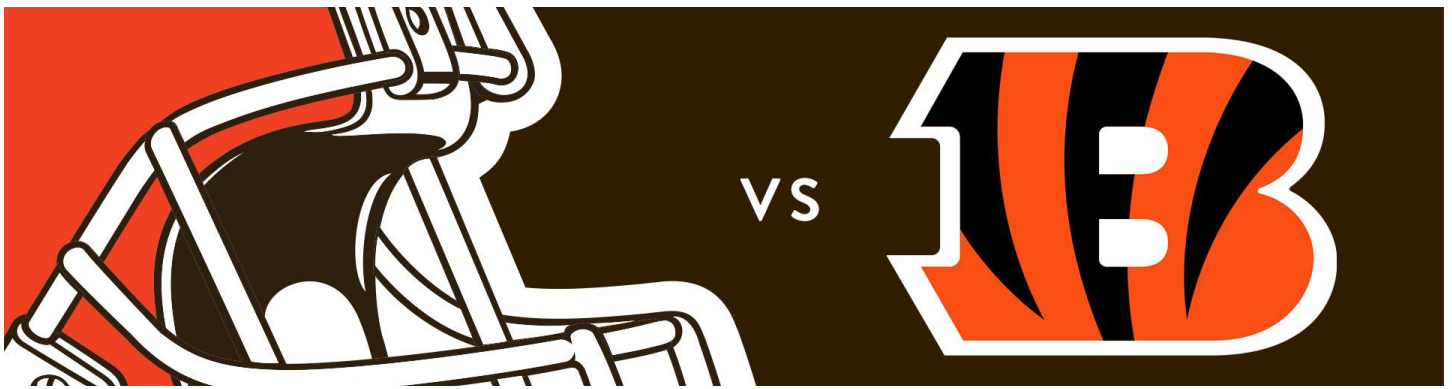




Cleveland Browns HC Kevin Stefanski
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25

Opening Statement:

"Injury front, Jack Conklin got poked in the eye. We'll see how that responds tomorrow. You know, very, very disappointing to come away with a loss in that game. Can't be minus 2 (on turnovers) versus a good football team. That's the story of this football game. Tip balls, and we gotta play cleaner. There are a thousand things that we can do better from a coaching staff, from a player standpoint, but we have to do a better job securing that rock. We obviously missed a field goal, missed an extra point. Those are points, and in these types of games, you have to come away with (points). So, it hurts when you feel like you're doing some good things. Now having said that, you we have a position, where we have a division game next week, right back at it. So if this team understands that these hurt, but we'll learn from it. We'll watch the tape, recommit to those things and understand that we have to do a better job in a bunch of different areas. But really proud of a lot of the performance from these guys. Proud of effort from these guys. But man, it's just frustrating not to come out with a win."

Kevin, I mean you mentioned like a lot of miscues in that game, but the missed extra point and the missed field goal really enlarged. I know it's Andre's (Szytm) first game, but will you consider bringing in competition, making a change after?

"I'm not there. You know, like most type of things. You know, points are at premium obviously. So that's frustrating. Andre's (Szytm) had a really good camp. He's done a nice job for us. So I'm not there."

Can you talk about how Joe (Flacco) played for you and just kind of kept coming back at it.

"I thought he saw it well, got the ball to the correct people a lot of the time, Mary Kay (Cabot). (He) gave guys the opportunity to catch and run, but yeah, frustrated for him and for everyone."

Those deflected passes, do you think both of those should have been caught by the receivers?

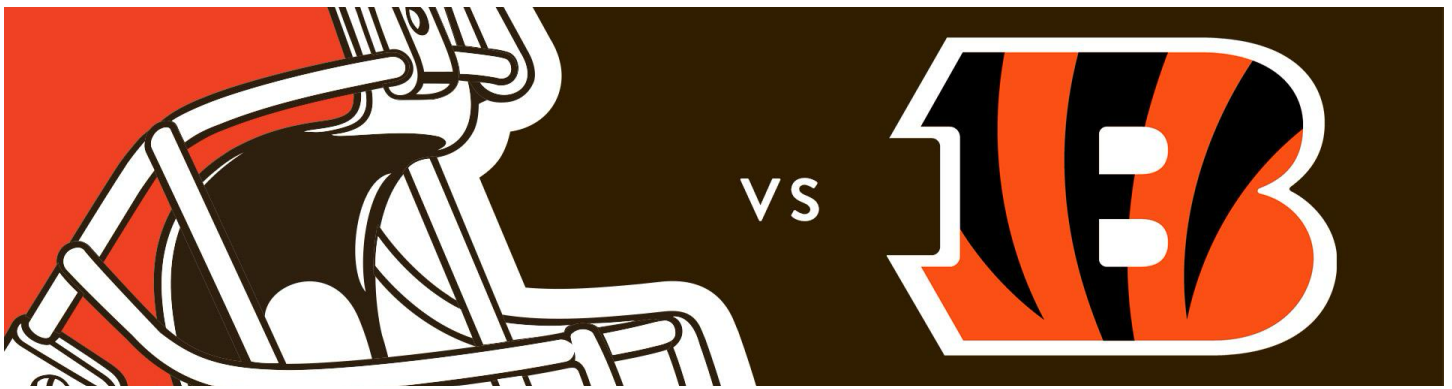
"Listen, if you ask those guys, they're going to say yes. Jerry (Jeudy) and Ced (Cedric Tillman) are two of our best receivers. We are counting on them. We will always be counting on them and they will come through for this football team, I have zero doubt about that."

Kevin, you also had what looked like back-to-back drops. On one, you were kind of on the edge of field goal range in third and fourth down. So when you talk about squandering points, is that part of it?

"It's part of it. It's the frustrating part. And again we are not going to play perfect. We're not going to coach perfect. There's going to be times that we don't do it exactly how we want it to be done. So we'll clean those things up. Again, those are frustrating moments because you feel like you're moving the ball."

Kevin on a positive note, Harold (Fannin Jr.) Dylan (Sampson), obviously their first starts and contributed in a big way to you guys ended up being the two leading receivers on the team. Just what did you think about their efforts out there?

"Yeah, I think our young guys were as I told you guys and told them, we're counting on them. So the idea that we have rookies really just isn't true. They're not rookies, they're guys that we're counting on. So I thought they both had some good moments."



The field goal drive at the end of the first half. Do you think he showed enough urgency that it seemed like there was time squandered?

"Yeah, we didn't want to leave too much time for them, (that) was the idea."

The defense gave up only seven yards I think in the second half and just kept...

"Really good, how many yards passing. So it was really good effort. That's the frustrating part for us as a team. Now we're a football team. We win together, we lose together. So we all get to share in this one. But yes, it doesn't change the fact, that's there's some really good things happening."

How tough is that? Your defense has all three sacks put together and then you squandered a field goal.

"Yeah, it's tough but it's just football. You're gonna get kicked in the teeth every once in a while. That's how this game goes. It's about how you respond."

Myles (Garrett) blew up one drive with a nice play on third down and came back with the back to back sacks. Just Myles (Garrett) really came through for you.

"Yeah, you know a couple times there he was getting double-teamed. Not a couple times, most of the time he was getting double teamed, getting slides, getting shifts and still finding a way to impact the game."

We talked so much about the run game coming in. How did you think it was and then did you think it was going to be a game where you had to possess the ball? I think all three scoring drives were 10-plus play drives...

"Yeah, I think we left some yards out there in the run game. I think we can absolutely be better in the run game. So that would be a point of emphasis for us. There's some things that we can help our guys with as coaches but ultimately I think that we certainly can be better."

I know you have to watch the film on this but how do you think the Dawand (Jones) held up for you at left tackle?

"Yeah, hard to say, Mary Kay (Cabot) without watching it. I thought protection by and large was pretty good. Couple play actions that got a little loose, if you will, but I'll have to watch it."

Was there any sign during practice week that (Andre) Szmyt was uncertain about things?

"No."

Did you find like you lost the impact a little bit, without Quinshon Judkins, do you feel like could have helped out there?

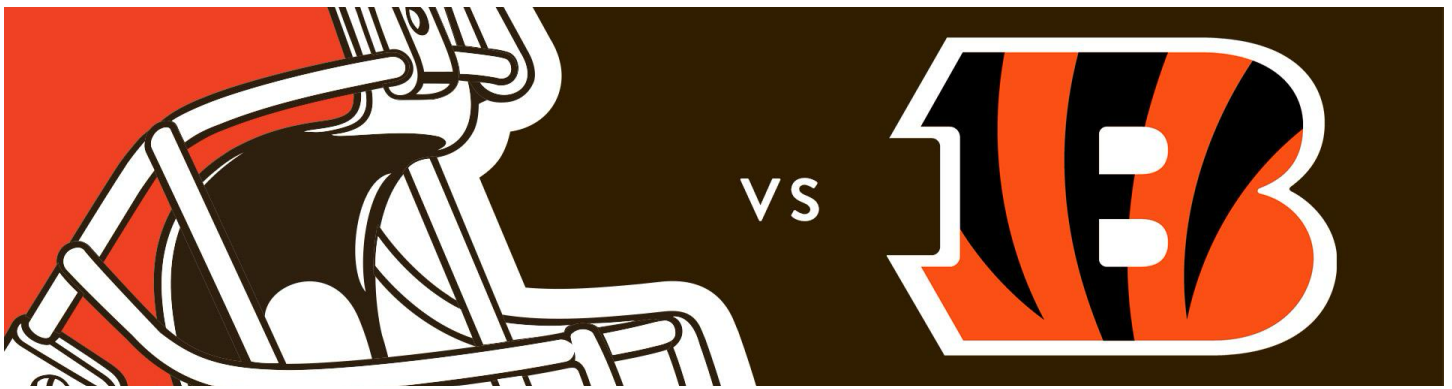
"Not on my mind."

How about (Dylan) Sampson? Just how involved he was in passing game and for a rookie, had an amazing game...

"Yeah, he's a guy that we're counting on Mary Kay (Cabot). We trust him. I know he's a rookie, but he's very mature. He's very intelligent. Doesn't carry himself like a rookie. He's a good football player, we're going to need him."

Kevin, very creative and short yardage plays today. Did you empty out your playbook or do you still have a lot there?

