



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

*Head Coach Kevin Stefanski
Cleveland Browns at New York Giants Postgame Zoom Interview
Week 15
12-20-20*

Head Coach Kevin Stefanski:

Opening statement:

“On the injury front, (T) Chris Hubbard has a knee injury. We will get further testing on that one. (DT) Sheldon Richardson had a neck injury and X-rays are negative. That is it for the injuries.”

“For the game, proud of the guys for battling. Knew it was going to be tough. Understood what we were getting ourselves into with this team. I think very highly of them. I think they are well-coached. I think they play hard. I thought our guys really matched that level of intensity that is required. Proud of those guys. Some great individual efforts. Now, we have to get back home, have a great week of work and then right back at you here in New York.”

On QB Baker Mayfield’s performance tonight:

“Baker was outstanding tonight. He was dialed in. It is really what I expect from him, and it is what he expects from himself. It is how he practices. I really thought he was sharp.”

On the Browns reaching 10 wins this season:

“Getting the one win a week is hard. We understand that. Our focus will forever remain right there. Proud of the guys how they battled tonight, but we have to come back and do it next week. It is just the nature of this beast.”

On the Browns’ fourth-down stop in the first quarter:

“Special teams was able to defend that play and then hands team, I know it was not perfect but came through again for us. I was pleased with those guys.”

On C Nick Harris’s performance after stepping in at RG:

“I know Nick is going to battle. I am not surprised. I have not watched the tape, but I am not surprised that he can go in there and battle and fight. He is a very smart player, being able to play center and guard for us. Not surprised that he is ready to go when we need him. Have to look at the tape to give you a full evaluation, but really pleased with where Nick is as a player. He is continuing to develop and works very, very hard with (offensive line) Coach (Bill) Callahan and (assistant offensive line) Coach (Scott) Peters.”

On LB Mack Wilson being inactive tonight:

“Just my decision.”

On DE Myles Garrett’s performance, given Garrett has shared the impact of COVID-19:

“I will have to look at it, but from the sideline, I thought he looked like himself. He had a few good rushes in there. The quarterback was getting the ball out pretty quick so did not have a ton of opportunities. He is coming along. He looks like Myles to me. I understand that he is working his way back, but I think he is looking pretty good to me.”

On the Browns producing two 95-yard drives and controlling the clock during tonight’s game:

“Those were some big drives for us, and we needed them. When you ever go that length of the field, you are likely making a play on third or fourth down. Our guys did a nice job of understanding the plan and knowing situationally what we were doing. Baker made plays with his feet on third down, which always adds an element to our attack. Anytime you can get a long drive, it is good because it chews up the clock and puts points on the board.”



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

On the decision to select Mayfield as tonight's game captain:

"I just kind of every week think about what the message is going to be for that week, and Baker is a fighter. You guys know that, I know that and I thought that was what was going to be required tonight in this game."

On how the Browns OL performed tonight:

"Gave up one sack. They battle. We got down there low on third-and-goal, ran downhill and ran behind those guys, and they move the line of scrimmage. I know what we have in that offensive line from a mentality standpoint, and that is very important in December."

On the Browns winning following a loss for the fourth time this season and what it says about the team's resiliency:

"It is important. Very few teams go 16-0 in this league. It is how you respond to those losses that matters. It is how you respond to a bad play that matters. Those are things we have been talking about throughout the season. I just think it speaks to the character of the players we have."

On if the Browns paid attention to or discussed results around the AFC today while awaiting for tonight's game and the significance of winning the game for playoff implications:

"Never came up with anybody that I was around. We are not really thinking about that. We are really just thinking about the team we are playing and the game we are playing. That is our focus. You are right, I was watching a lot of football, but that was not on my mind."

On the NY Jets winning their first game of the season today against the LA Rams and if that shows the importance of not taking an opponent for granted:

"It is the National Football League. I trust that the Jets are going to give us everything that they have next week."

On the boost provided to the Browns defense with CB Denzel Ward back from injury:

"They went after him early to see how he was, and he looked like Denzel to me. He was tight in coverage and making plays on the ball. It is good to have him back out there."

On his message to WR Jarvis Landry after the taunting penalty following the TD catch:

"He did not think it was a penalty. I will look at it on the TV copy, but I just told him you can't hurt the team. No matter what, you can't hurt the team."

On if there is one main aspect of Mayfield's game that they are more comfortable with after reaching this point of the season compared to the beginning of the year:

"I do not think there is one thing, but with all of the players that we are coaching and that I am coaching, I hope that we are all getting to know each other. You get in these battles. There are high points and there are low points, and we are fighting together. For all of the guys, we are understanding that this is a long journey we are on and it is never perfect, but we have a bunch of guys that will fight their rear ends off."

