



Browns Head Coach Kevin Stefanski
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
Week 17
12-28-25

Opening Statement:

"Love how this football team fights. Love that we get to even that season-series versus a division rival, get to do it in front of our fans. So I'm just extremely grateful for that group in there, how hard they play for 60 minutes. That's what they do at practice, shows up in games. So plenty to clean up like there always is. But to beat a good football team says a lot about that locker room. So I'm proud of those guys. But with that, I'll take any questions."

What can you say about... would it have been so much nicer obviously for Myles (Garrett) to be able to get the sack record at home today?

"He's celebrating in there, so he likes to win."

What do you think his presence, how did that affect the way Aaron Rodgers played today?

"Yeah, I think Myles affects every single game, Jeff (Schudel). Obviously he shows up in the stat sheet in a bunch of different areas, but even the things you don't see - how they have to play the game, I mean, they have to play an empty the entire game and chip both sides. Those are two eligibles that aren't getting out on the route immediately. So it affects how teams play us."

Kevin, you talk about the effort and the way these guys are playing, you know, the way the season has gone, it would have been easy for a lot of people would say to kind of pack things up. What is it about this group that they don't seem to...?

"Yeah, I know this group too well. I know how important this game is to them, how important it is to me. We only know one way."

What can you say about Denzel (Ward), there at the end?

"Yeah, he played really well. You know, he's a great player. Great to have him back out there. You know, that's a lot of time there for a Hall of Famer. So we knew they were going to make their plays, but our guys made one more than they did."

What can you say, just in general about this defensive effort to hold them down? And hold Aaron Rodgers down the way they did.

"Yeah, outstanding. And a bunch of individual efforts. Obviously, Myles getting all the attention he got. I thought Tyson (Campbell) was outstanding. I thought Carson (Schwesinger) battled and fought like he always does and ends up tackling the guy to the ground. You know, just a bunch of individual efforts and just that was what was required today."

You talk about individual efforts - the special teams have been sort of aligned all season, but when you needed the field flipped, how big was that punt that Corey (Bojorquez) got off?

"That was huge. You know, Dre (Andre Szmyt) coming through on his field goal attempts. Corey, when we needed him, doing a great job playing that field position game. Yeah, I thought the guys did a great job."

How about Shedeur? How do you wrap up Shedeur's performance today?

"Yeah, obviously he wins, you know, gotta win. So that's great for the young man. Gets to beat Pittsburgh, gets to beat a division rival. So, they're not going to be easy, not in this division. So proud of him for that. There are always things he can clean up. I thought we got a little unlucky on that first interception. We can certainly learn from the second one and he will. But, yeah, he continued to battle."

Kevin, what do you think changed? Because it seemed like Shedeur was really in control, and slowly he got hit on that first interception - it wasn't really his fault. But after that, just some mistakes maybe he would've liked to have back. What do you think changed?

"I don't think anything changed, Daniel (Oyefusi). I think it's a good defense. You know, we made a few plays early. We'll look at the ways that we can make a few plays later, too."

How hard is it to lose Harold (Fannin Jr.), your top weapon in a game like this?

"Yeah, that was unfortunate. You know, we had the four tight ends up just because of that injury on Friday, so he's a huge part of what we do. You saw it right away when it happened, but that was an incredible job adjusting to that football. It was a good read by Shedeur, then to get in the end zone was great. But yeah, he was missed, like you can imagine."

Kevin, did Wyatt (Teller) reagravate the calf?

"He did."

It looked like Carson was fighting through something. Did you see that too?

"Yeah, he was fighting through... I'll update you guys tomorrow, but a bruise."

And then you mentioned winning at home in your opening. But just how special is it to win the finale this year?

"Yeah, you know, we love playing in front of our fans. We love that they stick with us. We love the energy that they bring to this building. And we wanted to reward them with a win versus a division opponent."

Is there some satisfaction in preventing the Steelers from clinching today on your grass?

"Honestly, Mary Kay (Cabot), that's a division game. That's really all you have to say. I'm aware of all those type of things, but that's not what's important to us."

How much was the wind a factor, and is that why you didn't go for the one?

"Yeah. Huge factor. Didn't know that the wind was going to be as significant as it was today. Thought there'd be more precipitation, there was not, at least throughout the game. So, early, just watching through pregame, thought that it would be the best thing to take that football and then get the wind in the fourth."

Is that why you didn't try that long field goal?

"Correct."

I know you talked about this a little bit, but what is it about this football team that they are fighting so hard and they show so much heart and soul, and here they are at the end?

