



# CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

*Head Coach Kevin Stefanski  
Cleveland Browns at Kansas City Chiefs Postgame Zoom Interview  
AFC Divisional Round  
1-17-21*

**Head Coach Kevin Stefanski:**

**Opening statement:**

“Injury wise, (T) Jedrick Wills (Jr.) has an ankle injury, (DE) Myles (Garrett) has an oblique injury and (T) Kendall Lamm has an elbow injury. Obviously, we will get more information on those tomorrow.

“I am extremely disappointed that we were not able to get the job done today. We had our opportunity there late in that ball game, and we did not do it. We are going to share in this defeat like we share in those victories, and it hurts. There is a finality to this one when you do not get it done in the playoffs, and that really hurts. I appreciate how our guys battled. They fought like they do every single week, and it just was not enough today.”

**On if he was surprised by Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid’s decision to go for it on fourth down at the end of the game:**

“They have been very aggressive in a lot of those moments so that did not surprise me. Us getting a stop there, we would be set up so there is risk involved in their decision, but they trusted their guys and they made a play. Our defense put us in position many times in that game – holding them to a field that they missed there after the interception and getting an interception in the end zone there. Again, we are going to win as a team and lose as a team.

**On if he considered going for it on fourth-and-9 on the Browns’ final drive:**

“No, that was just probably too long there at that distance. If it was tighter, without a doubt.”

**On WR Rashard Higgins’ fumble for a touchback and if he thought Chiefs S Daniel Sorensen led with his head on the hit and should have been a penalty:**

“Honestly, I did not see the replay. I was told about it, but I will let the league handle those types of things.”

**On Higgins reaching the ball out at the goal line on the fumble:**

“I will never ever doubt Rashard Higgins’ effort or our guys’ effort. Our rule there is not to reach the ball out when it is first and goal, and he knows that. Again, appreciate his effort. He battled like he always does, but we have to fight that urge because it is such a big loss if it does end up being a touchback.”

**On factors into the team making uncharacteristic mistakes during today’s game, particularly in the first half:**

“We talked about that at halftime. We had three drives for three points [in the first half], a bunch of drops, penalties, bad play calls and all of it. It just was not good enough. You can’t come in here and ultimately score 17 points and get a win versus this team. That first half, I do not think that was a clean operation like we ask for.”

**On reflecting on what the Browns were able to accomplish this season:**

“I will reflect later. Right now, it stings when you do not get the job done that you came to get done.”

**On how much he talks with Browns players about not reaching the ball out at the goal line in that situation:**

“Let me be very, very clear: Rashard Higgins is a warrior. He has battled all season long. He has done everything that I have asked him to do from the moment we get together in July. I am never going to doubt that kid’s effort. He is a team player all the way. An unfortunate play, and he understands the rule and I understand



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the rule. We will continue to coach our guys, but Rashard Higgins, I am proud to coach him because he gives you everything he has.”

**On if it is a difficult situation for a player when trying to get to the pylon however possible but a touchback can be the consequence if he fumbles:**

“That is what the rule is.”

**On if he watched the replay of Sorensen’s hit on Higgins:**

“I have not seen the replay. Again, I will leave those things to the league.”

**On the significance of the momentum swing of Higgins’ fumble:**

“There were a bunch of moments in that game that did not go our way that need to in order to win on the road versus Super Bowl champs. Obviously, our goal there was to double-dip – get a touchdown and then come back and play well in the first drive of the second half. We really did not do either so that is disappointing from an offensive standpoint. That is where I point the finger at me and say, ‘What can I do better there?’”

**On how this game shows the Browns’ ability to compete with the best teams in the NFL:**

“Just in talking to the team, it stings. We came here to win, and we did not get it done. There is a finality to that. We are going to be one of 31 teams that did not get it done. There is only one that does each season. That is where we are going to measure ourselves. Ultimately, that is what our charge is. We want to be the last team standing, and we were not. To say where we are in that whole group, I do not know. I know we did not get our job done today.”