"Yeah, still have plenty left. That's our job, you know, to constantly give our guys an opportunity. Tony (Grossi), if we can give them an advantage any which way, we will. So back to the drawing board."



What do you think of (Carson) Schwesinger's performance?

"Would have to look at it. But just based on how we played as a defense and just the few glimpses I had of him, I thought he ran to the ball, ran the show well. He will only get better."

Seemed like they were keeping Ja'Marr (Chase) away from Denzel (Ward) a lot and when Greg (Newsome II) performed against a guy like that...

"Yeah, they moved their guys around a good bit. That may have been part of their equation. But we trust our guys. I thought there was some really good moments from our back end."

Especially tough, obviously because you guys want to defend your own home turf and for these fans who are full force for you guys.

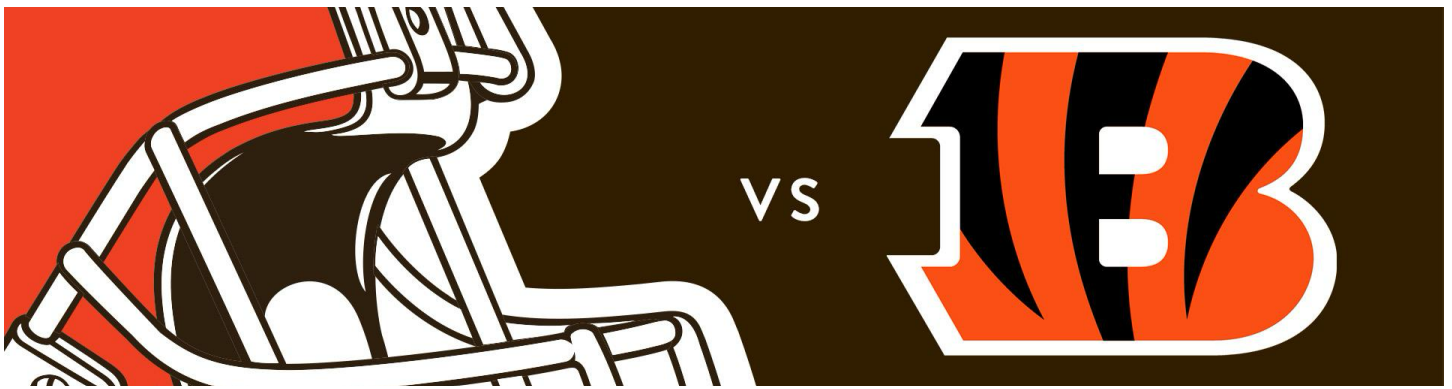
"Yeah, frustrating. You know, you start at home Mary Kay (Cabot) in front of a great crowd with a division game. So we didn't get it done. We know the reason we didn't get it done and give credit to Coach (Zac) Taylor and those guys. We didn't get it done and they did. But we got another division game next week."

Kevin, on the drive that ended in the missed field goal, you were first and 10 at the 13. Did you have in your mind you would settle for a field goal there and wasn't going to take any shots in the end zone.

"I have to go back Tony (Grossi)."

There was a sack on third down.

"Yeah, I can't, sorry."



Cleveland Browns QB Joe Flacco
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25

I know you've been through a million of these, but how do you process a game that felt like you guys had really good chances?

"Yeah, it's tough. I felt like we did a lot of good things, but we also did a lot of things that get you beat. You know, we just kind of felt we kind of played like an inexperienced team a little bit today. Like I said, we did so many good things. We were able to move the ball, and then just ultimately come up short. It definitely hurts to feel like you could start the season 1-0 and not do that."

Can you talk about the fact that, I know you really trust Jerry (Jeudy), I know you really trust Ced (Tillman) and nine times out of ten that they're going to make those plays?

"Yeah, listen, it's football. You know, I'm wishing that I had the ball a little bit better and, maybe I'm wishing I just threw it on his chest as opposed to doing what I did. And I think we're all looking at those plays and probably thinking about them and just like, you know, we're going to have to go home tonight and try to fall asleep with those things on our thoughts, and it's hard. Listen, when you lose football games, that's what happens. You're going to have plays where you look back on and think about and, those guys, they played a really strong game for us today. Like I said, I think when you look at this film, you're going to see a lot of guys that did a lot of really good things. We just had some MA's (missed assignments) that really, really bit us."

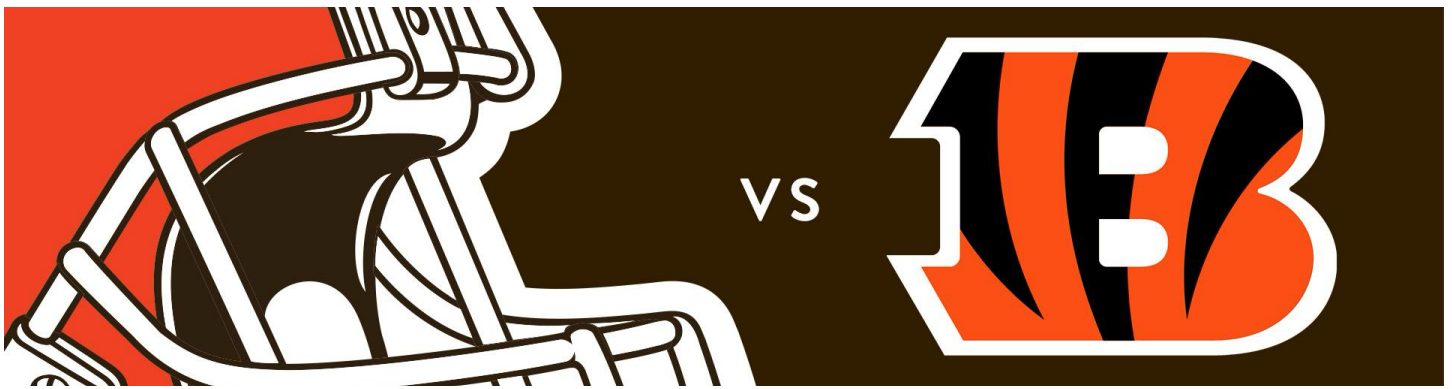
How do you feel about just the overall offensive operation for the first game?

"Pretty good. You know, I feel like we had a lot in, and I feel like we handled it for the most part. But at the same time, you could tell that we were young. I mean, there was times where we probably didn't have a ton of time on the play clock and we were moving around a little bit. So yeah, we got to get used to being able to do some of those things and not let it kind of slow us down that half a step or whatever it may be, but we did a lot of good things with that as well. I think they tried to throw a lot on our plate, and I ultimately think we did a decent job of handling it. But at the same time, you look at those few plays that got us."

Joe (Flacco), what did you see from Dylan Sampson, and how he was able to make plays?

"Yeah, I thought he looked really good. I mean, when you get him the ball in a little bit of space, the first guy wasn't making the tackle. And I think the amount that actually keeps you on the field, it keeps those chains moving, wears the defense out that extra a little bit. Makes sure they're running to the ball. I think that was the key today for him, is just making that first guy miss. And I think he did that a lot."

You're heading into Baltimore next week. How do you feel about that? Obviously you're going back to Baltimore. It's going to be really emotional, but do you feel maybe a little bit better about this offense, knowing what you guys went out and did today? If we just eliminate those couple of mistakes, like, maybe you guys can be better than people think.



"I think there's definitely, listen, I mean, you can't listen to the outside noise. We've been trying to build something all off season. There's definitely things that we're going to be able to look at and build off of for sure and say, man, like, look how well we did that. We just can't let the things that were negative affect you. You know, like this league can be harsh when you don't win, and it can come down on you hard. But at the same time, it is week-to-week. You go out there and you play the way you know how to play the next week, then that last week is forgotten about and you're feeling really good. You know, we're in here, if we're in the locker room in Baltimore at 4:25 next week and we won the game, we're going to be feeling really damn good. So, it's just that balance of like trying to take the confidence from the things that we did do well and the things that we didn't do well, those things seem to stick around and kind of invade your mind a little bit easier than the good things. So, it's a matter of just not letting that happen."

Joe, you've been around the league a long time and seen a lot of football. What do you say to a guy like Andre (Szmyt), who is probably feeling the world on his shoulders right now?

"Who'd you say there?"

Andre.

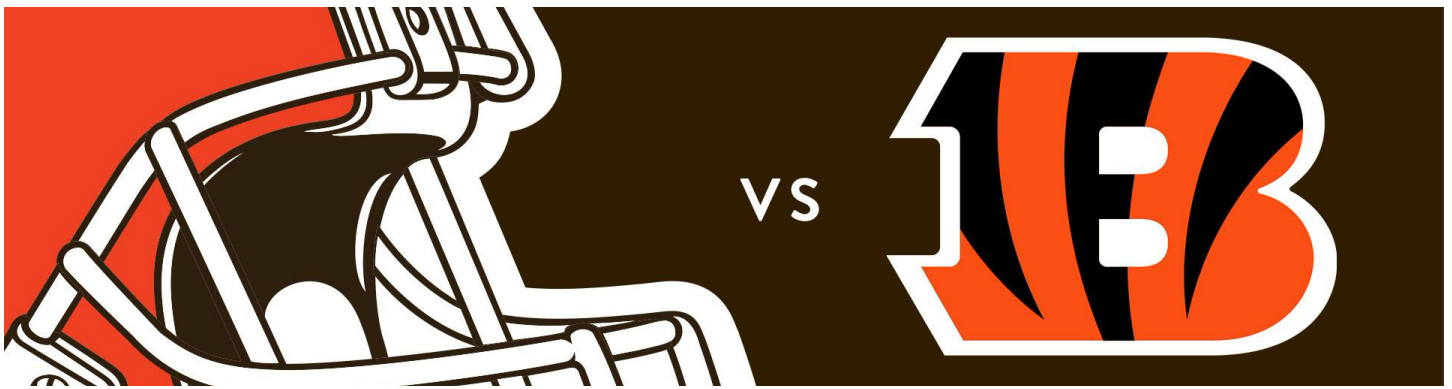
"Yeah hey, I think the problem is that you forget this is a team sport sometimes, because there's such a spotlight on you because of certain points in the game and what happened. And what you've got to remember is that we've all been in a situation where we've all made mistakes before that have been a big part of costing us a football game. You got to shake it. It's not just on you. It's a team sport. We're all going to be in there and rally together. Nobody wants to be in that situation and not come up for your team. But we've all been there and can understand not doing it. I think if you're able to kind of take that in, then you can use it to make you better in the future. So hopefully that's, we can help him do with it."

