does not matter how we do it. We are happy about it, but we are on to the Raiders now.”

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LB B.J. Goodson
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LB B.J. Goodson:

On the excitement after QB Baker Mayfield led a game-winning drive after the Bengals offense performed well during the game:

“That was the prime example of everybody having everyone’s back. There have been games where it has been vice versa or whatever the case may have been. That is just a prime example of our team having each other’s back.”

On the near interception by CB Terrance Mitchell:

“After that play, I went over to him and I got on him about body language because it is important. We did not get the ball on that play, and it is all about the next play. It was an opportunity for us for sure, but we still have to compete and defend.”

On young players like TE Harrison Bryant and WR Donovan Peoples-Jones stepping up in big moments during today’s win:

“There are no other words than it was beautiful to see those guys thrive in those moments. Like I told the guys before the game, today is a beautiful day only because it is another day for opportunity. They took full advantage of their opportunity today.”

On what is going through his mind on the Hail Mary at the end of the game:

“Do not get it in. Whether it turns it into rugby football or whether it is a Hail Mary, do not let them get them in. That is it.”

On WR Odell Beckham Jr. going down early with an injury and how it impacted the team and game:

“As far as in the game, it is a part of the sport. I have dealt with my own injuries in the past, and everyone else deals with it. This is a physical game. As far as afterwards, he was one of the first guys on my mind so I went back and talked to him and just told him that I was with him and I am praying for him. He is not on this journey alone. Especially guys who have been through injuries, we understand. You have other guys who will bash or say whatever about players. As far as football goes, we play a physical game, and it is a part of the game.”

On how impressed he is by Bengals QB Joe Burrow:

“The kid is pretty good. I will give him his credit. I will not take anything away from him.”

On the significance of DE Myles Garrett and CB Denzel Ward making big plays in today’s win:

“It is always big. It is always big when we can get our hands on the ball or get negative plays against the offense. That is big. I always talk to those guys about stepping up in big moments and key moments.”

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TE Harrison Bryant
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TE Harrison Bryant:

On his emotions after having a career game with two touchdowns in today's win:

"Late in the week, (TE Austin) Hooper went down. He had his surgery. Me and (TE) David (Njoku) knew that we had to come in, step up and make plays. Coming into the game, we knew that there would be opportunities. We just wanted to take full advantage of those opportunities. We did that today. Obviously, stuff we can still improve on, but going out and scoring two touchdowns in a game like that and winning at the end, it is huge. A lot of emotions. It was a great feeling."

On QB Baker Mayfield having 21 consecutive completions after a slow start:

"We always talk about keep working, even when things are bad. You know to never get too high and never get too low. To start off like that and end up having a great game, that just speaks to him and how focused he was and ready to go, and he knew the gameplan. To finish the game like that and come out with a big win, it was impressive."

On how surprised he was by the news of Hooper's appendectomy and knowing that he would be the next man up:

"It was very out of the blue. We were in the tight end meeting room, and he didn't come in. Coach was like 'Yeah, he has a stomach ache.' We went out on the practice field and figured the news out so we were like, 'Wow.' First off, just hoping he was alright and that everything was going to be good with him. Then me and David were talking about how we have to go in, step up and make plays."

On if he has spoken with Hooper following the surgery:

"Everybody has checked on him. I haven't personally texted him, just because I knew he just had surgery. I have asked everybody. I know (QB) Baker (Mayfield) has gone by to visit him and stuff, and he is doing good."

On WR Donovan Peoples-Jones having a big catch and how it felt to see Peoples-Jones have that special moment as another rookie:

"It was awesome. Right when we came in the locker room, I went up to him and talked to him. It is a great feeling. I remember how I felt when I scored the first touchdown against Washington. Just to know that feeling and really know the magnitude of that play where he scored the touchdown is incredible. It was a great play."

On the feeling on the Browns sideline before the game-winning drive:

"It was calm. We knew exactly what we needed to do. We needed to go out, and first off, get three to tie the game, but our mindset always going in is to just go down and score to end it. We went out, executed well and made some big plays. Everybody made some big plays on that drive. It was awesome to see it all come together and get the win."