On if the Browns are being more aggressive with their play calls earlier in games to than earlier in the season to help get Mayfield in a rhythm and confident:

"I just think we are trying to do each week what we think makes sense to go score some points. If that means a few more passes or a few more runs, that is what we will do. I do not know if it is different than the beginning of the year – I would have to go check the game scripts so to speak – but we are just trying to do whatever we think makes sense in that game."

On if the Browns are comfortable playing a game like tonight where possessions are limited:

"We are comfortable with it. I go back, we had a fourth-down play that we really liked and the ball got batted down at the line, and you are off the field. You are trying to make every one of these drives count. You want to come away with seven on each of these because you do not know the type of games you are going to be in so



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

there is a sense of urgency really from the jump from the very first drive that you better come away with seven because that is just the nature of this game.”

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QB Baker Mayfield
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QB Baker Mayfield:

On his confidence level at this point in the season:

“It goes back to talking to you guys earlier in the season about trusting these guys around me, trusting the guys up front, going through my progressions and just delivering the ball and let them make the plays. Our guys are making a ton of plays. Our protection continues to be great, and these guys continue to make plays for us. That is why the confidence is so high and I don’t have to do anything else. It is these guys doing their job.”

On reaching 10 wins this season:

“It is something that until I got into the league my rookie year that I did not realize how hard it was to win in the league. It is something to be proud of, but the best part is everybody in there is like ‘Yeah, 10 wins, but we are on to the next one.’ A notch on the belt and then move on because we are not done yet. That is the best part about this team and I keep stating it about them is they are on to the next one.”

On if the team was aware of the other AFC results today and the potential playoff implications of tonight’s game:

“No, we are of the mentality right now that we control our own destiny. Singular focus. It does not matter what else happens. As long as we take care of our business, we will be where we want to be. That is all we can do right now.”

On being named captain tonight:

“It is a big honor. [Head Coach Kevin Stefanski] decided early in the year to go a game captain every week until the potential playoffs. It is a big thing for me. Coming off of the stretch of games that we are continuing to build and improve, I feel like I am gaining more confidence in our team. For him to do that in a primetime game, it is great to have.”

On if being the game captained added any more motivations or pressure:

“No, I am not trying to do too much. Like I have told you guys before, just doing my job, continuing to get the ball out and just lead these guys and be authentic. You do not have to be a game captain to lead, and that is the best part about this team.”

On the NY Giants’ and NY Giants QB Colt McCoy’s performance early in the game:

“Obviously, you will look at the game afterwards and realize the red zone efficiency and our defense making those stops is extremely important, and we were 3-for-3 in the red zone. (NY Giants QB) Colt (McCoy) is a winner. He always has been. I grew up in Austin and watched him play at Texas. He is a winner. He is going to always have whatever team he is playing for in the game. We just have to stay in there and realize that as long as we don’t go chasing waterfalls, we are going to be in the game.”

On leading two 95-yard drives:

“We knew from film study that they are a big zone team, especially with a couple of guys out in the secondary that they were going to have to play a little bit more zone coverage and rely on their front. We had our guys in the right spots. Just that one play at a time mentality, those long drives and continuing to overcome penalties or eliminating negative plays, I am very proud of our guys for hanging in there.”

On the Browns’ success with play action:



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

“We have established the run game so well. These guys up front obviously are playing so well. Our backs are playing well. It takes everybody in the run game to be able to block. To be able to marry that up with the pass game and make it all look similar, it clears things up and our guys are getting open so that makes my job easy.”

On having a variety of WRs making key plays in the passing game making his job easier:

“We don’t want no scrubs. We have some dogs outside. We have guys that we are very proud of.”

On C Nick Harris stepping in at RG after T Chris Hubbard was injured:

“I said a little bit postgame to Michele (Tafoya). You hate to have somebody go down. We love Hub. Hub is a team-first guy always. He is a guy that has stepped in time and time again for us. The way Nick Harris stepped up and played guard, he is our backup center and for him to be able to step up and play a different position is tremendous. Hats off to him for mentally being ready and being able to come out there and play well.”

On targeting multiple receivers tonight and if that is a testament to his comfort in the system and with teammates:

“We are not going to force the ball to anybody. Trusting the progressions, trusting the play calls, taking what is there and keeping the chains moving. Eliminate negative plays and just let these guys make plays. We have great players outside.”