How impressed are you by what your defense is able to do after that first drive?

"Yeah, man, I mean you could, you start to feel it at the end of that third quarter there, like, oh man, they're not really going to let these guys do too much. It just honestly, like in the beginning of the week we talked about the AFC North and like the types of games that you play, and it was a similar game that you always play in this division. It wasn't a ton of scoring. There was some early on, but our defense played a really good game in a very winnable game. You know, they let up two drives maybe in those first two drives and that was it. And they played lights out after that. So, you know, I think we could all feel that. I think on offense we were, we were ready, and I think we were confident too. I think we did feel confidence in going out there and putting points on the board, and we just weren't able to make it happen."

Joe, when you guys had the missed extra point, as a long, long time veteran in this game, and you're playing with a pretty young football team, there's a lot of young guys on this football team. What is your role in making sure that they understand after that, "Let's go get this." Do you have to be verbalizing that with a lot of these young guys or what?

"No, listen, like, you know, I think you can say little things here and there, but once you take that field, you're worried about the task at hand. And I honestly don't think like these games are so long and plays happen here and there all the time. You know, most guys don't blink in those situations. They understand what our goal is as an offense and it doesn't change just because of something that happens here and there throughout the course of a game. It's a 60



minute football game and you know, the task at hand is always kind of the same once you take that field. I thought we did a pretty good job of kind of focusing on that today, we just weren't able to execute quite as well."

Did you go into thinking it was going to be a game where you would need to put together 12-play drives? I think all three scoring drives were real long.

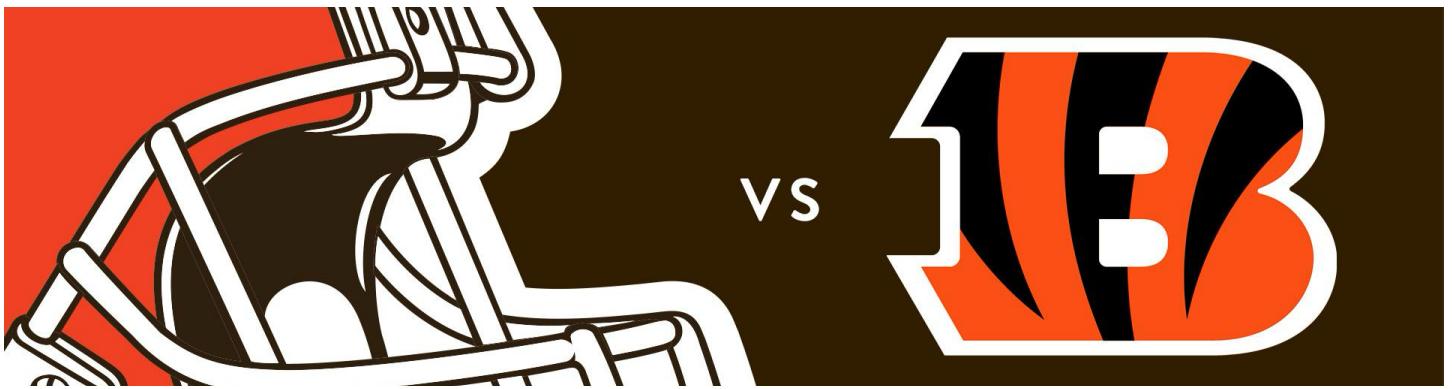
"No. You put your game plan together to go put points on the board and you're aware of how games can turn out and all the different things that you might have to do. I mean, our first series, I think was 20 plays or something like that. You know, I don't know. We haven't ran that many. You know, we're running 10 more plays than that in practice. You know, so to do 20 plays straight and kind of, you know, be able to still go out there and operate the same way, I don't think you're ever planning on, "Hey, in order to win this game, we're going to have to. We're going to have a couple 12-play drives." If you're planning on that, you're usually not going to win the game because it's so hard to maintain that many, you know, long drives and actually score as much as you want."

Do you feel like when you have more time with these receivers and THEY know, every single week that you're the guy you're taking care of, do you feel like now the chemistry, the camaraderie will come because obviously, you didn't have as much as ideally you would've liked to?

"For sure, yeah. There's some, you know, there's some things that we can be better. And I think obviously the more time you spend together doing things and the more confidence you get from doing things well, then we're all going to be doing a little bit better. That's my job. That's part of my job this week, and we talked about it earlier, is making sure that we get motivated from the things that we didn't do well and do that by looking at the things that we did do well and kind of getting it in the right mindset to come out and do it next week. There is a lot of pressure in this league. You know, you feel like everybody's looking at you. I don't necessarily think that's the reality. So we just got to make sure that nobody kind of falls into that trap. We got a lot of good football players, a lot of guys that did a lot of good stuff, and we didn't do some stuff that well, that happens. We got to be able to overcome that and be strong mentally. If we want to be the team that we think we can be, then little things like this, like they're good tests. We're going to have to be able to overcome things like this at some point. So it might as well happen now and let's face it head on and see who we are."

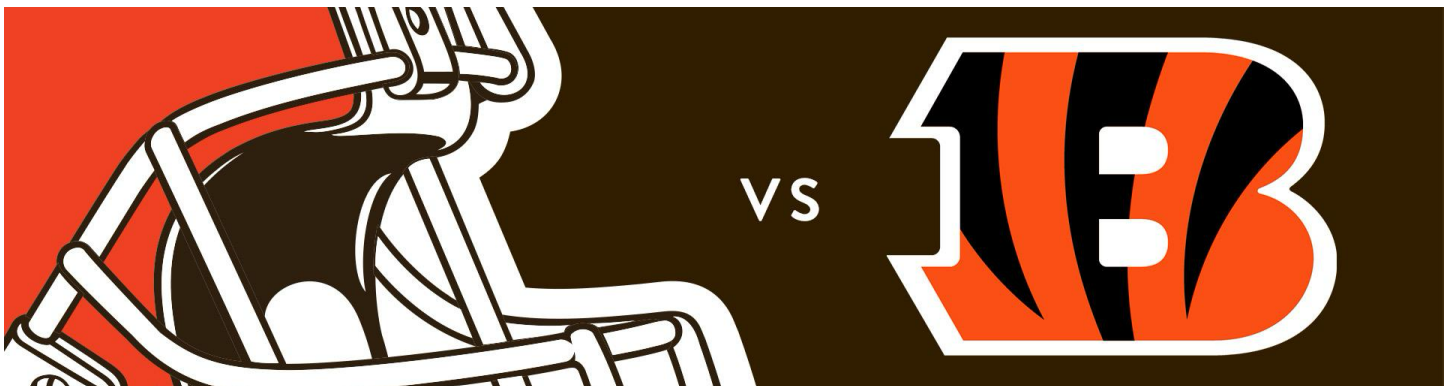
Joe, I apologize if you were asked this but as a captain and senior member of this team. Did you say anything to (Andre) Szmyt after this game?

"Listen, we'll run into each other in the locker room, and we talked about it a little bit. I think when you're in these situations, you think all eyes are on you. And the thing you got to remember is this is a team game. It's the ultimate team game. It's so cliché to say that, but it is. We're all in there. We've all been in that situation. If you've played this game long enough and you love this game, we've all been in that situation where you, you know, don't perform exactly the way you want to for your team. I know how that feels. And I can look at every guy in that locker room and they know how that feels. We're in it together. You know, I think it is a hard thing when you don't do things as well as you want to. You do think your teammates are, like, looking at you saying, man, if Joe just would have done this, we would, you know, what the hell was he doing? It's hard to not think that way. So at some point this week, yes, I'll be in the office throwing darts with him and look him in the eye and make sure that I can give him the confidence to go out there and do his job. Because we've all done it. And it's probably not if he has the, if he's the player he wants to be that he thinks he is and he wants to be. This isn't going to be the last time that he's going have to deal with



something like this. You know, when you play as much football as you want to play, if you're able to do that, then you're going to have to deal with these things every now and then. So he, you know, he's got to keep his head up and just continue to go out there and do what he's doing."

How about the fact that Quinshon (Judkins) could be back on the field as soon as, maybe even next week. What kind of – how much encouragement does that give you about this run game and this offense? "I think it's exciting for him. I mean, we got to see him a little bit in the spring, and he looked like a hell of a ball carrier. So, listen, I think all the pieces, you know, we're going to need all the pieces at some point, and different guys are going to need to step up at different points in the season. I think he's a big part of what this football team could be, so it's good to have him back. And, I'm excited for him to kind of get in there and feel like he can be part of the team again."



Cleveland Browns DE Myles Garrett
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
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Myles (Garrett), in situations like that, do you say anything to a guy like Andre (Szmyt) when you know he's probably feeling like the weight of the worlds on his shoulders?

"No, I feel like saying something to people in that situation, especially if you don't know them that well, you don't know if you're adding unnecessary pressure if, you know, he's already know in that mindset, and you know there's going to be situations like this again. He's going to make those kicks, and we're going to be better for it. We're going to win those games. So, there's no more scrutiny on him than the rest of us. We didn't have to be in that position, we could have came out faster on defense and picked it up earlier. And it's a team game, and we all have to play together."

As a captain of this team, what is your message to the locker room after this loss? You got a winning hand. Divisional game, now you have another division game coming up (vs. Baltimore Ravens).

"Keep your head up. We don't lose two in a row. You've got to look at the film and get up off the canvas quick to another division opponent. A good team we're facing, and it's going to be very different styles. So, we have to be able to prepare and look ourselves in the mirror very quickly, see what adjustments we need to make and get right back at it, because those guys aren't slowing down and neither can we."

What changed for the defense after that first drive? It looked like they were dominant after that.