"It's just our DNA, Mary Kay, obviously. We can talk about the big picture later, but in the meantime, small picture, division opponent in front of us. They love playing together. They love playing next to, you know, their brothers, and that's just what we're about."

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Browns QB Shedeur Sanders
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
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So how'd that feel, Shedeur, to get the win against a rival team that was trying to clinch a playoff spot?

"It felt good getting a win overall and especially the team we won against. I think it's been bittersweet because I feel like the offense, we got to do our part. I got to do my part a little bit more, we can't be happy with only 13 points on the board. So, we just got to be able to put up more points."

To get that win, though, your first win here at home. How cool is that in front of the fans?

"Yeah, it's extremely exciting to get the win at home, for sure. I've been needing to win at home for a minute, so that's what's good, that's what I'm excited for, that we brought that feeling back in this place."

Shedeur, you started out hot the first two series, and then there was a lull. Did they adjust to you or just a tough fought game throughout?

"I'm not sure, honestly. They got good players, they got good coaches, too. So of course, whenever we're having a lot of success, they're gonna make adjustments and everything. But I haven't watched the film to be able to know exactly. I know there were a couple passes, like, for sure, to get back down to the check down, to get back down to there, but I just didn't do it. So, it's just something to learn from."

Can you address the nice job that Harold Fannin (Jr.) did on the touchdown catch? And then how tough was it then to see him have to leave the game after that with a groin injury?

"Yeah, I mean, we kind of knew going into the game he was banged up, so it wasn't really like super surprising. We got great players 'on the Hungry Dawgs,' so Sal (Cannella) was able to come back in and be able to get his feet wet."

I heard Snoop (Tyler Huntley) called you before the game.

"Yeah, no I called him. I don't know, I gotta check my phone. But I think I had a missed call from him or a text, something. I don't know that I just called me at like, 6:30am, called him. I'm like, 'dang bro, why you still up?' He was like, 'bro, I'm excited, bro'. He was excited they just got the win, and he was definitely words of encouragement and stuff for me, but that's just how he is. Like, he not just doing that just because it gives them a chance now, I think the overall person he is and the time that we had spent together, he did nothing but speak life into me and I truly appreciate him for that."

How much have you guys, as an offense, grown to appreciate what Andre Szmyt's been able to do since those early season struggles and now he's been so consistent?

"Yeah, I'll say, just the relationship with Andre, we had a conversation when he was going through it, and then since then it's been nothing but up. So, I'm very happy that he was able to get out that hole that he was in and that he's able to see the other side of things. I think, like, that's the only thing I think about whenever I look at him, whenever I see him, I'm just excited, I'm just happy that he was able to see the other side of things."

How impressive was that performance from the defense that you guys stopped scoring for a bit there? They were able to hold the fort.

"Yeah, that's how the Browns defense usually is. That's how they usually are."

Shedeur, seven weeks ago, you came into a home game against the Baltimore Ravens, and you felt that you didn't play that well in your first opportunity. What would you say about your maturation and your growth since then, to have this home victory against a division rival, the Pittsburgh Steelers?

"I'll say overall, I'm able to see the field and the game slow down for sure. I think the main thing is, like, I just like throwing the ball a lot. And in some situations, you can't just throw your dog a bone sometimes, you got to be able to know when it's calculated risk. But like, I feel like our players are better than their players, so I just gave my guy a chance and we just ain't come down with it. And that's just how I go."

A lot of the vets and a lot of people are talking about how they're not really worried about draft pick position and stuff like that and how really like their focus as players is about, especially Joel (Bitonio), he said this is about setting the culture for a lot of the young guys like you and the rookie class. You've talked about changing the culture, how do you think that this win takes a step forward in doing that?

"I think in the building and everything we've been pretty consistent with what we've been doing, the only difference is now we got the result we were supposed to get. So, I don't think the difference between a win and loss is a couple of plays. It wasn't about how you're going about your business, how you're doing everything. Everybody's going about their business the same way, everybody's extremely locked in, extremely focused on what they got to do. But today we just got the result we were looking for."

Hey Shedeur, did you know Snoop before he was here with you at training camp?

"Not personally, no."

So how did that connection between you two develop as quickly as it did?

"I think because I always smile and he always smiling. I think that's what it is. And then we just like just talked, and just had a conversation about God and why he feels like he was sent here, just to give me them words of encouragement to keep me going, and understand his story and understand how things panned out for him also. So, he always told me, 'be ready,' and anytime I talk to him, he's always positive. People with the same vibe usually get along with each other."

Did you watch the game last night?

"I watched like one drive and then I went to sleep. Yeah, I be going to sleep early nowadays. I feel like I be running out of time."