**On coming back from a 19-3 deficit and being down one-possession to the defending Super Bowl champions in the fourth quarter:**

“I am proud of this team. We have a bunch of fighters. We knew that we were going to have to weather the storm and we knew it was going to be close. In that close moment, we had to go take it, and we did not get it done. Again, we will share in that defeat, and it hurts. I feel for our guys because they battled. They fought, and I am not surprised because they have done it all season long.”

**On Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes leaving the game due to a concussion:**

“Obviously, I was very sorry to see him get hurt. I hope that he clears and is better very quickly. He is a great player, a great ambassador for this league. You do not want to see anybody get hurt in those moments. That is a really good football team. We knew that going into it. They are deep really across the board. They have great players, and I really respect (Chiefs Head) Coach (Andy) Reid, his staff and what they have been able to build there.”

**On only having one timeout late in the game and the decision to challenge late in the game and not challenging one earlier:**

“All of those decisions, that is on me. I should have been better there. There is a cost to those when you do lose those because you lose a timeout. That is on me.”

**On taking a timeout on the team’s final drive:**

“Miscommunication. Unfortunate, and that ultimately is on me.”

**On how DE Myles Garrett’s oblique inhibited Garrett during the game and how Garrett battled through the injury:**

“I do not know ultimately – I have not had a chance to talk to him. I knew of the injury and I knew he was in and out. I do not know how much it inhibited him, but obviously, some that we were not able to have him on there for every play. Myles has battled for us. He has battled through injuries all season long so not surprised he was battling through this one.”

**On Mayfield’s performance and Mayfield helping the Browns rally to within one score:**



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“He fought like he always does. He rallied. I do not think I put him in enough good spots there. The offense in general, I do not think we put them in enough good spots, but he was ready to go help us win that game. That is what he has done all season long steering this ship, being out in front and leading this group. I am proud of him. Ultimately, we know that we did not get the job done so there is a huge amount of disappointment in that, but I appreciate how he battles.”

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*QB Baker Mayfield  
Cleveland Browns at Kansas City Chiefs Postgame Zoom Interview  
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**QB Baker Mayfield:**

**On how frustrating it was to not get a final opportunity late in the game:**

“It was frustrating, but that is the way these games work. Long drives, you have to take advantage of your opportunities. We did not do that today. Yeah, it is just unfortunate.”

**On WR Rashard Higgins’ fumble into the end zone and the momentum shift after it:**

“They popped a Cover 2 on us. Obviously, it was going to be a big play. It is the easy finger-pointing answer, but there are so many other plays we could have done. Obviously, I did the cardinal sin and threw across my body in the middle of the field on the first drive coming out in the second half. We hurt ourselves in the first half, and they capitalized. That is what the good teams do so they were better than us.”

**On his message to Higgins after the play:**

“The ball always finds a way to come back to you after things like that happen, and we are counting on him. There is a whole lot of game left – obviously, a whole half considering where we were in the game. We knew we were going to get the ball coming out in the second half, and we had everything we wanted. Like I said, we hurt ourselves and they took advantage. They played extremely well and made plays when they needed to.”

**On if he saw the hit on the Higgins play and if he has any response to it:**

“I did not look at it so not really.”

**On the season ending like this after fighting through adversity all year long:**

“It sucks to be quite honest with you guys. It sucks because so many people have sacrificed so much during this process and this very strange season and overcome adversity. So many people have stepped up – families of players and families of staff – and everybody sacrificed so much for us to be able to do this. It is just unfortunate for us to come up short. It sucks because we believed in it. That is why we are here, but trying to find the positive out of it, we are setting a new standard here. Everybody is saying in the locker room and continue to tell guys that we are going to be back. It sucks when you come up short, but you get that taste of it and realize you learned lessons. For now, it is definitely going to sting. Hopefully, (Chiefs QB) Pat (Mahomes) is OK. You never want to see that. (Chief QB Chad) Henne came in and that run to get fourth and inches and then that fourth down conversion, they made the plays. It sucks. Looking at everybody from our side of the ball, we gave it our all. We just came up short.”