On Njoku's TD catch:

"We had that play in this week and saw it in practice a few times. It was a look we wanted kind of. He went out and made an amazing catch, an amazing play in a big moment of the game. I was happy for him. It was an incredible moment of the game. It is one of the best plays of the game, honestly, was that catch. It was impressive."

On Mayfield playing with a cracked rib:



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“It speaks a lot to his toughness and what kind of competitor he is. He is going to come out and play for the team every week. It showed today – his toughness and how he finished the game. The final drive and how he plays, it was impressive.”

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Joel Bitonio
Cleveland Browns @ Cincinnati Bengals Postgame Zoom Interview
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G Joel Bitonio:

On QB Baker Mayfield's performance today:

"He is resilient. He fights. He scratches. That is what he has done his whole life. I did not know what the stats were, but I know we started playing well on offense and it had a lot to do with Baker Mayfield. On that last drive, no quit, no timeouts and to come down and make a play like that to win the game, it is big time stuff. It was very impressive."

On Mayfield's message to the team prior to the last few offensive drives:

"We were communicating. We did not know what the defense was going to do. We were hoping they got the ball back, but they scored on us there. We were just communicating, whether we were going to be in four-minute or a two-minute offense. We were trying to decide that. Once we got the ball, it was him directing us. Making sure before we went out there to tell us that we have no timeouts, to get out of bounds and get the ball back to the ref. All of those little simple things you go over in training camp and you go over weekly but you actually have to put it in action. When we threw that touchdown, they called a timeout right before, and he said, 'Let's go for one'. We went for the touchdown, and it was a heck of a play."

On what winning a tough game says about the Browns as a team:

"We pick each other up. If we were going to have our shot, we were running the ball fine, but we did not have any sustained drives. They held the ball a lot in the first quarter, and we just had not got on track yet. There was a real focus on just getting the next drive going, getting going and moving in the right direction. Once we got those first drives going, at halftime, I think we had 10 points, but we felt like we could score when we got the ball back. We figured out a way to get moving and to get the ball going. It is just resilience. (Head) Coach (Kevin Stefanski) talks about it every day. It is a team win every week. The offense steps up sometimes, and sometimes the defense steps up or special teams steps up. We found a way to get a win."

On C J.C. Tretter getting banged up in the first quarter and if he was concerned their consecutive snap streak may end:

"I went to go check on him, and he was in a lot of pain. I thought it was done for, but he finds a way to make it back onto the field. That is just what he does. He is tough, and he is prideful. He cares about his teammates, and he thinks being on the field is the best thing for his team. It is going to take a lot to get that guy off the field. It is impressive stuff, and it inspires me. I was ready to roll with him once he came back out."

On his reaction when WR Odell Beckham Jr was hurt early in the game:

"It is tough. Him and J.C. went down on the same play, and I was hoping it was not something serious. I really do not know [the severity]. I know he missed the rest of the game. That is a key part of our offense. He takes the tops off defenses. He empties boxes for us. He makes big plays. Anytime you miss a player like that, it is tough. He is kind of an emotional guy too so he brings some energy in that sense and so you lose that. Credit to the guys – (WR Rashard) Higgins, DPJ (WR Donovan Peoples-Jones) – they all stepped up and made some big plays. (TE) Harrison Bryant and these young guys were balling out. It was very cool to see."

On bouncing back from the Steelers loss with an exciting win this week:

"It was a loss last week and we got beat, but we are just trying to take it one week at a time. We were 4-2 on the season, and we were trying to move onto this week. We would have liked winning by more, but winning the way we won, there is no other feeling like it in football. That is why you play the game. Those moments are so special, and it is pretty impressive. It is fun to be a part of and all the pieces came together, and that is



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why you play the game. You have moments like that, and you will think about those moments your whole life.”

On his mindset during the Bengals’ Hail Mary pass, considering it was a QB battle all day long:

“Oh man, it was a little nerve-wracking. I was just hoping the ball would hit the ground or fall into one of our guys’ hands. I didn’t know what the call was or anything like that, but I was just like, ‘Get the ball down.’ They had been making plays all game in the passing game, and luckily, we stopped that one.”