Even though the season didn't go away then guys wanted it too, it really seems like there's a close-knit bond on this football team, a brotherhood. There's something special going on here. Can you describe what that is and how you feel about it?

"I think it's a group of guys that been through a lot of things within themselves, and I think we all like banding together and being one through any situation, through like things that we can't control. We all agree with a lot of things, and I think we the cornerstone of this team."

If you could give yourself advice for that first time you walked out to the field to where you are, kind of like another chance. If you could set that you could give yourself a message today for the first time you walked outfit, what would you say? What did you need to know?

"I would say definitely know you're supposed to be out there dominating. I think what you kind of gotta understand also like sitting and everything like that and just watching like it's a mental thing. So it's like, dang, you start questioning a lot of things, you know, and then sometimes you gotta... Like me, like before the game and stuff, I gotta like have a lot like built up anger, like within myself. Because like that's why I gotta play with that fire, with that different emotion within me, you know? And I think when you go out there the first time, I think it's more of like, "Dang, like this dude over there, like, they cool." But then like when you actually out there, you're like, "I don't care who it is. I'm trying to dominate them," you know? So I think it's that. It's kind of like what I do in the pocket sometimes, like whenever people be falling and stuff, yeah, kind of like that."

A little bit unrelated to football, but I saw pregame that somebody gifted you a really big carpet. How was that?

"We got it at the house now. Yeah, I really love gifts. I don't think for Christmas I got much. So, if anybody out there want to send me gifts, I'll post my P.O. Box online. And just please send clothes, anything, jewelry, bags, because all my bags got stolen when my house got robbed (joking). So appreciate y'all."

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Browns DE Myles Garrett
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
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First of all, how good does it feel to beat the Steelers to prevent them from clinching and to close out the season like that at home against a division rival?

"It feels great. They're our rival, we always want to beat them, doesn't matter the circumstances. When we line up, we want to beat those guys and so glad to have opportunity to do it and get the job done."

Did it feel like you came close a couple times to the record?

"For sure. But I mean, they kind of fell into the same line of thinking that the (Green Bay) Packers did. You know, we'll just throw everything at them and see if we can muster effort to win without it."

How much do you feel, Myles, that your presence like, intimidated them to throw as quickly as they did quick?

"Quick? I mean, that's their M.O. But of course they're going to throw even quicker when I'm lined up on that side, you know, they had a chipper there sometimes two chippers. And through getting out quick, you know, sometimes they're rolling away, they're doing a little bit of everything. And I kind of come to expect that. I know they didn't want me to be the one to break it against them."

I know you talked about playing hard to the end and all that, but what does it say about this team to do that in week 17 against a team trying to get to the playoffs?

"Shows heart, man. Shows grit. I'm proud of those guys in there. It's not easy getting up out of bed and doing what you're supposed to do, taking care of business, preparing the way you did at the beginning of the season, knowing that the end is in sight. But that's how you're measured as a man, as a football player. Know what you're doing when your backs against the wall or the writings against the wall. So those guys had a choice and we made the choice to come out there and get the job done, get a win."

How nice was it to see Denzel (Ward) just close out that game there in the end? You guys have been together so long. Just how good did that feel to see him be able to do that?

"I mean he's a foundational piece for a reason. The guy's special. Anytime he's on the field, he's a game changer. He's a playmaker. I'm not surprised that he was the one that came up with the big play to win it for us."

Myles, on the other side, Tyson (Campbell), his first game was against these guys like three days after he got traded. And just the way he has sort of settled in and made, I mean, I thought tonight, multiple plays, you know, the winning plays, the breakup passes. Just what has he meant on the other side of that secondary?

"I mean, the secondary was crucial today in general. You know, they're trying to get it out quick. You know, we got to be sticky in coverage. We gotta be on them quick and gotta use those five yards to hold them up and try at least to give ourselves time to get to the rush. But if not, you know, you gotta be there when the ball's out. I mean, they were everywhere. They were making plays across the field. I mean, DB (Devin Bush) punched out the ball. There were multiple forced fumbles from the line behind us. So those guys were just intent on coming out of here with a win. And that's the kind of attitude we want for the rest of the season."

How much do you guys also love to go out there and lay it on the line and fight so hard for Kevin Stefanski as your head coach?

"Man, we fight for each other. I mean, that's everybody. I mean, I don't think they're fighting so hard because of me. I don't think they're fighting too hard because of Kevin, we fight because we have each other – this is a brotherhood. You don't get a second chance at this. So, you want to make the most of it every time you step on the field. And you know what the guy next to you has put into it, what this means to him. And you don't want to take this for granted for one second."