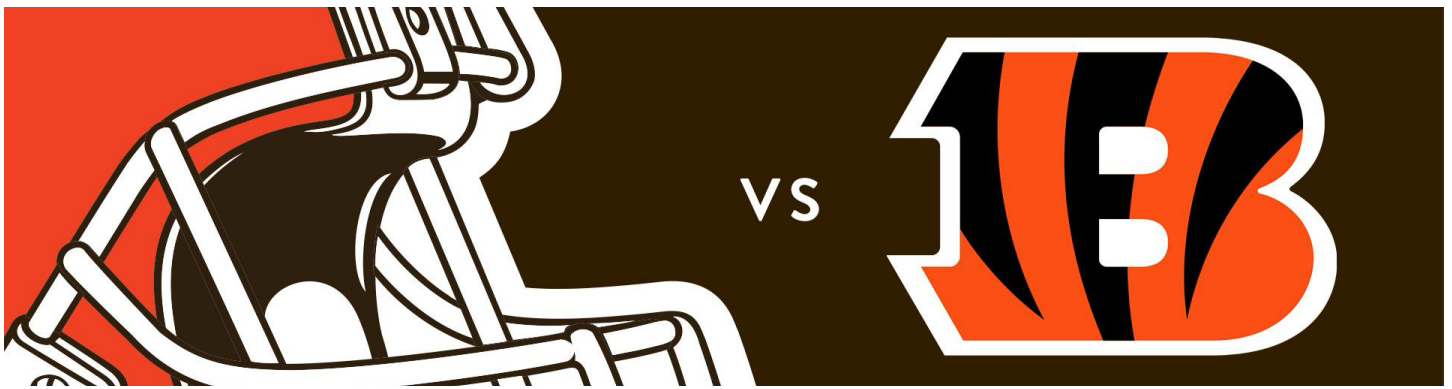
"I mean, there's, they have a chip plan. They have a plan for me. And, we just go to figure it out and find a way to crack it open and then get me rolling. And I feel like one tackle can start to get my rhythm and find what works. It's really a snowball effect. And I was really inspired by the play of the other guys, making plays all across the field. Whether it was the front, it was the backers and the db's, it was a little bit of everybody. So, I'm just happy to be able to step up those moments. But, you know, we got to have more, and it's got to be quicker."

Do you feel that you guys are in many ways a pretty young team? And there might be a couple of growing pains, but the way that you play today seems like maybe encouraging future.

"I mean, losing is losing. It's not encouraging at all. So, anytime you step on this field, you're old enough to win. No. one's going to make any adjustments just because you're a younger player, you're a rookie or a sophomore. So, those guys who came in and made plays for us, now we're going to continue to lean on them, no matter the age, and just continue to lift each other up. This is one game we were very close. Learn from it. Win the turnover battle. We've got to get some turnovers of our own to match them, and I think that swings the game right there."

Can you take us through that three sacks in a row sequence that you guys had?

"It's hard, you know, you kind of get into a zone, and it's hard to explain for myself. And then I feel like, you know, I kind of started a domino effect and everybody else wanted to get in on the party. Zay (Isaiah McGuire), Mason (Graham). Those guys started collapsing their pocket and getting busy themselves. So, I'm happy to see them get rolling, and we just have to do a little bit sooner. They had a good plan. We didn't appreciate how they were getting after our quarterback in our house. We knew we had to take step up and like I said, we just have to do it quicker."



Myles, I think at one point you had mentioned that the notion of Joe Flacco coming back here to his football team was very intensive to get you guys excited about the season. How do you think Joe did out there today? And do you feel like he's kind of the Joe that you guys had in 2023?

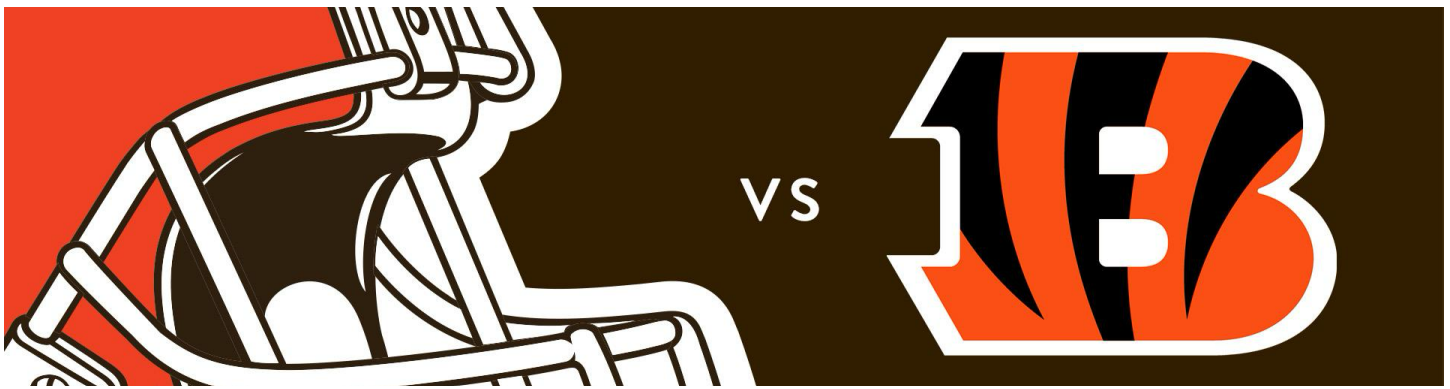
"Well, it's not my position to grade or rate Joe's performance. I think he made enough plays to win the game and we've got to rally around it. And, you know, it's a team game."

Myles, you know how good Joe (Burrow) is, Cincinnati's Joe, the rest of that offense is, to hold him into, I think 141 yards and not come away with the win? And you know how precious the wins are, too. So how frustrating is that to let slip away?

"It's tough, you know, we would have loved to have played the first half how we played the second half, and I think that would have really put the game away much sooner, kind of similar to how we did in '23. And no, I think that's something that we can take away is that we have that level of quality on the defensive front, being able to shut those guys down, keep them from dominating the game with the special individuals they have over there. So, that's something we can take away on defense, but we got to do it all together. And it's got to be a bit of a tit for tat offense goes and makes plays, has a long drive, we got to get it three and out, get their defense back on the field while they're tired and allow them to make plays again and keep on putting points on the board."

How big of a test will it be towards your guys' culture? Tough loss, like I said going back how would that impact the culture?

"These next few days will impact the culture of being able to get back in after a loss. No one wants to lose, but how you choose to wake up and attack the weak upcoming is really showing who you are as a man, as a person, as a player. So, continue to work, know you're behind often and elevate the people around you and we're all looking to know each other there's no one great leader on the team who's going to you know pull us forward. We have to do it together, that's how we do things."



Cleveland Browns Players
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25

TE David Njoku

What did you think of TE Harold Fannin's debut?

"(TE) Harold (Fannin) is a beast. He played very well for us, but we didn't get the job done so we have to worry about next week now. Focus on next week, start one day at a time, get the work in Monday and then go from there."

You guys gave a lot of responsibility to a lot of young guys like Harold and (RB) Dylan (Sampson), what did you see out of them?

"They aren't young, they are playmakers, if you know what I mean. So we rely on them and rely on the whole team as a unit. Like I said one day at a time and one play at a time and we'll be okay."

While the ending isn't what you guys wanted, how do you take this game and bring it into the next one?

"It pissed us off, it got us really mad. That's the mindset we need to have coming into this next week. Pissed off for greatness. Means we got to work our ass off and get back to it."

TE Harold Fannin Jr.

What were your nerves like, obviously leading into your first ever NFL game, and how did you getting the ball so early sort of help ease those nerves and let you play football?

"I have been putting in the work, so no nerves. I felt pretty calm. Just excited to go out there and perform."

After that one drop on third down, on the next drive you come back and make a play, how badly did you want that ball to come back your way?

"Obviously I want to redo that play over again, but I just trust my coaches and trust (QB) Joe (Flacco) and keep working."

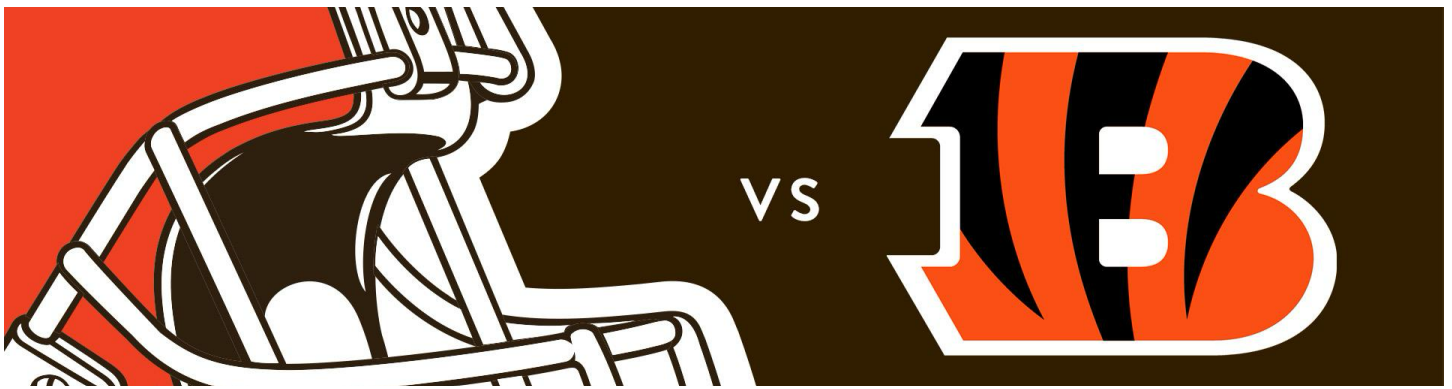
(WR) Jerry (Jeudy) said there were some big plays but the drops resulted in an interception, and he was saying how crazy and how rare that is. What do you tell those guys after that happened?

"I mean we are a team, so we win as a team and lose as a team. We just have to learn from it and move on from it. Don't really think too much about it, it's football, it happens."

K Andre Szmyt

You hit your first field goal attempt and missed that second one, what happened on that one?

"Similar to the extra point, I rushed my approach and pushed the ball. I got to do better and I expect better out of myself. Just try and forget about it and move on to next week."



What was the feedback to you coming off the field?

"Supportive obviously, these guys are here for me. I know I have to do my job and I'm going to do it next time."

I'm sure in your career you've had frustrating kicks before right, so what is your process on how you flush that and move onto the next week?

"Watch the film and see what went wrong. That's kind of what it felt like. Forget about it and give myself 24 hours, analyze what happened and move on."

RB Dylan Sampson

What does it mean to you that the Browns did give you so many carries today in your first game?

"Who knows if it was intended to be like that, but I felt blessed to start the game. My old coach used to say 'the ball finds energy.' So that's all I try to do when I get the ball in my hands, to maximize every single play. So as the game went on (QB) Joe (Flacco) and the coaches felt comfortable giving me the ball."