On WR Jarvis Landry’s performance while playing injured, especially on the second quarter TD drive, and whether that type of commitment can be contagious for the whole team:

“They are professionals. They play this game. They don’t miss games. That is what they do, and he wants to win and you can see that in the way he plays the game. You know he is hurting out there, but you know he is going to be in there. He is a mentor for those young receivers. They see him doing the right thing out there, and they are going to make sure they are taking the right steps and doing the right thing, too. There are so many guys that stepped up today. When you win a game on the last second, every key play is important, and that drive was just as important as the last drive.”

On what winning this type of competitive game means and what it says about the Browns as a team this year:

“We are resilient as a team. We talk about consistency and just playing each week one week at a time. There is no quit in these guys. We fought through it. We needed a field goal on the last drive, but we went down and got a touchdown. That is how it is. We talk about it. The offense picks up the defense. The defense picks up the offense. It is a team game. Luckily, we came down, we executed at the end and we got that win. Like you said, it is the next win. We are 5-2 now. We will look at the film, and we will move on to the next week and try and go 1-0 next week.”

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*DE Myles Garrett
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DE Myles Garrett:

On the Hail Mary and his mindset when the ball was in the air:

“Why is nobody rushing? Why am I not out there rushing? I wanted to run, but just like coach says, sometimes when I can be the guy on play action and get a sack when you are supposed to be setting the run – ‘No, no! Yes, yes!’ and that just turns into a big play. We won so I can’t really complain.”

On looking at this game as a defensive player:

“We look at it as a win. As a defender, I look at it as we can get better. There were definitely opportunities for us to get off the field. Plays could have been made on the ball. At times, we have to scramble and are out of breath. Whether it was up the middle run games or through the D, we have to keep him from getting away. He is a talented quarterback, and we have seen that. He has been playing well, but we can’t let him control the game like that. We did just enough.”

On QB Baker Mayfield playing with a cracked rib and leading a game-winning drive:

“He is a competitor, and he wants to win. He is out there and is going to do the job the best he can to 100 percent of his ability. We have all seen it is good enough to win games. I am proud of him.”

On if seeing a QB play with a cracked rib crosses over to the defense:

“We know he is hurting. We know that he is going to do the very best he can and that we are going to do the best we can for him.”

On producing his second strip-sack against Bengals QB Joe Burrow:

“Just making a play. It is not like I see him being bad protecting the ball. I am just going for the ball, no matter who it is. He just happened to put it up there for me.”

On if this is a game he will remember forever:

“Forever? Definitely one I will look back on fondly. I would agree. Those close games and close wins, you have to call back on them. Whether you are up or down, that is how you fall back on your fundamentals, remember how you won those games and know what to do in those situations.”

On the back-and-forth nature of the game:

“It does not have to be pretty. That is the game. Gritty and grimy, and you have to be tough. At the end of the day, you have to get the win and have more points than them. If you are doing well on defense, you have a chance.”

On winning even though there were issues on defense:

“No matter what happens, as long as we pull it out, I am going to be alright and we are going to be alright.”

On WRs Rashard Higgins and Donovan Peoples-Jones performing after WR Odell Beckham, Jr. sustained an injury:

“They can make plays. They have shown that. DPJ has shown that. Higgins has shown that over the years. It is just getting that spotlight on them, and they were ready for it. They have gotten those moments already in practice, and it is just about bringing that to the field. We all were witness to that.”

On Mayfield having 21 consecutive completions after having a rough start to the game:



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“He loves to call himself a gunslinger. Hell, I agree with him completely. He is going to live or die by his arm. He is going to believe in it. Wherever he puts it, he is going to try to make the best possible play he can on that play. We live and die by that. Whatever happens, we are going to have his back. If we have to go out there and put out the fire, we will. Just like today, he is going to win the game for us and we couldn’t be more proud.”