On overcoming penalties on the final TD drive:

“It goes back to laying down the foundation of this team. Resilience is one of the things we wanted to do. Every once in a while, stuff is not going to go your way, you are going to get knocked back and you have to creep back in and be able to overcome those penalties.”

On the TD pass to Landry:

“First read was actually to (TE) David Njoku. I saw him stumble a little bit. It is a crossing pattern in man coverage so when I saw David stumble, I got my eyes off him and moved on to Jarvis. Jarvis is a guy that you just give him a chance and he is going to make a great play. Looking back at the pictures of it, David wound up getting his feet together and being wide open. Our guys make plays, and we are going to trust them to do that every time.”

On DE Myles Garrett playing and battling through the impact of previously having COVID-19:

“Obviously, Myles continues to be a leader for us. He is our Walter Payton Man of the Year for our team. He is an extremely good leader on and off the field. Obviously, his play speaks for itself, but he wants to be out there whenever he can. No matter what, being 100 percent or not, he wants to be out there. He is the best pass rusher in the league and people are always trying to chip him, double team him and trying to prevent him from making plays, but he continues to just work extremely hard. We are proud to have him on our team.”

On if it is hard to see Garrett having a tough time, including a coughing fit after the game:

“I did not really notice it too much. Besides that, I was listening to the end of his presser. I understand he is a guy that those little spurts and those five-yard and 10-yard bursts where he is having to go full speed every play is not easy. I am not one to really know exactly what he is going through and I have not been in his shoes, but I get tired when I chase down (RB) Nick (Chubb) so I know his job is not easy.”

On how comfortable the Browns offense is when stringing together plays on a long drive:

“Our guys are extremely comfortable. For them to be able to continue to make these plays, and like you said earlier, overcome some of the penalties and negative plays and push forward and convert some very critical third downs when you do not have that many possessions, these third downs are extremely important and also, the red zone efficiency is very important. When you get down there – we talked about it pregame – we needed seven points, not field goals. We were able to accomplish that and the defense, vice versa, stopped them from getting touchdowns in the red zone.”



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

On if it was weird facing NY Giants tight ends coach Freddie Kitchens as the offensive play caller and if he spoke with Kitchens today:

“I talked to him postgame. Not weird. I appreciate Freddie. I continue to talk to him every once in a while. He has lost some weight. He looks good. Proud of him.”

On his conversation with Kitchens:

“Just ‘How are you doing?’ Just normal checkups. We talk every so often so it is not like a huge catch-up thing. That was my first time seeing him so like I said, he looks good.”

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*CB Denzel Ward
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CB Denzel Ward:

On returning from injury to play in tonight's game:

"It felt great to be back out there. I just have to get my wind back a little bit, but it was good being back with the guys out there."

On whether there were any effects from the calf:

"No, just getting my wind back. My calf and everything felt great. I felt good."

On how long drives by the Browns offense helps the Browns the defensive side:

"It helps us a lot. We are able to catch our breath, go over some plays that their (Giants) offense might have ran and communicate and talk about that and be able to go out there and be on the same page once we get back out there."

On the Browns remaining focused on one game at a time but if he also considers the significance of the team winning 10 games, particularly as a Cleveland native:

"Definitely. We just enjoyed it in the locker room. We realize our record, but we have to finish the season strong, and like you said, take it one game at a time. Focus on the next game now and do it over again."

On if the team was aware of the potential implications of a loss tonight, given other AFC Wild Card contenders won this week:

"We do not think about that. We are just focused on going in and finding a way to get the win."

On if the Browns followed other AFC games today and paid attention to the results during the day:

"We just focus on us. We have to take care of our job and our assignment. Everything else will take care of itself at the end of the season. We are not really too worried about what other people are doing, but just focus on going in and getting a win ourselves."

On the NY Giants' offensive gameplan:

"It was decent. It was decent. We were just more so focused on what we had to go do and executing our job and assignment."

On if the NY Giants were testing him early in the game to gauge his injury:

"If they were, it is fine with me. I like the ball coming my way and getting the opportunity to make plays on the ball so I was fine with it if that was their gameplan."

On NY Giants QB Colt McCoy's performance tonight:

"He was decent. He was decent."

On the Browns facing adversity once again with G Chris Hubbard and DT Sheldon Richardson sustaining injuries:

"People just have to step up. Pray that those guys get healthy and get back soon. Guys have to step up and come in without losing a step."

On the atmosphere after the win:

"Everybody is definitely excited. Like I said, we enjoyed it and celebrated in the locker room with all of the guys and the coaches. It is on to the next game now."



