



# CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

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*QB Baker Mayfield*  
*Cleveland Browns at New York Jets Postgame Zoom Interview*  
*Week 16*  
*12-27-20*

**QB Baker Mayfield:**

**On the experience during the past 24 hours and today's game:**

“It is pretty much 2020 all in 24 hours. This is what happens, and you have to adapt and change. It is not an excuse. I am just going to go ahead and answer all of the questions right now. None of this, there is no excuse. Yeah, it sucks that we did not have our guys, but we believe in the guys we have in this locker room, no matter who it is. That is why they are here. That is why they are Cleveland Browns. That is why they were brought here. We suited them [up]. We believe in them, and I told every single one of those guys that. There is no excuse. Plain and simple, I failed this team. I put three balls on the ground – two of them they recovered and the other on the fourth down, I just need to hold onto the damn ball. Plain and simple, I have to hold onto the damn ball. I failed this team. We had exactly what we needed to win this game, and I did not do good enough. That is it. I am proud of these guys being able to step up. These guys did not even think they were going to play. For anybody to criticize them, shame on you. Put it on me for not doing my job, for not playing at a high level like I should have and for not getting these guys going and finishing out this game. I have to hold onto the ball during a QB sneak. Obviously, (RB) Kareem (Hunt) was in the right place at the right time, grabbed the ball and tried to advance it, but you can't advance a fumble under two minutes in the fourth quarter so it is what it is. This one is on me. Here is the thing, this one is going to sting for a day or two, but we have the Steelers to win and get in. Yes, I am aware of what could have happened if we would have won today. I am well aware of that, but it is what it is. I am going to have to roll with these punches. Backs against the wall, and we have to win to get in. This group fought today, but I did not do enough and play well enough for us to win, and that is it.”

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*CB Denzel Ward  
Cleveland Browns at New York Jets Postgame Zoom Interview  
Week 16  
12-27-20*

**CB Denzel Ward:**

**On today's loss and being shorthanded due to Browns players being placed on reserve/COVID-19:**

"It was a very tough loss. Every loss is a tough loss. We all play this game to win the game. We can't make excuses about guys being out. Players have to step up. Personally, I know I did not play my best game, and I am one of the reasons that we did lose this game. I need to play better, and this was not one of my best games."

**On the coverage during the TD pass to NY Jets TE Chris Herndon:**

"Have to be on that. Have to be on that."

**On what the coverage should have been on the TD pass to Herndon:**

"Just have to be on it. Have to be on it."

**On what he could have done better, given he said he needed to play better today:**

"I just did not play that well – just technique wise and coverage wise. Just have to watch the film, get better and come back better next week."

**On if there was a particular play in mind that he wishes he played better:**

"Just throughout the entire game, there were just things that I should have done better and plays I should have made. Just have to go back and critique myself. I know from the performance I had and how I feel that I did not play a good game."

**On how strange or difficult the past 24 hours were:**

"It was different, but that is all of 2020. All of 2020 has been very different for a lot of people. We are not making excuses. They got us. They beat us. On to the next week."

**On having several Browns players on reserve/COVID-19 this week due to close contacts after previously not having any placed on the list for that reason:**

"It happens. That is life. I know those guys wanted to be out there and playing with everybody, but some things are out of their control. That is what happened. Just have to go with it from there."

**On the Browns placing their focus to Steelers game next week, knowing the team controls its own destiny to enter the playoffs:**

"Our focus is on Pittsburgh now. Just have to go into the work week focused and critique ourselves from this past game, watch Pittsburgh and go in there and try to pull out the win."

**On entering into Week 17 facing the division rival Steelers with a playoff spot on the line and the team having its fate in its own hands:**

"It feels good. Like you said, we have our fate in our hands. We just have to go and take care of business next week. Everybody come in locked in and focused and see where we are at the end of the year."



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**On the incomplete pass early in the game that could have been a strip-sack for DE Myles Garrett:**

“I thought it was a play for us, and I thought the call was opposite of what the refs had called. We just have to play the next play. If we do not get the call, we do not get the call.”

**On how the Browns handled adversity this week and how Browns players potentially being out for several days this week will impact the team’s preparations for Week 17:**

“Our main focus is on winning the game, and we failed to do that this week. That is what our main focus is. Things are going to happen in life, and we just have to put our focus on Pittsburgh now and take care of business next week.”