**On how hard it was seeing Mahomes get hurt:**

“Those hits are scary. You never want to see that, especially with obviously me being extremely familiar with Pat. You just don’t want to see that. Hopefully, he is OK. Safety first, and I hope he is OK.”

**On if he felt good about the Browns’ chances if the team would have had another possession at the end of the game:**

“We did, and I think that is what hurts the most. They went for it because I think they could feel that, too. It is what it is.”

**On the Browns offense’s struggles early in the first half:**

“We got behind a little bit – a couple of penalties here and there, a few drops and a few missed assignments. We were not ourselves in that first half and got behind a little bit.”

**On the interception at the start of the second half:**



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“Obviously, like I said, the cardinal sin of throwing late on the move over the middle of the [field]. Obviously, (Chiefs S) Tyrann (Mathieu) is a great player. (WR) Jarvis (Landry) did not see him or I am sure he would have fought for it. That is the type of player he is. I said it earlier in the week, you have to know where he is. I will look back on that. Maybe a pump fake and run, and it is a different story, but the defense did a great job of not allowing any points and keeping us in that game in that second half. We just have to capitalize. Like I said, we did not make enough plays to win today, and the Chiefs did.”

**On the Browns’ final drive and if he expected the team to go for it on fourth-and-9:**

“Obviously, when you get the ball with momentum starting to swing our way, we were confident that we were going to go out there [and score]. They decided to bring a couple of pressures and made the plays, and we did not. No, by the way the game was going believed the way we handled that situation giving the ball to them and trusting our defense the way they were playing at the time to get to stop. Like I said, there were a great couple of plays by Henne to convert there.”

**On how far the Browns came this season and the future of the franchise:**

“Obviously, each year there is turnover inside the locker room, which is unfortunate because we had an extremely special group here. Like I said, I told some of the guys that know for sure going to be back that we will be back. As I have said and restated throughout as the season has gone on, there is a new standard here and that is to be expected. This is going to leave a bad taste in our guys’ mouth for extra motivation through the offseason, but yeah, we have come a long way since I first got here. We are not done yet, and that is the best part. Obviously, it hurts to have to wait until next September to have to play, but it is what it is.”

**On how valuable it will be for the Browns to have this playoff experience moving forward:**

“I think it will be extremely valuable for our guys to look at each play matters, you have to be extremely locked in and take care of business and obviously, the atmosphere was unbelievable today. Those are valuable learning experiences that we have to truly take in and grow from.”

**On LB Mack Wilson’s hit on Mahomes and if he heard anyone accusing Wilson of a dirty hit:**

“No, I did not specifically see the hit, but Mack is not a dirty player. That is not the case. If anybody truly thinks that, that is their own opinion so they can have it that way. Like I said, I hope Pat is OK, and like I said, Mack is not like that.”

**On how tough it was to lose Ts Jedrick Wills Jr. and Kendall Lamm to injuries in today’s game:**

“Very unfortunate. Obviously, it was going to be a big game for Jed, and then losing Kendall also sucks because he has been a guy who has stepped up time and time again for us. Then ‘that guy named Blake’ stepped up again for us. It just is what it is, but like I said, we still had the plays to be made there, and we did not.”

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*DE Myles Garrett  
Cleveland Browns at Kansas City Chiefs Postgame Zoom Interview  
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**DE Myles Garrett:**

On his emotions after tonight's win:

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*WR Jarvis Landry  
Cleveland Browns at Kansas City Chiefs Postgame Zoom Interview  
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**WR Jarvis Landry:**

**On the disappointment of having momentum in the second half and not being able to capitalize on it:**

“We just could not get the ball one more time. I am proud of this group. I am proud of this team. I am proud of everything that we accomplished. Obviously, this is a tough moment because you have come through so much in the way and the passion that we did, you want to think that there are a lot of positives, but you never want to lose a game. Our ultimate goal was to win the Super Bowl, and we did not do that.”