Alex (Wright) is saying he doesn't give a crap about draft picks. I know there's fan sentiment but that's all that's left for you guys. What context do people miss when they say that the Browns are just playing for draft picks?

"No one signed up to lose. No one signed up to lose at all. So, I don't care what the situation is with the record. Not a single one of us want to line up and lay down to a team or a man that's in front of us. No, we got put here in this place or selected, whatever it was – drafted to come here and win. Has it always been that way? No, but I'll be damned if I'm just going to go out there and lay down to another team just because we want some more draft picks. That's not me."

Happy early birthday, Myles. On that last drive with the Steelers and Aaron Rodgers, what were your thoughts as he was moving the ball down the field and you guys are finally able to make that stand?

"It's not going to be us. I've seen it a thousand times with this guy. I mean, he's incredible in making it happen, but it's not going to be us. Just got to make one play and stack those one play at a time – get to fourth down and what happens, happens. But can't let it be us. We can't be in his Hall of Fame run."

Still as confident as ever if you get the record next week?

"Absolutely. Why shouldn't I be... Four more quarters, 60 more minutes. However you want to draw it up, it'll get done."

I mean, you were bearing down and it was just like, almost like you take the football. I mean, on a couple of those plays, the way he was, you know, just throwing it out there to (Jaylen) Warren or (Kenneth) Gainwell or something like that. I mean, is that what you're talking about? Just the way. Even more so than usual, getting rid of the ball quick.

"Yeah. I mean, to an extent. I feel like they were more worried about keeping me away from Aaron than getting the win, and I think that's what came back to bite him. So, they'll have to fight it out with Baltimore (Ravens) next week. But I'm just proud of the guys for fighting and getting this one. That's the main thing. And I'm always going to keep it that."

Myles, even though the season didn't go the way that you guys wanted it to, is there something special about this team, just in terms of heart and soul and brotherhood and all that kind of stuff?

"Yeah. I mean, regardless of the record and what's happened on the field, I'm completely proud of these guys and how much they've grown as men and the kind of camaraderie and team we have. I don't think I've ever been so happy and excited to go to work just being alongside those guys. Whether it's D-line, whether it's offense, linebackers, the secondary, those guys, they not only made me proud, but made me proud to be a Brown. They made me proud to do this and be here every day. So, I'm happy to just wake up and have the opportunity to play with them."

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Select Browns Players
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
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G Joel Bitonio

Do you soak it in a little more, just in case this was your last home game in Cleveland?

"Yeah, I'm thankful every time I get to play this game. Just walking off the field, you take in the moment just in case. You never know what the future is going to hold. There's retirement, there's free agency - you know, I've never done that in my life. There is so much stuff that goes into it. I'll take it in and I appreciate the win. I'm happy we finished this year with a win at home versus Pittsburgh."

Joel, when you get to this point in the year, fans are thinking about draft position. Head Coach Kevin Stefanski alluded to that big-picture, you can talk about that later, but now, we're still focused on a division opponent. Can you explain why, even in a lost season like this, it's important to get a win like this, this late in the season?

"I'll tell you what, I do not blame the fans for thinking about the future. But as players in this locker room, every time you go on the field, it's a resume. This is a real sport. This is the NFL. You have to put your best foot forward when you go out there. You have to compete. For this team, there are a lot of young guys - you look at (LB) Carson (Schwesinger), (DT) Mason (Graham), (QB) Shedeur (Sanders), (RB) Dylan Sampson, (TE) Harold Fannin Jr. with that touchdown catch. These guys are trying to build a culture for the future, and to go out there and be like 'we're going to lose our last couple of games for a better draft pick...'; it would never cross a player's mind. Maybe the fans want to have some fan-fiction, maybe upstairs is hoping or something like that, but I know the players and coaches fight for every win and every time you go on the field, it's a resume builder."

S Grant Delpit

To finish up the home part of the schedule with a win over a rival, with everything that's gone on this year, how did this one feel walking off the field?

"It feels great. Good one for us and good for the fans. The stadium was rocking, man. It's insane that we had three wins going into our last game of the season and for the stadium to still sound like that, it says a lot about the Cleveland fans and the Dawg Pound. We got them one."

Were you surprised (DE) Myles (Garrett) didn't get that sack?

"Surprised? You know, we play every play as hard as we can. The crowd sure wanted him to get it, and I thought it was already written. He'll get it next week and we're going to celebrate in Cincy."

You guys were really trying to get him (DE Myles Garrett) it, moving him around a lot on the line, but it seemed like the Steelers were getting the ball out quicker than they normally do.

"They chipped him, they had two people on him (DE Myles Garrett) every play. They throw the ball in 0.5 seconds, so Myles is going to have to learn to fly if he wants to get that sack against that team."