How did you feel you adjusted to the speed of the game, was there any "welcome to the NFL moment"?

"No, not yet. I'm trying to avoid any kind of big hits and stuff like that right now. We practice every day against a very good defense and I treat practice like the game so when it's game time, it should just be fun."

You finished eight-for-eight on targets and catches, one drive you were four-for-four, how important was it for you to get into a rhythm in the passing game?

"Doing all that I can, first of all chipping the defensive ends they do a good job rushing up the field, giving (QB) Joe (Flacco) time, but also being a playmaker at the same time. Trusting my teammates for allowing me to block and when I get the ball I'm just trying to maximize every single play. That's my mindset each game. I put the last play that just happened in the back of my mind and I just move forward because that's what it is about."

WR Cedric Tillman

Let's start with that last play, the interception. Can you walk us through what happened on that play?

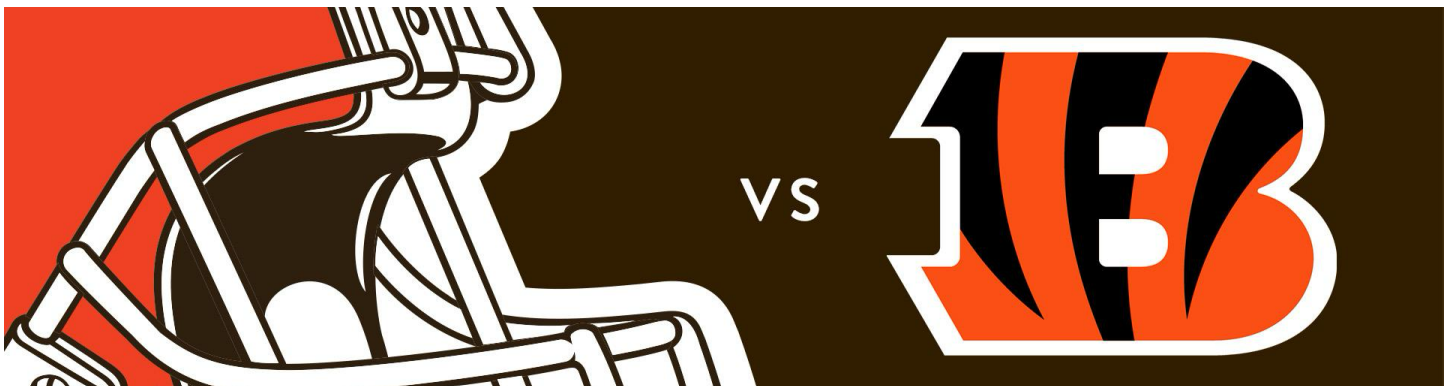
"Just a regular hook route and we didn't connect. It's as simple as that. We'll get it next time. Obviously, disappointed as a team, but we'll learn from it and move on. But for sure we'll connect and I'll make the play next time."

How frustrating is it for it to end that way. Obviously, you score the touchdown.

"Yeah, it's the NFL. I'm learning, it's just how it goes. Obviously, you don't want it to happen. But I'm going to keep working hard, keep getting in the lab, as a team keep getting in the lab, and next time the opportunity comes, I will make the play."

Did (QB) Joe (Flacco) or anyone say anything to you on the sideline?

"Just keep your head up. It's week one. Obviously, we really wanted this one, especially against a division opponent, but it didn't happen that way."



DE Isaiah McGuire

Talk about getting those sacks in a row towards the end of the game. How did that feel?

"It felt great. Sacks come in bunches. Everyone knows that, so just to go out there and do that and do my part it feels great. It's a blessing."

How important is it that the defense was able to step up in these big moments, even though you did not get the win down the line you continued to get stops?

"We proved something to ourselves. It is just about being us, we know the standard we have for ourselves and it's our job to go out there and do it no matter what."

Was there any sort of adjustment in that second half?

"(Defensive Coordinator Jim) Schwartz just said you got to be us. That's what it boils down to. Being us. Doing the fundamentals and just having fun."

How do you carry this one over defensively, and hope it carries over to the offense next week?

"See what we did good, but also see what we did bad. It's just figuring out those details and trying to strive for perfection. Is everything going to be perfect, no, that's football. But however, we do strive for that."

CB Greg Newsome II

What's important in the next 48 or 24 hours, especially for the younger guys, to rebound from something like this?

"Just learn and go into next week. It's the first week of the season and we've got 16 more regular seasons and we've got a divisional opponent next week. It wasn't all bad, there was some good. Learn from those, keep going those things, correct some of the negative things, and keep moving forward."

When I spoke to (TE David) Njoku he seemed pretty animated that you guys are pissed off. How do you take that into next week?

"He should be pissed off. We had them where we wanted them, and then we didn't finish. Taking that motivation is easy. Just learn from the bad things and continue to do the good things. And just find a way to win next week."

What do you say about some of the rookies that were able to step up on the field today. Obviously (RB Dylan) Sampson and (TE Harold) Fannin (Jr.) got a lot of looks today.

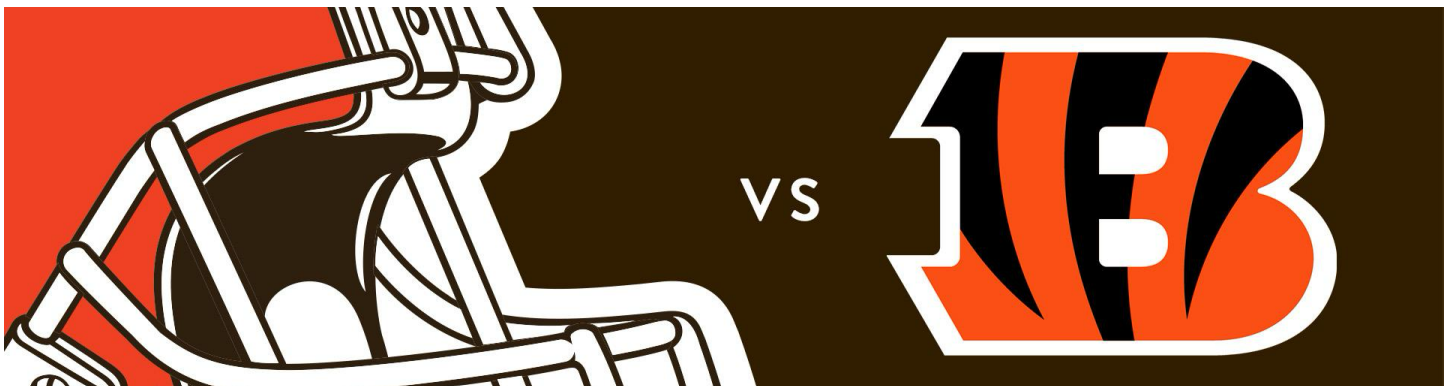
"It looked amazing. I was just talking to (RB Dylan) Samp (Sampson) and told him he played a heckuva game and we're going to need you down the stretch and we're going to need you next week. It's good for them to get their first real game under their belt and I think they did a great job."

This game had a couple little things not go your way. Do you chalk that up to the ball not bouncing your way and move forward or are there ways to prevent that?

"We have to find a way to get turnovers as a defense. I think we did a pretty good job with total yardage against them, but we didn't have any turnovers, and that's the biggest way to tell a win from a loss."

Three straight sacks on the goal line, as a defensive back, take me through that whole sequence when you turn around and realize they got him again.

"Oh man, I love it. When I'm in coverage and I see a sack, it's just like I said, that's the best defensive line group in the NFL and they showed up when we needed it."



WR Jerry Jeudy

So on a day like today when those two things happen, is the feeling of being sick of losing kind of the feeling of the locker room?

"It is of course, I am pretty sure everybody is sick of losing but it's one game and we have plenty of games left."

(WR) Jerry (Jeudy), along those lines how do you make sure it doesn't spiral from just the one game in week one to now going into week 2 and multiple?

"Got to go to practice and look at the film and see what we got to work on and execute that at practice."

For it to be such a close game against a division rival do you hang your hat on that at all?

"No we lost, we don't hang our hat on nothing about losing, we lost. We have to find a way to finish and find a way to win because if you don't get the W then it doesn't matter."

(WR) Jerry (Jeudy) on a positive note (TE) Harold (Fannin) had a big game for you guys as a rookie, (RB) Dylan (Sampson) same thing, they were the two leading receivers on the team today. What did you think of the young guys around you and their efforts today?

"Nah they stepped up big time today, they made big plays like we expected them to do. We've seen that through camp and practice and they came out and did it today. You know I'm not surprised at all."

Do you think this game will help define this team for the rest of the season?

"Oh yeah this game will most certainly help define our team, we either bounce back or settle."

You have become one of the leaders on this team. You have talked about finding a way and continuing to change that culture. How much do you put this on yourself?

"I want to come in and make plays every time. As a leader I want to make plays and that's how I define myself."

How do you think (QB) (Joe) Flacco did today?

"(QB) (Joe) Flacco did great today, he threw the ball down field and we had chances to get field goals, get points but the two turnovers hit our hands, unfortunate picks but you know I think he did a great job today."

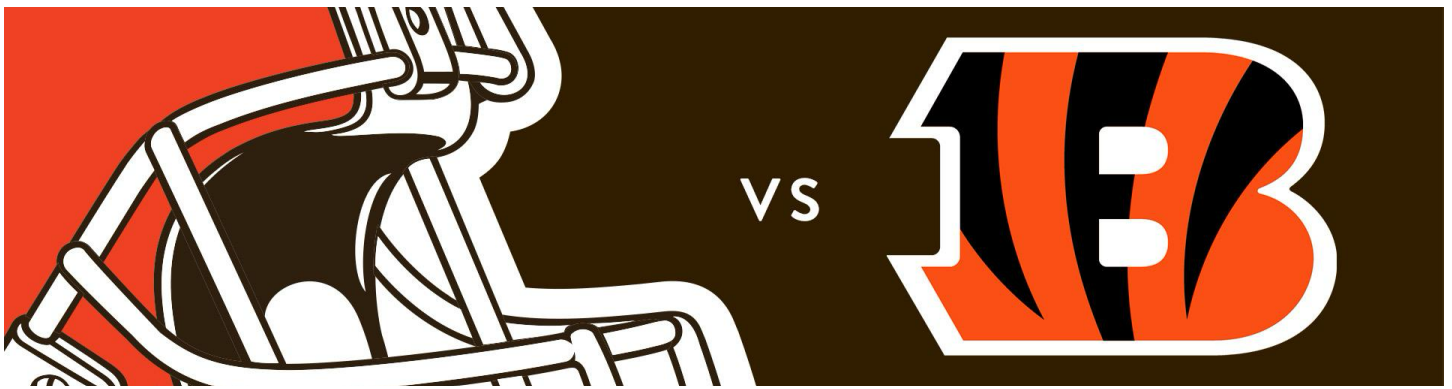
(WR) Jerry (Jeudy) you have been in this league long enough and know to have a short term memory when it comes to drops. What is the key mentally to being able to move past those things and just go to the next play, go to the next game?