**On his message to QB Baker Mayfield after the loss:**

“We all played a part in it. It is not just Baker. We all played a part in it. We just have to come back better next week, like I said. It is definitely not just on him.”

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*G Joel Bitonio*  
*Cleveland Browns at New York Jets Postgame Zoom Interview*  
*Week 16*  
*12-27-20*

**G Joel Bitonio:**

**On the experience yesterday:**

“We had our morning meeting. We went and tested. In our morning meetings, someone test positive they told us. We got pushed back. Then we just kept getting pushed back, and we just kept getting pushed back until we got the OK that our flight was leaving at 7 p.m.”

**On his mindset as the team adjusted to changes yesterday:**

“We do not know who tested positive, unless you get a phone call. I was just preparing like I normally do. I was watching film and hanging out with the family a little bit. It is uncertain. You do not know what’s going on. Before now, we were pretty good on the close contacts. Usually, it was only one guy at a time. For this one, we were not so lucky and we lost a bunch of guys. We really did not find out until we got on the plane and those guys were not there.”

**On what changes to the gameplan the Browns coaches were able to make in the past 24 hours:**

“I have no idea about the pass routes. I do not know what they did there. I am sure we had a few different formations and personnel groups that we had to throw out there, but it is tough. You do not have time. We did not do our Saturday walkthrough and stuff like that. We still had our meetings. We did a walkthrough this morning but it is on air and you do not know what you are going to get. It is tough. The guys you hope are ready to come out, and to have to be put in that situation is tough a situation for everybody. We did not do a good enough job executing the gameplan.”

**On the Browns running game today:**

“We just did not execute the gameplan. They called a jam front. They covered up the center and the two guards. They dared us to run the ball, and we did not execute well enough. They beat us up and stopped the run. We went to the pass, and it kind of got us going a little bit in the second half. It is unfortunate. You want to come out and try to establish the run, especially when you do not have those receiving threats that are normally out there. We did not do a good enough job executing. They beat us up there.”

**On QB Baker Mayfield’s response to adversity and turning over the ball, including on the last drive:**

“We felt like we needed one more chance to get down there. We were driving, and again, we did not execute well enough. Baker gave us a chance today. He gave us an opportunity to have a chance to win. We should not have put that all on him. Everyone else has to step up around him. It was never Baker’s fault.”

**On the Browns having their own playoff fate in their hands next week:**

“We have a chance to get into the playoffs. We have to win a game to get in the playoffs. It was unfortunate we could not do it today, but we are still alive in this thing. The team has to look at the film, though, and get better from it because it was not good enough today and it was not up to our standard of play. We have to take care of two or three things that you want to improve on and get better because Pittsburgh is a good test, and they kicked our butts the last time we played them. It is a



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big challenge, but everything we want is still in front of us. We still have a chance to go to the playoffs.”

**On how resilient the team has been and if it is disappointed with today because it did not live up to that standard:**

“Yes, we are disappointed. We wanted to come out and win this game, but we did not do it.”

**On running multiple QB sneaks during the game and if the NY Jets lined up in a different formation on the final offensive play:**

“Yeah, they had a different front. The second time, there was still a B gap to run through. The defensive end did a good job of crashing. You kind of wedge block to in there, and they had a guy for a guy. The defensive end crashed hard, and there was no one to block the defensive end and kind of hit him there in the backfield.”

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*Head Coach Kevin Stefanski  
Cleveland Browns at New York Jets Postgame Zoom Interview  
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12-27-20*

**Head Coach Kevin Stefanski:**

**Opening statement:**

“We got beat today. Credit to the Jets. They beat us. I got outcoached. We got outplayed. We did the things you can’t do. We were minus-two in the turnover battle – you can’t do that. Penalties. Drops. Not good. That is going to get you beat, and it did so credit to the Jets. As I understand it, next week, you win and you are in so all of the work that the guys have put in the season, we still control our own destiny, so to speak. When we show up, we will watch the tape tomorrow, and when we show up on Wednesday, we have to put a great plan together and we have to go to work. Have to get back to the basics because that just was not good enough today, obviously.”