On his mindset during the Hail Mary pass at the end:

“Please God don’t let him catch it. When I saw it get bobbled in the air, and I was like, ‘Oh, if he catches this off this tip, I am going to lose it.’ It didn’t come to that.”

On how he felt after the game:

“Tired, just like the last one. At the end of the day, I have to just have a little bit more juice than the guy I am going against and have a better plan than what he is expecting of me and how he plans to block me. I know it is a joint effort with them, whether it is chipping, sliding my way or whatever they have to do to get me off my game. I just have to be there, be disruptive, strike the quarterback and affect his timing, and if I don’t get there, allow others to be freed up one on one or a free runner to get to the quarterback.”

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10-25-20

WR Rashard Higgins:

On his patience during the season to produce in today's game after being a healthy scratch for a few games earlier in the season:

"We do it at practice. It is nothing new to the team and nothing new to me. I do it day in and day out. I work hard, wait for my opportunity and make the most of it."

On keeping his spirits up when he was inactive for games earlier in the season:

"Self-motivated. I always knew my time would come. It eventually came. Like I have been saying, I made the most of it"

On QB Baker Mayfield's 21 consecutive competitions and game-winning drive while playing with a rib injury:

"That is our leader. We look to him to leads us, and he came up big today."

On Mayfield's mentality in the huddle prior to the game-winning drive:

"We do two-minute drives all the time in practice. It was a situational thing, go down and no timeouts. We needed three and got seven."

On his situational awareness to get out of bounds on the catch in the final drive:

"Thinking no timeouts, catch the ball inbounds and try to get out of bounds. I love being a smart player. I have to be going forward for the clock to stop. I just tried my best to get out of bounds and just made a play."

On if his instincts took over in that moment to get out of bounds:

"It is instincts and a football play."

On WR Donovan Peoples-Jones:

"He has been in the same predicament as me. Stay ready so you don't have to get ready. It showed up. We knew once (WR) Odell (Beckham Jr.) went down, he was going to play a big part of this offense. He did his thing today. We have to go back and look at the film. There are some things we can clean up, but we did a good job of showing up today."

On the feeling being 5-2 compared, particularly after his season last year:

"I want to get to the playoffs. I am going to do whatever it takes. Wherever coach needs me, I am going to be there."

On his connection and rapport with Mayfield showing up late in the game:

"Playing football. That is all I can really tell you. We are playing football. He knows me, and I know him. There is nothing to say about that. It is wine poured in a cup – smooth."

On several players' mentality and if they feel like they something to prove:

"Nothing to prove. It is just stepping up. One of our brothers went down today, a sad moment. We hope he can come back soon, but we have to step up. (Pass game coordinator/wide receivers) Coach (Chad) O'Shea does a good job of putting us in a position to not handicap us and make sure we know everything on the field. When (WR) Jarvis (Landy) goes down, when (WR) Odell (Beckham) goes down or one of the tight ends go down, we need to be able to play four receivers. That is what we need to do so we need to know the position."



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

On if this is a game he will remember forever:

“Absolutely. My boy DPJ got his first touchdown on the game winning drive. That is what it is all about.”

On the back-and-forth game adding to it being memorable:

“I just want to win at the end of the day and go to the playoffs. I have been saying 0-16, that hurts my stomach knowing that we actually went through that. It made us tough. It made me tough. It made me resilient. Whatever I can do as I have been saying, I want to do it. I worked hard in the offseason so when the time comes and presents itself, you have to make it. That is what I want to do.”

On if he is savoring every second of being 5-2:

“It is unreal sometimes and where we came from. We are not there yet, though.”

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BENGALS POSTGAME QUOTES
OCT. 25, 2020
CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI

ZAC TAYLOR
Head coach

What is the message to your team after a loss like that, given the nature of losing a game in the fourth quarter for the fifth time this season?

"Stick together. You could tell it was an emotional locker room afterward for the right reasons. It's guys, that moment after in the locker room — it's tough to find those words (to say to them), because you totally felt like you were going to win and you (didn't). That has happened to us a couple times. This is a team that believes it can put together a winning streak — one game, two games, three games, four games, five games — we believe in it. We just we just haven't done it. We haven't proven it to the outside world, but we're going to stick together. I can promise you that. It's a group of men I'm proud to coach. We're going to get through this, we're going to stick together, (and) there's much better days ahead."