**On being proud of the team for fighting throughout the game and season:**

“Of course. Like I said, I am proud of how we played and I am proud of the things that we accomplished. We just did not make one more play than they did today.”

**On if it is too soon to put the season into perspective and if he can speak about the foundation the team set this season:**

“Like I said, we play this game to win championships. Obviously, we always have the mindset of one game at a time. We push each other that way, but you always have your end goal in mind. We accomplished a lot, but I think right now with all of the emotions, I can’t think of everything. Like I said, I am just proud of the effort and the way that the guys played and continued to fight, being down and continuing and just trying to fight. These guys, we created a high standard, and we have to find a way to beat these teams. This one hurts, but I guess that is part of it.”

**On QB Baker Mayfield’s performance today and if he expected the Browns would score if the team received one more possession at the end of the game:**

“Of course, I believed that. Baker has played well for us. It is tough. It is just tough.”

**On the Browns making uncharacteristic errors in the first half:**

“You can’t [make those mistakes]. Things happen inside of a game. You have to try to bounce back from them. We understand that the self-inflicting things can get you beat. I still believed that we had our opportunity to win this game. It is just tough.”

**On if he saw LB Mack Wilson’s hit on Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes:**

[Shakes head ‘no’]

**On WR Rashard Higgins’ catch and fumble and if the rule about fumbling out of bounds in the end zone should be reconsidered:**

“I don’t know. I think a guy on the other side made a good play. He made an effort play. Higg was just trying to make another effort play. Hats off to both guys for competing. It did not fall in our favor on that that one.”

**On if he’s excited about the Browns’ future, including with the opportunity to add more pieces this offseason:**

“I have always been optimistic since the day I stepped foot in Cleveland. It is Believeland, and we just have to keep believing. The right pieces will fall into place. We have a great team as is. If we can add guys, that can obviously help us get better in certain areas. Obviously, that is not my call, but I know the guys who are here this year did a hell of a job this entire year, as difficult as it was, to make it as far as we did.”

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*G Joel Bitonio*  
*Cleveland Browns at Kansas City Chiefs Postgame Zoom Interview*  
*AFC Divisional Round*  
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**G Joel Bitonio:**

**On what hurts most about today's loss, including not getting a final opportunity at the end of the game:**

"Our defense played really well down the stretch there, and we were hoping for one more chance. They called a good play, and they made a big play. It was tough to not have a chance, but we had opportunities earlier in the game where we could have gotten some points and maybe made it a different ballgame."

**On how the team can grow from this year's playoff experience and if that will benefit the team down the road:**

"I hope so. Coming back next year, we will have a lot more experience. If you have been with Cleveland before, you won 7 games and that was maybe the most wins you would have. We learned how to win a little bit this year, and hopefully, we will use that experience next year and take it a little bit farther."

**On the Browns' making uncharacteristic mistakes early in the game:**

"We did not have that many opportunities on offense. We got a field goal on our first drive, and we only had three possessions in the first half. We obviously fumbled before the half, and that one hurt us a little bit. All season long, our mantra has been, 'We have to take care of the ball' and 'it is all about the ball.' We lost the turnover battle. That hurt us a little bit. We got into a rhythm in the second half, started to run the ball well and protected Baker better. In a playoff game against the world champs, you can't spot them that many points, and it is tough coming back out of that hole."

**On WR Rashard Higgins' fumble into the end zone:**

"He was fighting for that extra foot. That was his goal there. I have not talked to him directly yet. Everybody was pretty down in the locker room. We knew going into halftime that we were keeping our heads up. While it was an unfortunate play, we knew we had to play the whole second half. He had some big catches in the second half and was able to bounce back. It is something we will learn from. We will learn. It is a game of inches – literally on that play. You want a guy fighting for that last inch, and it is just is unfortunate how the ball bounced on that one."