How important is it for you guys next week to finish the season strong with a win and carry over this momentum or a good taste in your mouth against Cincinnati?

"Yeah, you know, you want to win every game, especially the last one of the season. Two wins, going into the offseason will feel pretty good and keep the ball rolling. It's two teams that are in our division that are our rivals, so wouldn't want to play nobody else."

Did you think that you guys did a better job today of handling the quick game stuff?

"Yeah, I think we did a good job. Shoot, six points. That's a good job to me."

DT Shelby Harris

What you guys did out there today, is that the equivalent of pitching a perfect game?

"We got the win. That's the most important part about it. I think a big deal we made of it was that we're not going to let them clinch at our house. They're not going to come to Cleveland wearing AFC North Division Champions hats after the game - none of that. We took that to heart and we went out there and dominated. That's what we expect."

To close out the season at home with a win, how meaningful is that?

"It's great. We set the franchise record for sacks in a season. Myles is on his way to do his thing. Obviously, the season didn't go the way we wanted it to, but we're not quitting. We go out there, we have a lot to fight for still. Every

year, it could be someone's last in this league. You're not in a position to take it easy in any games. You got to go out there and put your best foot forward every week. It starts again next week against the Bengals."

With Denzel getting targeted three straight plays, with the game on the line, how comfortable are you on defense to have the Pro Bowler there?

"That was their decision. I'm not throwing it at Denzel, but if they thought that was their best matchup, good for them. It didn't work out. That's why we have it - if you're going to try him and don't think he's going to be up for the challenge, he'll prove you wrong every time."

Myles said it seems that they were more worried about the sack record than winning the game, do you agree?

"Yes - that's how it's felt the last couple of weeks. Everyone is more worried about the record, but obviously we had to do some different things and really focus on trying to stop the run. Not letting that be an issue. Trying to force them to throw the ball, but yes, teams aren't just going to let us pass rush, so we got to force them to. I guess we did a little better job of that this week, and we have to do a better job of that next week."

TE Harold Fannin Jr.

What happened on your end of the play and what did you have to do to make it?

"I didn't really think too much about it. I just saw the ball there and adjusted to grab it. I'm thankful that 12 (QB Sheduer Sanders) put it up there for me to grab it."

RB Dylan Sampson

How much do you guys love playing hard for Head Coach Kevin Stefanski and putting it all out on the line?

"Like you said, you dig deep and you realize why you play this game. Play it for the people you've been through it with, play for your brothers, so it's about what you care about. If you care about it enough, you go out there and give it your all."

What is it about Kevin that he's able to connect with you guys and keep the locker room, despite everything that has gone on?

"I think it's a hard job for any head coach to do. Week after week, loss after loss - it's a long season. It's not an easy job to try and keep a team together, a locker room together. I think the mindset has been instilled since camp, we didn't get the season we want, the results we want. It just goes back to how we are built."

K Andre Szmyt

Andre, how did it feel out there to be a big part of this win?

"It feels good getting the win, first of all. It feels good to be with the guys (LS) Rex (Sunahara), (P) Corey (Bojorquez), it's an amazing feeling to get the win."

You were able to make some kicks, Pittsburgh struggled - what were some of the challenges they were facing?

"I can only speak for myself. But sticking with my process. Trying to figure out what the wind was doing pregame. Having that experience here and having games under my belt, you kind of know what the weather app is going to say, you kind of know what to expect. Just stacking weeks like that, week after week, helping me progress."

You had some early season challenges, but you dedicated yourself to work through that. How does it feel to be so successful this season and close out your home season with a win?

"It feels great. I think we came such a long way - developing and I have such a great group around me. Guys like Head Coach Kevin (Stefanski) and Rex, Corey, everybody is supportive and have been there for me. It means a lot."

CB Denzel Ward

Were you worried about contact at all on that last play?

"No, I thought I was in great position. I was able to get the ball out."

Is that the dream scenario for a Cornerback with the game on the line?

"Oh yeah, I wish I would have got that interception on the play before, but I was just glad to be able to help my team finish it off and get a win."

You came up grabbing your arm, what happened there?

"When I was diving for the ball on the interception, I fell on my shoulder, so the shoulder was a little sore. I'll be alright."

Denzel, is it hard to stay mentally sharp when they don't test you for 58 minutes?

"Yeah, like I said, I try to stay locked in the whole game. I know teams aren't going to come at me and try me too much, but just being ready for my moment whenever they do decide, I just take a lot of pride in being that guy to be a playmaker on the team and know I'm going to make the play once it does come."

It's been such a tough season, what inspired you guys to play so hard today?