How much of Cleveland's last offensive drive was a matter of Baker Mayfield being as hot as he was passing vs. the Bengals having coverage issues?

"(We had) a sack; if we could just finish on ... the first or second play (of that drive). They've got the clock running. They're in disarray. He (Mayfield) pulls out of it and finds a completion. Then he gets some one-on-one situations ...

"Last week, it was a bunch of zone coverage and they had some good success, so we put a bit of man coverage, (and) they won some one-on-one opportunities. That's just the way it goes, and it's unfortunate it went down that way."

How would describe Joe Burrow's performance today?

"Awesome. Awesome."

Why was he so effective throughout the day and why was he so resilient in the fourth quarter?

"He's always that way, though. You look at (the) last game — there aren't many bad decisions I'm putting on his plate (that I would say he was responsible for). The first interception, he's got to throw a better ball there, and there was a sack or two there (where) he's got to get rid of the ball. Those were all in the first half. Those were all in the first two drives, maybe. From there, you can call any play and trust it's going to be executed. You're going to find explosives on non-explosive calls. He's going to extend plays. He's good with his feet. He makes everybody around him better."

Can you take us through the call to go for the touchdown on the fourth-and-one play? What made that play work?

"Gio (Bernard). Gio made it work. Gio did a heck of the job with the motion. At first, he's motioning across and the safety didn't run with him. I was concerned there for a moment — we've got other options — but he sold it, he lost his man, and then was free in the flat. So it was really good execution by all those guys, but I'd give most of the credit to Gio there."

You had been really successful with quarterback sneaks all day. Did you think about running one there?

"Sneaks aren't great against every front, though. You have to actually see what they're in before you just put the football in the referee's hands, you know? That was not an option right there. You can call a sneak and hope that the ref is on your side for that one play, but we felt good about the play call there."

What was the reason Baker Mayfield completed 20 consecutive passes?

"He was hot. He was hot, you know? You've got to give credit to him, but there were a bunch of snaps in man coverage there where they made the plays, and we did not."

Your starting left tackle, right tackle and center all went down with injuries. Have you ever been in a game where you've had that happen before?

"I haven't, but this is a resilient group as you've ever been around. No one can see it because no one comes in the locker room, and no one's going to say it because we can't win, but it's as resilient a group as I've ever been around, and they just have faith in the next man up. The next man ... come in and make a play, we're counting on

you to do your job.

"I'm just really impressed with the backups that came in the game on limited reps (in practice), even Mason Schreck. Cethan (Carter) woke up this morning and couldn't go. Mason Schreck had no idea that was coming his way, and he stepped up and was our second tight end. We had a big tight end with Fred (Johnson), and then he (Fred) had to move to left tackle and then to right tackle, so we lost that. But the guys just kept their heads up and kept chugging along. I think we had only two turnovers — I don't think we ever punted, if I remember correctly. They just kept getting the job done."

Why were the offensive screens working so well today?

"They (the Browns) were doing a nice job stopping the run. Sometimes, on the stat sheet, it's going to say you had a bunch of passes when you really didn't — you're just supplementing the run game with the screens, some of those 'specials' and some of those quick gains. They're just long handoffs — that's all that is. I thought that we did a good job in executing that today."

How confident are you right now, not only as a play caller, but also in your offense as a whole?

"(I) couldn't (have) more confidence. Those guys believe those plays are going to work. They make every play work, and it doesn't (even) have to be the best play call. They just get it done. There's belief right now in that room that they can score on every play, and they're trying to do that. Now you're starting to see guys run after the catch, and that's been something that's been missing for a while. I thought today guys did a good job in that area stepping up."

How concerning is it for you that Baker Mayfield didn't have an incompleteness — save for a spike — past the first quarter?

"That's not what you want to see. We've got to do a better job getting to the quarterback with our rushes and our pressures, and then holding it down on the back end."