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

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*WR Jarvis Landry
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WR Jarvis Landry:

On QB Baker Mayfield's performance tonight:

"He is a NFL player and a first-round draft pick. He plays at a high-level and always has. I keep saying that for us to get where we want to go and for us to win these games, it all starts there. He is a big part of everything that we are trying to do. He is playing lights out."

On being called for a taunting penalty:

"I have no idea. I have no idea. I am sure we will find out about it on Monday or Tuesday when the report comes back from the league. I think I will have a better answer for you during the week or when we talk next week maybe."

On how bad he felt when K Cody Parkey's PAT attempt hit the upright following the taunting penalty:

"I immediately came off the field and (Head) Coach Kevin (Stefanski) pulled me to the side and talked to me. Instantly, I already knew once I saw the flag. I never want to put myself or the team in that situation. I did not think I did anything to deserve a flag. At the end of the day, they threw a flag. I even apologized to Cody for putting him in that type of situation. As a team guy, I never want to put myself above the team in that situation. It looks selfish. I owned up to it to the guys and to the coaching staff."

On balancing his competitiveness throughout a game with the fieriness potentially crossing the line:

"Just not taking it overboard. A lot of times, you get a flag for being excessive, which again I have no idea [why I was called for taunting]. On Monday or Tuesday, we will find out what the ruling was, but I think for being excessive. Like you said, I try to toe the line, but a lot of my teammates feed off of that type of energy and that type of passion. Nothing I ever do is out of disrespect to my opponent. It is really for myself and for my team."

On managing his multiple roles for the team:

"As we are continuing to grow these last couple of weeks throughout the season, that has become part of our identity. We use a lot of guys in our offense. A lot of guys are being successful in ways that help keep the defense off balance. With me being able to be in these motions, be in different alignments and drawing attention to myself allows me to be able to allow plays to work is something I take pride in. Seeing (RB Nick) Chubb run down the field, seeing Higgy (WR Rashaad Higgins) catch the ball or any of these guys make plays, that is part of the game and part of who we are trying to be."

On the Browns reaching 10 win this season:

"It is very exciting, but I am looking forward to 11."

On growth younger Browns players this season, including Higgins and WR Donovan Peoples-Jones:

"It is not shocking these guys are making the plays they make to me. That is not shocking that these guys are making these plays. You look at Hig, a guy who has been through the test of time here in Cleveland. Not only that, but being in the situation that he has been in and being that third or fourth guy in the rotation and now really being one of the guys that has a prominent role in our offense and is making the plays that he is making is very exciting to see. Then you see DPJ, who is a rookie, who is playing like a guy that has been a part of the league for a while. It is very exciting. I know I speak a lot about Baker and him being the reason for our offense and our team to be able to get us where we need to go, but it is also about these other guys like Higs, DPJ, myself and (TE) Harrison Bryant; (TE) David Njoku made some great catches these last couple of weeks. Making those type of plays in those moments to be able to give fresh chains, get first downs and get into the



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

red zone and to be able to call plays and keep the defense off balance, that is something that is very special that I notice. It gives me chills. Like I have been saying, our best football is ahead of us, and we are playing it. We are really playing it.”

On his reaction to T Chris Hubbard leaving the game to injury and C Nick Harris stepping up at RG:

“Listen, the first person I went to after the game – I know he is going to get interviewed after I say it this week – is him. Just giving him the praise and respect because he is a center. I do not know how much guard he has played in his life, but he stepped up, stepped in and did what he had to do. The offense continued to flow as is. That was something that was very special. I went to him after the game and told him, ‘I appreciate you. I appreciate the way you work. I appreciate the way that you can step into a role that you maybe weren’t prepared for and still be able to get the job done’. It speaks volumes about this kid. It speaks volumes about (Executive Vice President of Football Operations and General Manager) Andrew Berry being able to draft this guy, who is as versatile as he is and can come in and make these plays and do the assignments that we need to have successful plays and win the football game.”

On if he has ever seen Harris play G in practice:

“Never. I promise you. I am an observer so I see this. Not that I go into panic when Hub goes down because it is like, ‘Who is the guard? We have a lot of tackles and depth at tackle, but not so much at guard.’ He comes in. Obviously, we win the game. It is like, ‘Wait, this rookie came in the first quarter, played the whole game and did what he had to do. He kicked ass.’ That is something that does not go unnoticed. I just wanted to let him know that personally that I was proud of the way he came out and did what he had to do for the team.”

On if he has any comment on Peters getting fined from last week’s incident:

“No.”