"We still got games on the table. Still have a lot to play for, even though we aren't making the playoffs. Still trying to get wins for this city and for our team, so we'll always go out there and fight every time."

DE Alex Wright

Was (QB) Aaron Rodgers frustrated today?

"Oh he (QB Aaron Rodgers) was. He was out there cussing up a storm, upset about whatever he and the coaches had going on over there. This is the first time since the last game that I've seen him that flustered. Other than that, he did what he could, and their offense did what they could. We did a good job as a defense today, you know, we let some slip through the cracks, but that's football. At the end of the day, glad we came out with the W."

How crazy was it to see (CB) Denzel (Ward) get targeted three straight times in a game winning situation?

"I don't know what their game plan was, but when you try an All-Pro corner that's the type of result that's going to happen. Even if he (QB Aaron Rodgers) tried TC (CB Tyson Campbell) I trusted that he was going to break the play up. But the fact that you tried 21 (CB Denzel Ward), he got a lot of balls, so it is what it is."

Did (DE) Myles (Garrett) give you a hard time on that one sack you had?

"No, the thing with (DE) Myles (Garrett) that people fail to understand is that he wants us to get ours, just as much as we want him to get his. Myles is the type of person that says you have an opportunity, you take advantage of that opportunity. Even if he doesn't get the sack, you go make your plays and make yourself known."

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Steelers Head Coach Mike Tomlin
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Opening Statement:

"You know, [a] tough, hard fought AFC North matchup. We certainly didn't make enough plays today, and they did. [I've] got to compliment those guys on an outstanding winning effort. And it is back to work for us. We've been here before, and so certainly we have a big week ahead of us, man, in the big game, in Acrisure next weekend. From an injury standpoint, (Steelers TE) Darnell Washington had a broken arm. He wasn't able to go back in. The rest were just bumps and bruises associated with play. Questions."

Are you surprised you played like you did with so much on the line?

"You know, I didn't think we played poorly. We just didn't make enough plays. I thought they played well. I thought the game was kind of unfolding in the way that you would anticipate, but we never made that signature play that kind of got us over the hump. That generally is the deciding factor in games like this and we generally make them. We didn't make them today."

What kept you from making those plays, especially offensively?

"You know, they had a lot to do with it. They made some plays. And I'm never one not to compliment worthy opponents, and certainly they made plays today."

How much did not having Darnell Washington affect some of that decision-making in short yardage situations?

"We get challenged with the attrition component all the time. We make no excuses regarding that. We have capable men. We adapt, adjust, and we keep moving."

Was Steelers WR Scotty Miller the number one read on that 4th and one where Steelers QB Aaron Rodgers threw it to him down in the end zone?

"He certainly had options, and he was one of them."

On that play, did not having Darnell affect your decision to possibly not tush push on that play call?

"Again, as I mentioned, we have options. Attrition is a component of it. We adapt and keep moving. We make no excuses about what we do or what we don't do, particularly as it pertains to who's available and who's not."

How much did not having Steelers WR DK Metcalf affect the passing game?

"It was an impact, but we certainly have capable men, and we expect those guys to make necessary plays, and we certainly didn't make enough today."

How do you think the defense did after the first two drives?

"I thought they kept us in the fight. We got some takeaways. We put ourselves in a position to win."

Was there too much focus or emphasis on keeping Browns DE Myles Garrett from that sack record? Did you feel that from your offense at all?

"We didn't do anything against Myles that we don't normally do against Myles. The sack record is irrelevant. We have to minimize him if we want to engineer victory. We did the same thing last time we played them. I didn't think he had any sacks in that game either. And so we didn't take a different approach because of the gravity of the record. It's just standard business when you're playing these guys and him."

Three straight shots to Steelers WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling to end the game, was that the guy Aaron wanted, or is that what Steelers OC Arthur Smith drew?

"He had eligibles on the play, and certainly he was one of them, and he's a capable guy. I have no qualms about us playing to win the game and the way that we did."

How significant was it for them to get that lead early on?

"The start doesn't determine anything other than the start. I doubt that any of us got uncomfortable. It's the nature of how these games go. I thought our ability to put some points on the board prior to the half and then have the ball coming out in the second half, really kind of made anything that transpired in the first half irrelevant."

Is Darnell out for a significant portion?

"That I don't know. I just reported to you guys what I have."

Did Steelers K Chris Boswell have normal footing on the field goal that he missed?

"It's irrelevant."

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**Steelers QB Aaron Rodgers
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
Week 17
12-28-25**

With so much at stake, are you surprised at how the team played today?

"Played like what? They've got a good defense, but we didn't execute very well on third downs. I didn't have a very good game. Didn't run the ball early like we wanted to. Pretty bad on third down."