"The key message is to just not focus on it. Always go to the next play, don't really go too much in on it."

LG Joel Bitonio

We were just talking to (WR) Jerry (Jeudy). You see, two interceptions that go off guy's hands. You don't see that very often. Two mistakes. I mean, just kinda like bad luck. How hard does that make this to take?

"Yeah, it's a tough way to start the year. You know, as an offense, I think we tell ourselves, like, score a touchdown in the red zone there. You know we don't have to take the field goal, and you got a chance to win the game, but those mistakes happen. It's hard to win when you give the ball away twice and don't take it away. I think our defense played really, really well against a good offense. I thought we did some good things on offense. Got to run the ball a little bit better. But it's frustrating."



Actually, the culture earlier in the week, and you said you haven't had adversity yet. Does this feel like a good test of adversity for you guys?

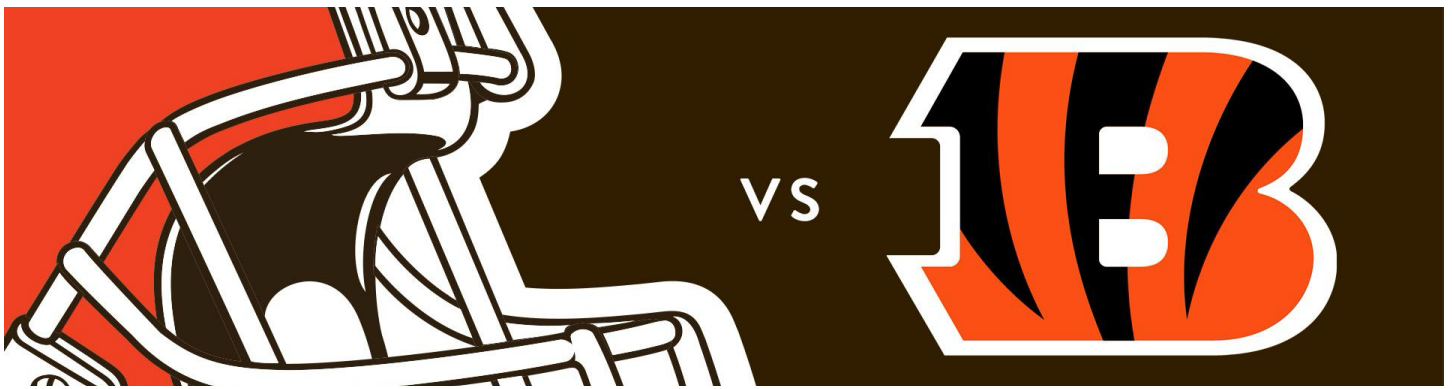
"Yeah, it's our first test of adversity this year. We'll see how guys bounce back, how guys practice next week. It's a long season, you know, it's one sprint and 17 sprints and we've got a tough matchup next week, so it will be a good challenge for us. I think I like the character of the guys in this room and we're gonna get back to it and hopefully fix mistakes."

As a leader on this team, what's the message to a guy like (K)Andre Szmyt. It was his first NFL and game and had some tough misses out there, but you obviously want him to bounce back.

"Yeah, we're a team. We take that loss as a team. I remember how nervous I was, I still get nervous for the first game of the season, so I understand the nerves. I think he'll bounce back. He has the right mindset. Hopefully, a good week next week will get him back in the flow."

How do you prevent guys in the locker room from developing that woah is me mentality.

"It's a mindset shift. We already talked about it. We're not going to let one game turn into two. We have to have our best week of practice, and truthfully you can't point fingers at other positions. Everyone did enough today to look at it and try to get better from it. If everyone can have that mindset of self improvement, I think we'll be at a better place next week."



***Cincinnati Bengals Head Coach Zac Taylor
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25***

Overall thoughts on that one?

"Glad to get a win. I thought did a great job rising up out there on the last couple possessions of the game. We didn't put them in great spots, and they just rose up. They got two turnovers. So to win the turnover battle the way that we did, that's a key stat in a win in week one. We knew there was going to be adversity. There's always adversity. There's always adversity in week one. There's always adversity when we play Cleveland. There's always adversity when we're on the road in Cleveland. It's never simple. So for our guys just to find a way to win in the end. I'm proud of them. The best outcome of this game is 1-0. Forget about the stats. Forget about the score. Forget about how it all played out. The best the outcome could have been was 1-0 and we're proud of that. We'll make some corrections and move forward."

The offense looked good in that first drive and then kind of sputtered the rest of the game. Why couldn't they find a rhythm?

"It's hard. A lot of times, it's just one play on a drive. If one play drills you and now you're behind the sticks a little bit, that plays into their hands. We had some great efficiency early on. There was a play here or there and there are things I can do to put us in a better spot. I think we're all going to be accountable with that on offense. We felt like there was an opportunity there that we didn't fully take advantage of. There's opportunities where I could put us in a better position. I look forward to correcting that all that after a win. It's a lot easier."

Can you take us through the three straight sacks?

"Play action on the first one, and I didn't see exactly how (Browns DE Myles Garrett) 95 got in there, but he did. We're trying to account for him on every snap, and he just finds a way to win sometimes. The second play was very similar. I think they played tempo and they got us. The third play, that's a regret that I have is on the nine-yard line and calling a deeper throw like that. Probably something to just get the ball out of our hands quicker so we can save some space for the punt. It was a third and really long situation."

What went into the decision to punt it there in the offense's last series, and then your thoughts on Bengals CB D.J. Turner's big play?

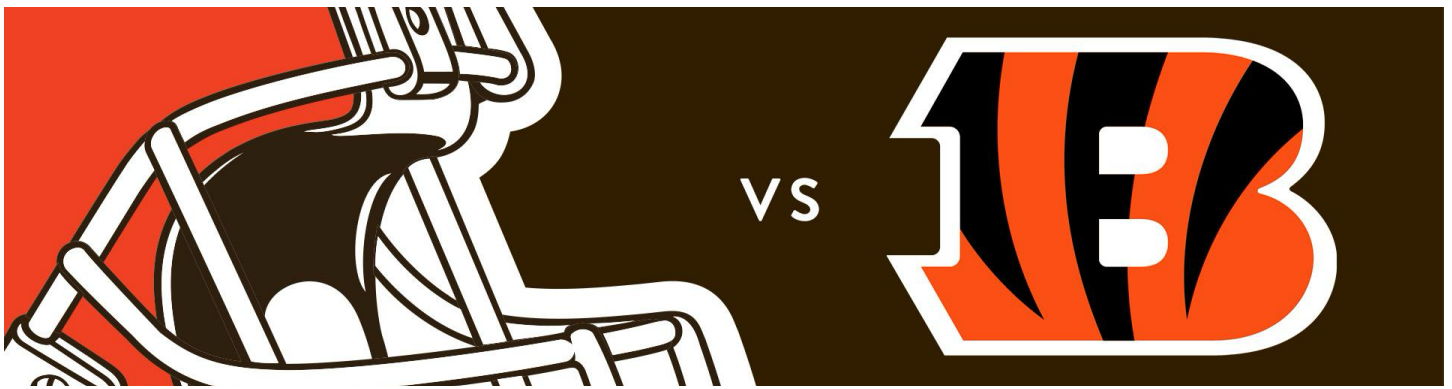
"Our defense is playing really good at that moment and they missed an extra point, so you know a little bit how they feel about the field goal, so you know, that probably weighs into their decision making a little bit. So I just felt really good about kicking it away and letting our defense go get the win for us. And they did. D.J. turned up with a huge pick. You know, those weren't easy turnovers, you know, (Bengals S Jordan Battle) J.B. and D.J., both of those were tough, you know, off tip balls, and they went and got them and we're grateful for that."

How much do you feel like Jordan's (Battle) pick in the third really turned the game around?

"It's week one, the turnover battle is critical, and it comes down to these one-score games and usually you're gonna look at the scoreboard and see who won the turnover battle, and that's usually the team that won the one-score game. So, just proud of the way our guys handled that and found a way to get us a win."

How do you think Dalton played?

"Good. I felt good there. We'll obviously watch the tape and evaluate everybody, but I didn't have any issues."



You had a lot of players step up and the rookies all contributed on defense. Can you talk about their play especially in an environment like this?

"Yeah, very calm, collected. That's what I saw. There was a time we had two young linebackers out there; two rookies out there when (Bengals LB) Logan (Wilson) came out. I'm watching just to see their body language. Didn't miss a beat. I think there's a lot of guys that fit that description. All those guys that got in there and got a chance to play. It was not too big for any of them. That's why they're here, because they're all built like that. And so we're going to have to call on all these guys as the season progresses."

You talked for several months about how hard the coaching staff was going to work to get this team off to a good start. With so many changes, how satisfying is it to get it done?

"Everything didn't go our way on every single play, but I truly believe our guys did nothing to beat ourselves, [or] to allow us to beat ourselves. We just played disciplined. They kept rising up to the occasion on defense. Offense made enough plays there, especially early on, to build us the lead, to where we can play this game. Many times I can think of when we lost here. We were playing from behind and they were able to control the game as the game played out. So I'm proud of the way that the offense started off, and got us a lead there in the first half, that allowed the defense to get their bearings straight and make some key stops for us. And that's a great way to win. You heard me preach it all last year. We got to play with the lead, so we can play the right way in the second half, and this is a great example."

Three time outs to beat the clock. Was there an operation problem there?