Despite losing Austin Hooper, Cleveland's tight ends had three touchdowns today. What was the problem in stopping them?

"Two of them stand out. They ran a quick out (pattern) and they beat us early in the game. And then he threw a great ball strike out, or some five-step slant or something, where I thought Vonn (Bell) was in really good position, (but Mayfield) put it in about the only (spot) you could put it. I'm not sure who made the catch, but they did a really great job. I can't think of the third one, but they did a really good job, and we've got to be the ones tightening down the coverage and making the plays."

Carlos Dunlap looked to be yelling on the sidelines at either coaches or players. He posted the defensive depth chart earlier this weekend on Instagram, calling you out. How frustrating is that situation right now? Is it a distraction to your team?

"We just handle that internally. We (have) a group of guys in the locker room who want so badly to do things the right way and get this to where we want to be. That's who we put our focus on."

Dunlap is one of the designated "pass rushers," and the defense has had zero sacks in the last two games. How frustrating is that?

"We've got to do a better job up front (with) just everybody getting (more) pressure on the passer."

JOE BURROW
Quarterback

How challenging is it trying to match someone was as hot as Baker Mayfield was today?

"He played unbelievable. That last drive was impressive. I thought we had him, and he was able to get the ball off and not get sacked. Hats off to him, he played great."

What else can you do to help your team win?

"I had two turnovers. I have to stop doing that. I've had a turnover in three straight games. I can't do that."

You lost three starting offensive linemen today, but the reserves seemed to step in and play well ...

"They really did. Bill (C/G Billy Price), Fred (G/OT Fred Johnson), and Hakeem (G Hakeem Adeniji) came in there and battled. I was proud of those guys for coming and playing the way they did. They played their tails off for us and stepped up when their number was called."

Your two biggest passing games this year have come against the Browns. What have you been doing to be so successful against them?

"It doesn't matter to me. Football is about letters, not numbers — W and L. We took an L today."

On the fourth and one at the end of the game, can you walk us through that TD pass to Giovani Bernard?

"We had two plays called. It was either a sneak or that one. They didn't give us a look we wanted with the sneak — (they were) packing it in there. Gio did a great job with his motion getting himself open."

Did the Browns defense do anything differently this second time around?

"They blitzed a little more than they did at the beginning of the game. We were kind of gashing them with the check downs, so they got away from that toward the end of the game."

How hard is it to stick together during this 1-5-1 start?

"We have a bunch of great guys in the locker room. And a great coaching staff. Zac (Bengals head coach Zac Taylor) is going to get us to where we want to go. I know everyone is down in the dumps right now. The fan base is frustrated, just as we are. We're 1-5-1, but we have a great guy at the helm in Zac, who called a great game today. He's going to keep us together. He's the leader of the team, the leader of the organization."

It seemed like you were having a lot of success on screens today ...

"Yes. That's what was gashing them when they were blitzing. We called screens, and got them in blitzes a lot, so that got them away from the blitzing. That was a good part of the game plan today."

On the incomplete pass to A.J. Green in the end zone, it looked like you weren't even looking. You dropped the snap and then got the pass off quickly. It looked like you knew right where you were going ...

"I was going to A.J. the whole time. I have to catch that snap — that's unfortunate. Denzel (Browns CB Denzel Ward) made an unbelievable play there. A.J. had it in his hands and was shielding him with his back. Denzel reached over his back and punched it out. That's a big-time play."

What do you need to be doing to in the fourth quarter in order to convert these games into wins?

"We kicked some field goals down there (in the red zone), that ended up being the difference in the game. And we turned the ball over. I think we ended up scoring on every drive in the second half, but we just have to score touchdowns every time instead of field goals."

Can you describe the feeling of leading that last TD drive to take the lead late?

"It's what I expect of myself. It's exciting, but I expect myself to do that every week. I want the ball in my hand at the end of the game. I'm comfortable, and I'm confident I'm going to go down and make a play to win. Unfortunately Baker was playing out of his mind and led that two-minute drive after it."

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