How significant was Steelers TE Darnell Washington's absence?

"Darnell is a big part of what we do."

How impacted were you by what you wanted to do by the absences of Washington and WRs Calvin Austin III and DK Metcalf?

"Those are three impact players for us, but we have a lot of confidence in the guys that filled those roles."

Was there a wrong route on the second and third down plays in the last series, and I assume interference on that last play?

"It was definitely interference. I'll have to look at the film on second and third down."

What did you see on that throw to (Marques) Valdes-Scantling?

"One-on-one."

What needs to change between now and next week, if anything?

"Not much. We just have to execute better."

When you let go of an opportunity like that, how hard is it to bounce back?

"It's not difficult. It's our job - playing all 17."

When you play the Browns, how hard is it to balance trying to limit Browns DE Myles Garrett but still get it going?

"We had a similar game plan as the first time. We just executed better in the first game."

How much was it in your mind and in the O-line's minds about Garrett being one sack away from the record?

"You have to ask them. It wasn't on my mind."

Did you have any communication with DK prior to this game?

"I'm not going to share that with you."

As one of the leaders of this team, how important is it to turn the attention to what's at stake and a chance to still win the division next week?

"Win or lose, that's what you do. You move on to the next game."

You talk about bouncing back after adversity, does that make it easier to have the confidence to go into next week?

"I have full confidence we'll go home and win next week."

Is Steelers WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling a guy you just have the utmost confidence in to throw the ball to him three times in the end zone?

"Yeah, I do."

What gives you the confidence that you guys will be able to right the ship next week?

"Because we've done it all season. We've handled adversity well and when we've had to play our best ball, we did. Other than today."

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Steelers DT Cameron Heyward
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
Week 17
12-28-25

How disappointing is it to have a chance to clinch and not be able to do it?

"Tough. We had our opportunities on offense, defense, special teams, we had some clear opportunities. Go home, bring on Baltimore"

How tough is that pill to swallow and what do you do to get everybody past it and move on?

"The competitor in me is 'We lost this game. We lost a chance to clinch today.' The competitor in me is like 'Bring it on.' Baltimore is coming in. Winner takes all. I got a lot of respect for those guys over there. Let's win it at home."

Do you think it puts unnecessary added pressure on the entire team this week to get it done?

"There's pressure on everybody. We play in a professional league with pressure every week. If you're not ready for that pressure, or you feel like it's unwanted, I think you're in the wrong league. Playing in this league, there's always going to be pressure."

It seemed like you guys settled in more defensively in the second half, what led to the defense finding more of a rhythm?

"I thought we gave up some bonehead plays early. Even though it's a touchdown, that's the difference in the game. We have a chance to make a play on the ball and we didn't. And then we controlled the line of scrimmage from there on out. That's a lot of tough sledding when you're expecting them to play good defense as well. It was a battle for field position in the second half. Even at the end we knew if we can get off the field again, we give ourselves another chance. I commend our guys for doing it. All you ask for is a chance. Some times you get them, sometimes you don't"

As one of the leaders of this team, what would be your message to the team, how do you expect them to respond to this?

"It's for everything this week. We don't have to look around. We don't have to wait for somebody else to play. It brings you back to high school ball, when everything is riding on every single game. When you're a competitor, you understand this rivalry between Baltimore [and Pittsburgh]. This is what you want."

One win here since 2018 for you guys, what is it about playing here in Cleveland, do they get up for it more, is it something about the intimacy of this rivalry, can you put a finger on it?

"Every game is different. Usually it comes down to those opportunities. You cannot seize those enough. Field goal there, convert fourth down. It's those moments. Perspective."

Teams and players talk about momentum when it's in their favor. With the inspired football that the Ravens played, do you feel that the Steelers took a shot now, as far as momentum?

"We've had momentum. One game doesn't take us off the track. We've been playing good ball as of late. There's still things we can hang our hat on. Stopping the run, turnovers, controlling the ball, we've been good on offense. Giving yourself a shot late. That's all you can ask for."

Do you still like the position you're in?

"Yeah. Because we control our destiny. We don't have to look around. Week 18, ball is in our home court. I expect our guys to be locked in, ready for the opportunity."

You mentioned turnovers earlier, you all had two interceptions today and you didn't get a win. That's unusual. How frustrating is it to win the turnover battle and not come away with the victory?

"There are some turnovers, but you missed some as well. We're critical of our team, we're critical of our defense. We had some clear opportunities to seize some more turnovers as well. We talk about taking care of the ball, we talk about taking the ball away. There were some missed opportunities with us today. We don't have to search high and low for them, they're very glaring."