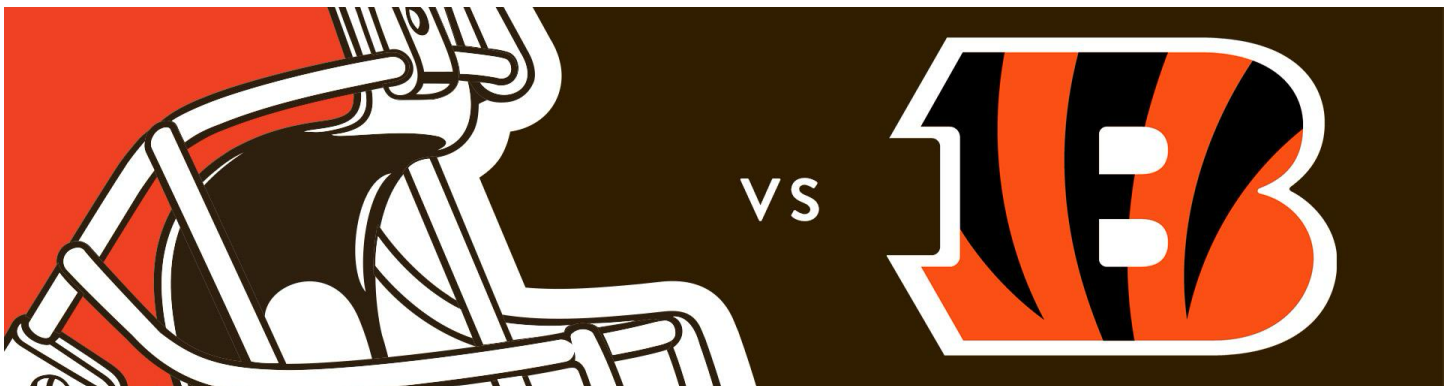
"No, all of them were a little different. And so again, there's sometimes we feel like our critical plays in the game, where we want to make sure we get the best play possible. It's not ideal. It's not what we want to do, but all the times, you know, really (Bengals QB) Joe (Burrow) called a couple of them, which were all the correct decision. If he was going to talk to me about it in a meeting - 'what should I have done here?' - I would say let's not waste a play here. One of them, I'm not going to get more into that. That's not what we want to do, but he made the right decisions there."

What makes it so challenging, it seems like every time you play them?

"Without getting too much into it, I have a lot of respect for their defensive coordinator (Jim Schwartz). He makes things hard. He understands us. They have great talent on defense - great talent on defense. The guys play hard. They play with a lot of confidence. All the matchups, you know, they do a really good job. They're all good football players. And it's just always a challenge when we play them. [We are] thankful to have gotten their number the last couple times. Week one is always a challenge. You're always going to get the other team's best. You're always going to get the healthiest version of them. They got the healthiest version of us. And you're going to get their best right out the gate. You just have to find a way to win. That's what our guys did."

What most impressed you about the defense today?

"Their calmness - just their calmness. We got them in a lot of situations we wanted them in to get back on track. They got to some third and shorts out of those long yardage situations. So I think if that's an area we're going to watch, I think we could probably be a little bit better there with some of the tackling where they got some extra yards, but first of all, win the first down to get them in some of those situations; eliminate the run game, you know 2.0 yards to carry - I know that was the same as us, but if we're playing a game where our defense is doing that, I'm going to feel really good about the outcome."



Bengals DT Mike Pennel signs Monday. I think he played around 25 snaps. What does it say about how he was able to jump in like that?

"I think he played about 22 plays per game last year in every single game all through the Super Bowl. [We] watched all of his training camp stuff, all his preseason game stuff, and thought, this is an easy decision to get this guy over here. So it wasn't like we're pulling somebody off, you know, like Dalton, who hasn't been putting pads on and playing a little bit. Mike's been practicing and [he is] such an impressive [player] and right out the gate just a great guy to have in the locker room."

In the last nine minutes, you got unbelievable play from the front.

"Thanks for pointing that out. We had a great training camp. I thought our guys came out of it in shape and healthy, and it allows you to finish games like this on defense, like you said. So again, those guys did a great job. Very relentless, and making the secondary's job a little easier to be able to create some of those turnovers and flush them out of the pocket, and make life hard on them."

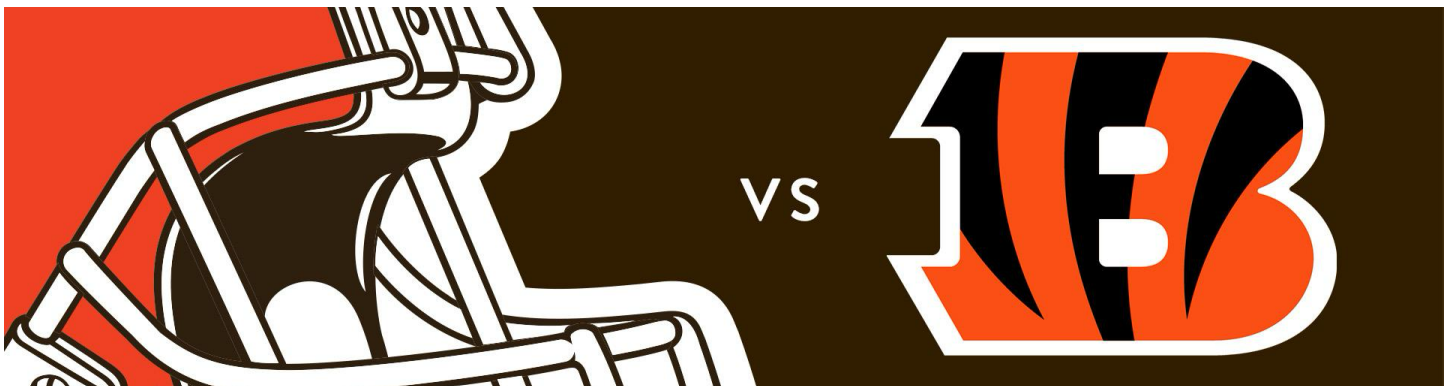
What went into the decision to get the ball into Chase Brown's hands as much as you did, especially early on?

"He is a great playmaker for us to be able to get the ball in space. He's usually the one in the pass game who's able to get the most space too, potentially, and so he's hard to bring down. But I just thought our guys did a great job firing off the ball early on in the run game - our tight ends, our linemen, our perimeter receivers. We ask a lot of those guys, and they helped us set the tone and build that lead early on."

How much do you kind of feel Bengals DE Trey Hendrickson's presence on some of those big plays by the defense? "That's where this game comes down to. When you put them in known passing situations with the game on the line, that's where they have to account for Trey, and it's hard. When the game's on the line to be able to put someone on his side every single time and call your best play, that's a challenge I just went through for it feels like eight and a half hours. So that's a challenge. And so in that outcome, we were able to be the team that was able to make it difficult on them, and that's a great way to win it for our defense."

What did you think of Bengals LB Demetrius Knight, Jr. and Bengals LB Barrett Carter playing their first games? It seemed like Demetrius was all over the place in the first half.

"That's what we've seen all training camp. And again, we'll evaluate it and make sure we see everybody playing and clean everything out, but I loved the energy from our guys. And they were lifting each other up. That's what I asked from them last night. It's not all going to be perfect. I promise that there is going to be adversity. Lift each other up, and I felt that throughout the team. Everyone had confidence that we're going to find a way to win. And that's what we got done."



***Cincinnati Bengals Joe Burrow
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25***

How does it feel to get the win to start the 2025 season?

"We'll take it, we'll take it. Any time you can win like this, you kind of steal one. We stole one today, we're going have to do better."

How would you evaluate your performance today?

"I'll have to watch the tape. In the first half, I thought I was pretty lights out. I thought I made some good throws in the second half, but I'll watch the tape and see."

Can you walk us through the three sacks the Browns had during your fourth quarter drive with nine minutes left?

"We called play action, and Myles (Garrett) won on the edge. I tried to step up, but he did a good job abandoning and running me down. I'm having a tough time remembering the second play. The third play, on third down, the pocket started to collapse a little bit, I kind of jumped over the line and the guy (DE Isaiah McGuire) grabbed my leg - I tried to dive out of the end zone right there."

What was the game plan to use RB Chase Brown as much as you did?

"These early games are always tough. You have to be able to establish the run and that's where we want to be. On offense, we want to be able to run the ball. In the first half, it was great and the second half, all the facets of the offense weren't good enough. We have to get better."

How frustrating is it to not move the ball you know you are capable of?

"It was obviously frustrating at times. We made enough plays to win, so it was good."

What was it like to have the fast start on offense?

"We scored a touchdown on two of three first possessions. We went right down the field on the first one, scored a touchdown, put us in a good spot. We just have to find a way to make some adjustments to help get some guys open and try to find a way to complete balls, keep running the ball in the second half, like we didn't do today."

What have you seen from the Bengals defense?

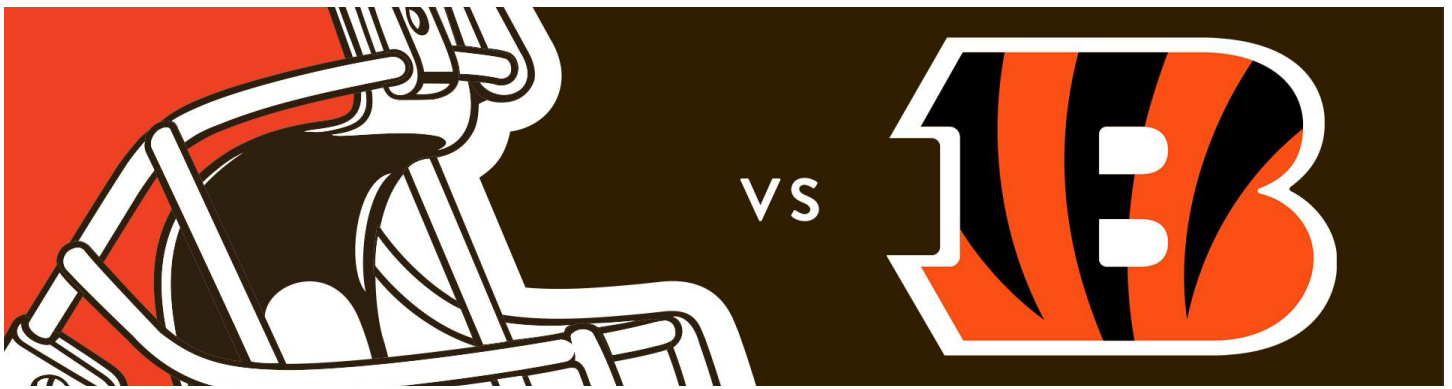
"You can see in practice, but practice doesn't matter at the end of the day. You can make as many plays in practice as you want, but you go out there on Sunday and don't make any plays then that's all that really matters. They made big time plays today in big spots. I thought they stopped the run and put some pressure on (QB) Joe (Flacco) in some key spots. The two turnovers were just great plays by our guys."