**On if the Browns had to completely change today’s gameplan based on the number of players placed on reserve/COVID-19 during the past 24 hours:**

“No, and that has nothing to do with the results of this game. We got beat. We had plenty of guys. We had all of the guys we needed, and we did not get it done.”

**On if it was disappointing that the NY Jets defense made it tough to run the ball:**

“Disappointed in not scoring points. Did not run efficiently. Did not throw well enough. Have to go back and look at it and find some answers because those are the type of things you have to have an answer for or the other team is going to keep doing it.”

**On what is different about this situation with a player testing positive for COVID-19 that resulted in a number of Browns players to be identified as high-risk close contacts and being placed on reserve/COVID-19:**

“I am not going to get into the specifics of that. I will only tell you that we are going to work real hard to make sure something like that does not happen again.”

**On RBs Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt combining for only eight runs in the first half and if he wishes he called more run plays:**

“I will look at it. I wish we scored points, whether running or throwing – it does not matter. I wish we were able to convert some third downs and stay on the field. Certainly, we are trying to score points any which way we can.”

**On T Jedrick Wills Jr. being inactive today due to illness and if that was due to concern that Wills may ultimately test positive for COVID-19:**

“As I understand it, we are just following the protocol. I do not know if that was the concern. I just know he was not available to us today.”

**On how much the Browns OL missed Wills and G Wyatt Teller, given the team gave up more sacks usual today:**

“Again, it had nothing to do with the guys that we did not have. We got flat out beat and flat out out-coached with the players we had, myself included.”

**On QB Baker Mayfield’s performance today as Mayfield battled through adversity but also had three fumbles:**



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“I want to look at the tape before making a full assessment of any of our players. We have to take care of the ball. I know Baker understands that. Trust me, I put those guys in some bad spots today. I will look at how I can be better, but can’t come on the road and end up minus-two [in the turnover margin] and expect to win.”

**On how the NY Jets WRS were able to get open on their TDs:**

“I think you are going to look at the tape and you are going to say... I know we did get picked that one time. I am not exactly sure what happened with the corner and the safety on the one touchdown. Ultimately, it is going to come down to doing your job and playing with the proper technique, including your alignment. Those are the type of things you have to do to be sound in the back end.”

**On what impacted Mayfield the most today between new starters on the OL or at WR that Mayfield has not worked with as much:**

“I think he will talk and he will agree with what I am telling you guys is that we had all the players we needed. We had plenty of active [players]. We trust the guys who were playing today. We trust them. That is why they are Cleveland Browns. That is really not the story here. We just did not do enough. Better way put it, we did too many things that a losing team does, and that is what you get when you do that.”

**On why he called the QB sneak on 4-and-1 on the Browns’ final possession and what he told Mayfield following it:**

“It was inches. Feel good about that. Again, we just can’t lose the ball on a sneak. It just can’t happen. It has happened twice.”

**On how to get the Browns refocused on what is ahead next week with a playoff berth on the line:**

“What is ahead of us is everything that we set out to do this season. It is all still right there. We have to make sure that we are very honest about the tape tomorrow when we look at it together and then identify, correct and move on. Then Wednesday, we are getting back to work.”

**On challenging the incomplete pass early in the game:**

“Obviously, challenged it because I thought it was a fumble. I understand why they stayed with the call. When they blow the whistle like they do and make it incomplete, it is really hard to go away from that call. Had they not blown the whistle, I think it would have been hard to overturn the other way. That is just what happened there.”

**On how much the Browns changed the gameplan after multiple players were placed on the reserve/COVID-19 list late in the week:**

“It was a little too late in the week to wholesale change anything, and we did not need to. Those guys were in all of the meetings, they were at the walk-throughs, they were at practice and they understood the plan. We made some modifications, as anybody would in that situation, but the guys understood what we were doing.”

**On if Browns players who were on placed on reserve/COVID-19 list due to close contacts will be back for next week’s game:**

“Just have to see how it plays out. We are following the protocols. I know those guys go on the list, and we will see when they come off, but that is not in my control.”

**On the Browns’ plan this week with the unknowns of when players may be able to return to practice this week from reserve/COVID-19:**

“These one-game seasons, it is whoever is available to you. That is how you put the plan together and go. We will work hard to makes sure, again, that we are following all of the protocols to a T.”