**On the hit Higgins' fumble and if it could have potentially been a penalty for a helmet-to-helmet hit:**

"I honestly was just looking at the ball. That was the first I heard about helmet to helmet. I have not seen the review yet. I was just seeing where the ball was in relation to the pylon and where it went out of bounds. I have not seen that yet."

**On the Browns' struggling early in the run game:**

"I think we only had five runs in the first half, and we only had three possessions. They were blitzing a little bit and had some different fronts. It is tough when you only get five carries in a half and you only get 20-something plays in a half. In the last drive and the last possession we had, we were in a two-minute situation to try and score. It was kind of a mix of things. I do think we showed we could run the ball on them, and it was just the game script and game flow made it so we did not get into a rhythm early in the first half."

**On how losing Ts Jedrick Wills Jr. and Kendall Lamm impacted the Browns offense's rhythm:**

"It was a tough situation. Jed got rolled up on pretty good and then Kendall's elbow got hit pretty good. (G) Blake (Hance) came in again and I do not think he has played left tackle in a few years, and he was going out there and competing. That is all that we could ask him to do. That is part of it. You wanted to have your five linemen out there and rolling, the guys who we came in the season as starters, but it is football. Guys get banged up, and I really do think we were moving the ball pretty well in the first half. We just did not turn them



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into points, which against the Chiefs, you have to do that. I never thought we were so out of sync where it was like, 'Man, we can't do much here.' It was just converting those finishing in the red zone, which is something you have to do to win these games."

**On what was going through his mind when the Chiefs offense was facing third-and-14 on the last drive of the game and if he was expecting to get the ball back:**

"It was tough. On the sideline, we were talking about how much time we were going to have time we were going to have left – probably 1:20 or so with no timeouts. You always have faith in your defense to make a play, and that was a heads up play by him (Chiefs QB Chad Henne). He scrambled, he got it close and (Chiefs Head) Coach (Andy) Reid had a big time play call there to throw the ball on fourth-and-short. I thought they might go with the hard cadence and then maybe run a QB sneak after a timeout or something. He had faith in his offense. We were talking on the sideline and we have faith in our defense to make those plays, and they made one more play than we did today."

**On the team's mindset on the final offensive drive with a chance to take the lead:**

"We were just trying to take it one play at a time. We had a big drive and a big stop by our defense going into that drive so we felt comfortable taking our chances. We had plenty of time to go down there and score, and we were hoping to get a touchdown and then make them have to go the length of the field to get a field goal or to tie if we got the two-point conversion. You are just taking it one play a time. You never know. We could run the ball still or we could pass the ball, and that was just one thing where you just try and focus on the next play and your responsibility for those plays. If you look too much big picture, you kind of get a little fog in your head. It was cool. You have the ball to go up and score in the AFC Divisional Round of the playoffs in the fourth quarter, that is all you can really ask in that situation. Obviously, we did not handle our business, but we were taking it one play at a time and trying to give ourselves a shot."

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**DE Myles Garrett:**

**Opening statement:**

“Before we get started, I would like to say two things. One, I am definitely praying for (Chiefs QB) Patrick (Mahomes). I have known Pat since we were in high school. He has always been a great dude. I want to say that nobody on our team is head hunting, going after guys or trying to hurt a guy, no matter how good he is. We are praying for his recovery and praying for his success. He has always been a quality guy and the way he does stuff for the community. He is a leader on and off the field that you appreciate seeing, especially from a guy of that caliber and just always trying to be a positive force everywhere he goes. Second, I would like to say happy birthday to Muhamad Ali. I know he would have been 79 today. That was one of my role models. That was just a little bit of motivation for me, and he always has been. I would like to say that I’m proud of my guys. Before that question is even asked, I am proud of everything they have done this year. They fought, they battled and they made plays. We were one play away from being where we were supposed to be, but sometimes, that is just how it rolls. Those guys never stopped fighting offense on defense. That is what I am looking forward to next year to get another chance and being one play away and making it next time.”