How different of a run defense do you feel you guys are now than when you played Baltimore last?

"We'll find out. We got to work that out. I know that monster over there went for big yardage this past week. We gotta draw up a good gameplan. Always comes down to accountability, gap integrity, getting off blocks, and seizing the ball when we get to it."

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Select Steelers Players
Cleveland Browns vs. Pittsburgh Steelers
Week 17
12-28-25

TE Pat Freiermuth

What makes this place so tough to play in?

"It's a good environment, they have good fans. It's a tough place to play but that is no excuse, we must execute better."

What can you guys change between now and next week?

"Everyone getting on the same page, and being able to get open for Aaron (Rodgers), we just need to execute at critical times."

You guys have everything on the line next week. How do you guys approach this coming week?

"We have to do everything it takes to be able to win."

I know you guys always say next man up. Schematically, how challenging was it for you guys without DK (Metcalf) out there today?

"Yeah, I mean, obviously losing DK is a tough challenge. As competitors, we have to be able to step up."

WR Adam Thielen

How do you feel coming up short with a chance to lock things up?

"Obviously, these are the games you want to play in with a chance to, you know, right your own ship and make the playoffs, so yeah, disappointing but we've got to go right back to work"

Why do you think the offense could hardly get into a rhythm today?

"Yeah just momentum, just earning some early first downs, I think that's always good for an offense you can kind of get the ball rolling just by earning some first downs early in the drive and we never really accomplished that"

How do you put this, maybe like, behind you and kind of turn the page? You know you still have a chance to win the division next week.

"Well, I mean look at it as next week is a playoff game. And so you have to move quickly. You got to learn from some of the stuff that happened today and then move on as fast as possible. Like I said, it's just the playoffs starting a week earlier for us."

How frustrating was it that you guys, you know, your defense was making some big plays, creating turnovers, and you guys just weren't able to capitalize [on] a lot of those plays?

"Yeah I think that's usually, as an offense, the most frustrating thing when you feel like you're letting the team down because our defense played so well, had so many, you know, gave us so many opportunities to, short fields, getting us the ball, [the goal] was to be able to go and score and ultimately win the game. We knew that if we could go and score, we were gonna win the game. Obviously we didn't get that done"

How difficult was it not having DK (Metcalf) out there?

"Yeah obviously a player like him—he's paid the way he's paid for a reason, because he's a difference maker. He draws a lot of attention and he makes a lot of big plays. So, tough to not have him out there, but that's not an excuse. We feel very strongly that whoever's out here can go make those plays and carry the weight that we're missing, but it didn't happen today."

LB Jack Sawyer

How do you move on after a loss like this?

"I mean obviously when you lose it's frustrating, especially, you know, what we were playing for today. It's frustrating, but you know, we give them credit, they played a good game."

I guess the one thing you can look at is you guys aren't eliminated. You still have next week. How do you kind of turn the page?

"We have to. We got no choice, no choice. It's onto next week you know, and it's a must win game, and get back to work and make the corrections we need to make."

I know we're not there yet, but do you feel like there's a lot more pressure now on this week to go out and win next week?

"I don't think we feel any pressure to. Go on about our business and our business is winning and every time we don't, it sucks, and every week, going into the week, all of them are must win. So you know, I feel like we've been in the playoffs for the last five weeks and that's kind of the mentality we've had, so it's nothing different, but you know, we know what's at stake"

What was working so well for you guys today, you know, just as a defense? You held them scoreless in the second half, you forced all those turnovers. What was working?

"Yeah I just think that uh, we are just getting better in the right areas at the right time. We played really aggressive, stopped the run for the most part, I thought too, which was huge, and just played good collective defense."

How about your interception?

"Oh you know, blessed to be able to make that play, you know, but we didn't win. That's the most important thing"

T Dylan Cook

You guys played a pretty good defense today. Is that the reason you had trouble moving the ball?

"That is a good question. We will have to watch the film back and correct our mistakes."

When you guys got down to the 10-yard line, did you think you were going to score there?

"Yeah, definitely I always feel like it, when we get in the red zone, it's tough."

Was that a rally cry to make sure Myles Garrett doesn't get a sack today to pass T.J. (Watt)?

"In the back of our minds, yeah, for sure. We just wanted to win the game at the end of the day."

What's the mentality now going into Week 18? How do you shake this off and go into the next one?

"We gotta regroup quick. The future is in our hands. We just gotta come back together and move on to Baltimore."

Myles was talking to you at the end of the game there. What did he mention to you?

"I said it was an honor going against someone like him, and that you should keep counting it. Just a little post game talk."

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