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*DE Myles Garrett*  
*Cleveland Browns at New York Jets Postgame Zoom Interview*  
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**DE Myles Garrett:**

**On awaiting updates yesterday on the team's adjusted schedule and Browns players being placed on reserve/COVID-19:**

"Roll with the changes. We have to see what happens. Just waiting for the call. We will leave that night or tomorrow. Whenever we play, we have to be ready for whenever they want us to be on the field."

**On LB B.J. Goodson being out after being placed on reserve/COVID-19:**

"He is our play caller. He is our best guy in the linebacking corps. He makes plays in the run and the pass. He is a vocal leader out there. We love having him in the locker room and on the field, but we just have to keep on going."

**On the incomplete pass that was challenged in the first half and if he felt it was a strip-sack:**

"I guess that is up for interpretation. They told me on the field that it was too tight to overturn. That is my fault that I did not go out there and get it done."

**On the disappointment of not being able to rally the troops and win today, given the team's resiliency this year:**

"It is tough. No matter who is out there, we try to go out there with our head high and fight them hard. We are scratching, clawing and fighting against everybody we go against. We are just trying to ride with we have at that time, no matter who is out. It was a tough one, but they played well. They got one on us."

**On if he was checking the scoreboard and if the Browns knew they could have clinched a playoff spot with a win today:**

"I did not know that, but I know now. Now the road goes through Pittsburgh. The Steelers come to play us at our house, and we have to get to the playoffs through them."

**On the Browns having their fate in their own hands:**

"I would rather it be in my hands than anybody else's. I do not have to worry about anybody else losing or winning. All we have to do is we have to go win. It is all on us."

**On the past 24 hours and if that impacted the Browns offense's start to the game in the first half:**

"I am sure it was a little shell shock, but you have to go out there and play the best you can with the guys you have. They did that. We did not come out on the winning end. The Jets came out and they attacked us early. They attacked us on defense and offense. They made the plays they needed to make, and we did not get any takeaways. That is a key stat of the game. They were plus-two in takeaways, and we had none. If we can't get the ball on the offense, we have to pick up the slack on defense. We just did not pull it together in time."





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**On if he has an understanding of how a Browns player contracted COVID-19 and others were placed on reserve/COVID-19 and if the situation could have been prevented, given he previously had the virus:**

“I do not know the situation with the guys and what they were doing or where they were. I do not know how they will [be when] they return. Everybody is affected differently as we have seen through the last six months and how they are effected and how their breathing and their heart is affected. Hopefully, they return healthy and most of them are asymptomatic and don’t have the virus the way some of us have had it, and they return as back to themselves.”

**On if he believes QB Baker Mayfield was rattled by the events of the past day:**

“I did not see anything change in his eyes or his demeanor. He went out there the same gunslinger you know him as. He comes prepared. It was on all of us. It was on all of us today. All of us came up a little bit short. They were prepared. They had a good gameplan. They found a way to win. That is the name of the game.”

**On if he relishes the opportunity to face the Steelers and Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger again next week:**

“Pittsburgh is not too liked around Cleveland. I know they have a storied history. He is one of the greats, but that is more of what I like to think about. Going against some of the great tackles and great quarterbacks, fortunately, I get to go against one of each. I get to go against (Steelers OT Alejandro) Villanueva who has been in the league for quite a while, a Pro Bowler for multiple years and the same with Big Ben, a Super Bowl champion and Pro Bowler. I know he is in the record books for many a stat. Just being able to go against that kind of competition year in and year out two times a year, you don’t find that really anywhere else. Especially you have Baltimore and next year the return of (Bengals QB) Joe Burrow, it is going to be a tough division, but I look forward to these challenges. If our road goes through him, so be it.”

**On if the Browns have enough leaders to rally the troops for next week:**

“It is not about having multiple leaders. You know the saying, too many chiefs, not enough Indians. I believe if you have one good leader on the whole team or you have two good leaders on each side of the ball or you even have a leader on special teams, it is about having someone to rally around when things are going wrong. We rallied late, but it just was not enough in the end. It is not about always having a leader to get you over the hump. Sometimes it is just about making those plays. You can be a leader and not a playmaker and you can be a good playmaker and not be a leader. We have some of both, and today, we just did not have enough in the tank to get the win, and they did.”

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