**On his oblique injury and when it occurred:**

“I think around early second quarter I pulled my oblique. It definitely got worse. It hurt to pick up my feet and hurt to breath, but it is the playoffs. It is win or go home. If I was capable of going out there and giving it all I had, I was going to do that. I know they started to limit my snaps, but when I was getting the chance to get out there, I was going to make it happen because I know my guys are counting on me, and I know it is the same way it is reciprocated that I am counting on them to be where they’re supposed to be.”

**On his mindset after the sack of Chiefs QB Chad Henne in the fourth quarter and Henne converting on that series when many expected the Chiefs to run a hard count or punt:**

“Yeah, I thought they were going to run a play. They have offensive weapons all over the field. They are definitely going to take their shot and rally. They would rather take their shot than have to play on their back foot and give us another shot at going to the end zone. I know they are a confident on offense and rightfully so. Chad made a great play. After the sack, I was just worried about trying to get my breath back and make another. We knew that it was going to come down to another passing play. He felt the pressure and got out of there. He was able to get close enough for them to get the conversion on the next play. He did what he was supposed to do.”

**On what stings most about today’s loss:**

“It came down to us on defense, and we let it slip. We had two opportunities – they came to third down twice and fourth down on the second one, and we didn’t make it happen. It was right in front of us, and this time, we didn’t get it done.”

**On if there was a time in the game where he truly felt the Browns were going to get the job done today:**

“After our last score, we felt like we had a puncher’s chance. We came out fighting and fought ourselves out of the corner just see where we are at the end of it. We fought ourselves into having an opportunity to win the game, and they were able to get away with a win. That is what makes them great. They were able to do the things they needed to win the game. Maybe next year, one play away and we will get it done. We have to focus our offseason on recovering, getting better and keeping this core together because we have a good team.”

**On defending Wilson in his opening statement and if people are accusing Wilson of a dirty hit:**



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“I know what they were saying on the field. Some of the guys felt like that. I know (Chiefs TE) Travis (Kelce) felt like that, and I am cool with Travis. He is a good guy. Hung out with him a couple of times in the offseason. I don’t ever want him to feel like my guys or my team is out here trying to injure somebody or put them out of the game. We are trying to put some bruises on you and trying to hurt you, but we are never trying to injure someone or take them out purposefully. We are trying to play it how it is supposed to be played with sportsmanship and integrity.”

**On clarification on which Chiefs player felt that way:**

“Travis said that. He is passionate. That is his guy. He is always rolling with Pat.”

**On if he can appreciate in the moment how far the team came this season, despite today’s loss:**

“I can appreciate my guys. I can appreciate what they did and how proud I am of them for the effort that they put in and the results we got. Am I happy with the result? No. I am never happy with losing. We are always trying to go to the very end and be there. At the end of the day, it was not in the cards for us and we did not get it done, but we get another opportunity and have another chance. Most of these guys are pretty young. We have a young core. We go back, keep building on what we have this year and take another crack at it.”

**On how he feels about this Browns team going forward:**

“You all have seen that we have a hell of a team all around. We are out here to prove ourselves and anything we set ourselves to or that we think we can do, we are not trying to impose any limit or standards for us that keep us from going as far as anybody else says we can do. We can make it to [the AFC Championship] and we showed that. We showed that we can go to the AFC Championship. We were just one play away. We just have to make that play. They were able to get it done, but I like our odds next year just because we have a lot of guys here that are young and we can keep getting better.”

**On the Browns making uncharacteristic mistakes during today’s game:**

“They get paid, too. They are a good team. They had two weeks to scheme us up and push us a little bit off balance and make us look a little bit uncharacteristic. They were doing things the first few plays that were unlike what we were seeing. We just have to roll with the punches and start going with the things that got us here. That is what we did that, and we were right there at the door.”

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