On if he is going to allow himself to enjoy the win tonight:

“I am trying. I think that is a gift and a curse for me. As soon as the clock hits fourth quarter and all of the zeroes get up there, I am already on next week and I am already looking forward to gameplan for the week coming. That is the part of it that is a gift and a curse – I do not want to say that I hate – but the gift and the curse because I think to my teammates sometimes that I don’t really show emotion, even after wins. Ultimately, I am happy inside internally. I just want that to continue. I don’t ever want to get content or complacent with success. I have watched these guys work as hard as they work each and every day. I know that 11, 12, 13 or however many more it takes to be able to get that end goal is something I am excited for. I will celebrate then.”

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DE Myles Garrett:

On QB Baker Mayfield's recent performances:

"Like you said, he is hot. He is playing with his hair on fire. With our rushing game rolling and our passing game going, it is hard to stop. We just have to be able to back him up, be able to get stops and get the ball back to them so they can put points on the board."

On keeping the NY Giants out of the end zone tonight:

"It is about bend, don't break. They got some yardage, but we are trying to keep them off the board. At the end of the day, we are trying to have more points than they do. Whatever we have to do get a W in that win column, we are going to do. It is nice to keep them out of the end zone, but at the end of the day, a W is a W, however we get it."

On the Browns reaching 10 wins, understanding the 1-0 focus:

"It is nice. I have not done it since I have been here so it is an achievement I am proud of. It has to be something that we continue to do. We have to finish this year strong and we have to keep on going 1-0 each week. We must have that mindset that this is the first year of many that we can do something like this, if we hold each other closely, keep our chemistry and play for each other."

On the importance of each game seeming to build as the team continues to push for a postseason berth:

"Every game matters. We are still trying to get in like you said, and nobody is going to lay down. You saw that with the Jets today by getting one over on the Rams. There is nobody in the NFL who is going to lay down and let you take something from them. We have to be desperate out there and play with desire. That is what it is all about – discipline and desire. We just have to come with that attitude every Sunday or Monday."

On how much longer it takes him to feel 100 percent after a game, given the impact of his COVID-19 recovery:

"I am not sure. I am just getting over a coughing fit from the locker room earlier. I am trying to get some water into my system and be able to breath. Taking those deep big breaths are tough right now with the shortness of breath and that turning into a cough or getting choked up. You just have to find a way. It is about desire. It does not matter how I feel, I have to do something on the field. When I get off of the field, I can catch my breath and maybe go see someone and try to work with someone. Hopefully, if we make it to the playoffs, I can try to get myself to as close to 100 percent as possible."

On DT Sheldon Richardson's impact today, Richardson sustaining an injury in the game and how Richardson seemed after the game:

"He looked pretty good to me. He was smiling and joking, like his usual She;. I don't know what the prognosis is right now, but seeing him walk around with a smile on his face is a good enough sign to me."

On Richardson's plays on fourth down early in the game:

"We made a lot of good situational plays on defense. His was just one of three or four that we had. He is a big time player. That is why he is here. We see him do it time and time again, and I expect nothing less out of him."

On if playing in the game is a little more difficult than people may think, given the impact of his COVID-19 recovery:



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

“It’s bound to affect your lungs, and I feel like I need those to be out there and give my full effort. It is hard to make a move or do something that you know is going to expend a lot of energy, knowing that you have to do it again the next play and the next play. It kind of throws off what I am doing, but just have to go out there and make it happen. Today, we did. Me and (DT) Larry (Ogunjobi) were able to get on the board with the second-to-last play. It is tough. I am trying not to think about it during the game. Just make sure I get as much oxygen as I can and keep rolling.”

On if the Browns paid attention to other AFC games today when waiting for Sunday Night Football and if that impacted how the team approached the game, given potential playoff implications:

“I did not look at any of that honestly. I didn’t see any of it. I was taking nap. I wasn’t really watching the games; I was preparing for mine. Started stretching, talked to my family, played golf with my dad on the phone and got ready for the game. I was not worried about what anyone else was doing. I know what we have to do on the field. All we are worried about is us.”

On CB Denzel Ward’s impact tonight:

“He is lockdown. He is The Warden for a reason. People do not want to throw his way. Having that kind of boost knowing if everyone else is doing their job, they are not going to be able to throw his way and that gives us just a little more time. They were not trying to drop back and throw the ball. They were trying to make it a rushing game, but that was partly because of what he is doing in the back end there and playing a good game.”

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RB Nick Chubb:

On QB Baker Mayfield's performance:

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