What's the balance like knowing you won, but not playing to your standard as an offense in total?

"Well, we celebrated in there (the locker room), now it's behind us, we'll watch the tape and get better. Everybody on offense knows that the second half today wasn't good enough and we'll address it."

Did you want to go for it on 4th-and-1 at the two-minute warning in the fourth quarter?

"You can't go for it at that spot. If you don't get it, you basically lose the game. Our defense was making plays at the time, so you just have to punt it and try to get them to make another play."



How do you internalize a game like today?

"We found a way to win. Like somebody said earlier in this press conference, we didn't win any of these games last year. Usually when you can win a game like this, that's a recipe for success and that means you are going to be a good team if you can find a lot of different ways to win and we did today."

How did you feel RG Dalton Risner did who came in for the injured Lucas Patrick?

"Dalton did great. He got here in the middle of last week. The operation was clean. We have a lot of different silent cadences, and I thought he handled it well. That right guard spot has to be a smart player, especially on the road to handle all of those cadences and turn his head around and get a quick snapshot of the defense and know what to do quicker than anybody else because he's not looking at the defense so. Credit to him for being ready. He's a veteran player. He knows what it takes, so I'm excited to keep playing with him."

What was so difficult playing against the Browns defense? The front four? The secondary?

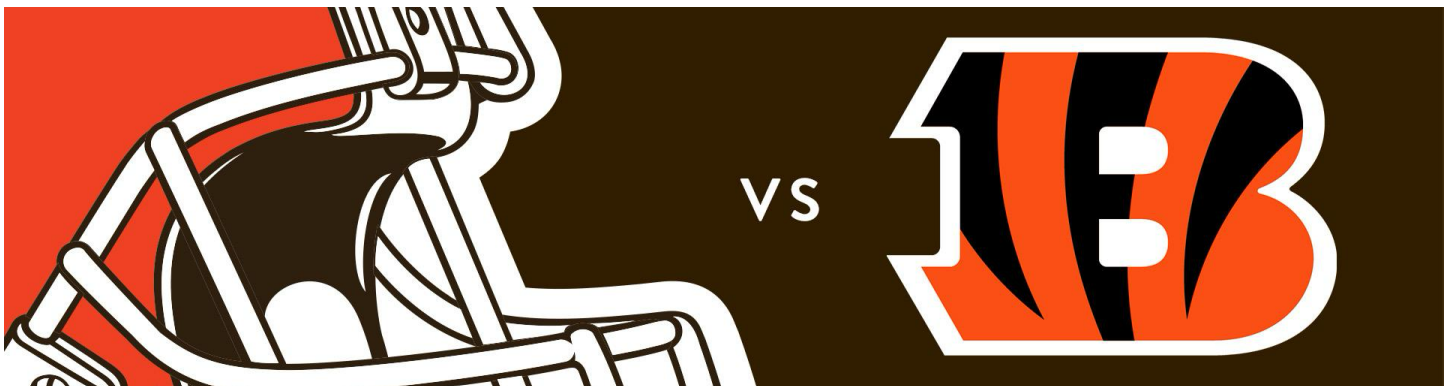
"It all works together. It all works together there. The corners are two of the best in the league. I don't think any other team has a better tandem than they do. They do a good job figuring out ways to get their guy 95 (DE Myles Garrett) in one-on-one situations. Playing man coverage and being sticky so you have to hold onto the ball a little longer trying to get guys open, and by the time that happens, usually 95 is there. Their whole scheme works together and I have a lot of respect for them."

Where do you rank DE Myles Garrett?

"It's tough to find anybody better than that guy."

Is there something you can take away from that you did what you had to do to win the game?

"That's how a lot of these games play out. Never clean. Obviously, we would have liked it to be more clean and like to be explosive. The first half was great, we scored touchdowns of two of the first three possessions. If you can do that through the whole game, then you are going to be really happy with your performance. We weren't able to sustain that today."



***Cincinnati Bengals Players
Cleveland Browns vs. Cincinnati Bengals
Week 1
9-7-25***

S Jordan Battle

You gave up sixteen points and got two takeaways on defense, what do you guys think you did best on defense today?

"Stopped the run. They had two [yards per carry]. D-line did a good job stopping the run so Joe [Flacco] could put the ball in the air and give us a chance to make plays on the ball."

Your interception was huge it ultimately led to the field goal to give the Bengals the lead back for good, just describe that play.

"It was a great play. In cover two, just breaking on the ball. He made a bad throw inside the receiver, I think it was 3 [Jerry Jeudy], to tip it. Then just the focus to maintain and catch the ball. It put our offense in striking position."

DJ [Turner] got the interception that more or less sealed the game, the first of his career. That's what AJ [Golden] has been preaching.

"Exactly. Plus two in takeaways. Ball disruption. We've been working on it all camp and it showed today."

Describe your emotions on the Browns final field goal attempt.

"I was super excited. Coming off the field after getting a stop, they had good field position. And then you see a kicker go out and miss a kick. It's very relieving and it's very cheerful for us. It's joy. Especially knowing the offense we got."

RB Chase Brown

I thought that playing this kind of football game, the training camp you guys had got you ready for this. It was a very physical training camp. Did that get you ready for this kind of encounter?

"I believe that 100%. We started fast every single day, and we started with competition. Starting practice early, getting on the field early. I think that helped us get that fast start today. We went down and scored on our first drive. I think the main thing going forward is being more efficient offensively. Converting those big third downs, and just being better overall. We left a lot of meat on the bone out there."

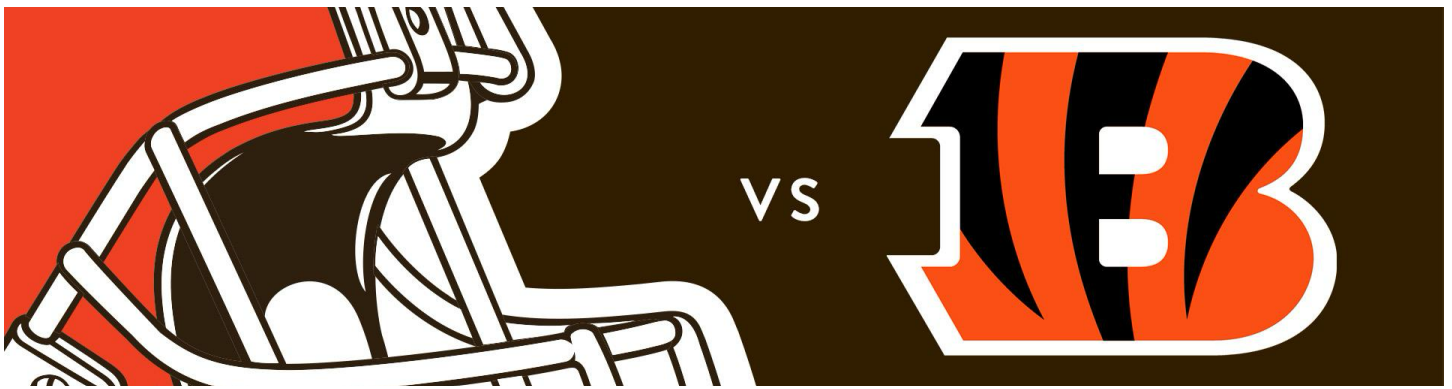
The interior of the offensive line. You got some young guys, and some old guys who haven't played together. How do you think the offensive line played with that in mind?

"I thought they played really well. They worked so hard during training camp. They started off really well, but overall there's so many things to learn from, so many things to get better at. In our room, we wanna be better there and I wanna be better. Offensively, all around we'll watch the film and come back better."

WR Ja'Marr Chase

For you personally, how would you grade your game today?

"I left two plays out there. I dropped one and I didn't get my feet down on the other. Not bad, but I felt like I left something out there."



Do you think that comes with being a veteran player that you don't get upset about those kind of plays?

"I've been here long enough to know this whole year is a roller coaster. The whole game is a roller coaster. It's sports. At the end of the day I just gotta be me, be myself, and reliable for the team."

This offense got off to a hot start, why do you think it sputtered for the last two and a half quarters?

"I'm not sure. We started off real fast running the ball. I thought that's how we were gonna go all day. We were running the ball all day and made a good capitalization off of that."

What do you think [Jordan] Battle and [DJ] Turner showed today?

"Grit. Showed a lot of grit out there. Making plays on defense and catching the ball. Tipped passes. We need those. They did a hell of a job."

You guys won on defense, after all the stuff last year, does that fire you up?

"Yeah. Good to see that, honestly. Worship my defense right now. I've been congratulating them since a minute and twenty seconds left on the clock. Nothing but praise to those guys. Can't say anything more than just a hell of a job today."

You know how important it is to get off to a fast start. When you do win one, and get to this point, do you feel good, even though you didn't play well or play to the standard you want?

"From being in the NFL for so long now, the games that are ugly and we win we gotta take it. Every game is not gonna be pretty, every game is not gonna be the best. For me, for Tee [Higgins], for Joe [Burrow], it's not gonna be best for us. We gotta take everything we can, and get the W."

CB DJ Turner

There were questions about the defense and what it would be like coming into the season. Defense was the reason you guys won the game today

"It's great but all the outside noise we don't care about. We've known the entire time what the defense can do. And we gotta show it on film, and we gotta do it next week."

Can you take me through your interception?

"It was a deep curl route, a stop route. We got physical at the top of the route. He bobbled the ball, I saw it and made a play."

You mention how you were good on the first drive. Is that because you guys were playing sound, and doing little things?

"Yeah. They called a PI (pass interference) on me, they called a PI on Cam [Taylor-Britt]. They called a roughing the passer on Trey [Hendrickson]. An illegal contact. We're good."

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