



Chicago Bears Postgame Media Availability

Saturday, August 15, 2026 – Soldier Field – Chicago, Ill.

BEARS HEAD COACH BEN JOHNSON

Opening Statement: “A few guys who didn’t finish through there, so (TE Nikola) Niko (Kalinic) has a right knee (injury), didn’t finish the game. (DB) Xavier Woods had a groin (injury) and didn’t finish, (LB) Nephi Sewell had a concussion and didn’t finish, so he’s in the protocol right now. And then (LB) Ruben (Hyppolite II) has a shoulder (injury). So we’ll keep looking at that as we go here. Proud of our guys and how they played. We talked about being disciplined in all three phases, and we really saw that today. Two penalties on the day from all three phases. We haven’t had a practice yet with that few of fouls. That was really encouraging to see, they took that to heart. I don’t know if I’ve been part of a preseason where that’s been the case in my career, so credit to them. And then we talked about being physical, being fast, being detailed. I thought our guys were able to cut it loose. We simplified the game plans from what we’ve been doing in practice. We just let them go out there and play. I thought the fundamentals and technique showed up. I thought our defense was tackling for the most part when they had opportunities. Offensively, we had some details there in the passing game, quarterbacks were fairly accurate with the football. But it’ll be really good tape for us to look at, and it’s a good start as we get going. If you noticed a difference in terms of offensive execution and it looked better in the second half, that’s really because of (Assistant Head Coach / Wide Receivers Coach) Antwaan Randle El calling it there in the second half. I thought he did a phenomenal job with (QB) Case (Keenum) taking the reins and then transition on over to (QB) Miller (Moss) just to see how he was trying to stay in their wheelhouse. He was part of the quarterback meeting last night, and we were talking about what was on the call sheet and their favorites and all that. And I think it was a phenomenal experience for him, and I know our guys rallied around that as well. So, I’ll open it up from there.”

On why he chose to hand off play calling duties:

“I think we might take a look at a couple guys here during the preseason. Last year, (Ravens Offensive Coordinator) Declan (Doyle) had an opportunity in one of those games to do the second half. So, I wanted El to get that chance and he wanted it too. I think he’s an outstanding coach, and I think sometimes when you’re put in certain position rooms, you kind of get labeled one thing or another. Here’s the thing about El, I think he’s got a chance to be an offensive coordinator in this league. I think he’s got a chance to be a head coach in this league. I think he would do a

phenomenal job in both those respects, and I don't know if he gets that type of credit around the league right now. So, it's a good opportunity for him to get some recognition.

On the screen pass touchdown to RB Salvon Ahmed:

"We've been harping on those details. We've got specific landmarks; we drill them every single day. I think our defense has done a really good job throughout the week of practice to make those hard for us. So, we've had a lot of very difficult looks. Some of our worst plays in practice over the last couple weeks have been our screens. I just think it's a really good job upfront, executing the timing, the rhythm and then we always talk about those screen runners when they get the ball in the hands. We're trying to get vertical for a few steps, and then it turns into a punt return after that. That's certainly what that one looked like as he was taking it across the field. So, good to see those guys blocking down the field. A guy like (WR) Kaden Davis, who really is trying to run coverage away from the screen ends up making a key block and it's good to see things like that."

On the rotation between OL Kiran Amegadjie and OL Jedrick Wills Jr.:

"I think that's a hard one for me to assess right now. Sometimes that trench play, you have to go ahead and take a look at the lens from behind and really be able to take a look at it. But, as a whole, I would say the offensive line – I felt like our quarterback got hit more than I would like. (QB) Tyson (Bagent) certainly did in the first half. And in the second half, we still felt some pressures there on Case and Miller. So, we'll look at why that was the case. Then running game-wise was a little bit spotty as well. So, different style. The defense certainly attributes to that. Their front is coming off the ball, and they make it very difficult for one-on-one blocks and you have to be very specific with your angles and all that. And so, there's a back and forth there in the running game as well. So, hard to say a whole lot about left tackle quite yet."

On how 'ready' he feels the offense is:

"I feel really good about where those guys are at. We had a phenomenal throwing session before we got going today, and that was by design. We got over 60 plays that we were able to simulate. Going in a huddle, calling the play, talking through the coaching points, the footwork, the timing, the rhythm. I thought all of those guys that didn't play in the game, they needed that. I think that's how you get better at the passing game is you have to have days like that. It was a good time to do it. We'll assess whether we need to play in the next couple games as we go through these joint practices here, and we'll see where we're at as a team. But I'm happy with what the offense looks like right now, and yet we're only halfway through this thing, and we have a long ways to go."

On what 'still needs to be cleaned up':

"My concerns last year were a lot with the pre-snap. We don't have those procedure issues to that degree anymore. So, provided we can keep those to a minimum, I think that's where we'll continue to get better. I think our defense is going to continue to get better because they're facing a clean unit as well. We'll see what it looks like going against a couple of new opponents. I'm excited to go down to Cincinnati, and they've got a lot of new talent on defense that we're going to have to be on our Ps and Qs if we want to have success against. That to me is going to help us really shape where we're at as an offense right now."

On DL Jamree Kromah:

"It's something you see in the springtime. The new techniques that we're coaching with and he's flashing. And yet it's like, 'Is this the time he's going to turn it on?' And you don't know. Then you go into a game like this, and you see the get off, you see the relentlessness. You could feel his presence every single snap. I'm standing close to the D-lineman and they're hooting and hollering and cheering for him because they're as excited as he is because they're seeing him going out there and making plays and making an impact like that. He's such a hard worker. I know he's been in the program now for a minute and to see him have some success on the field like that, that was huge."

On Ahmed:

"Yeah, we feel good about those top two backs right now and where they're at. So, the battle for three, four, five, whatever that looks like, a lot comes down to special teams. A lot comes down to how do you separate yourself from those top two guys? What's your skillset? How's it different? He's got that slashing mentality where he's hard to bring down in space, and that showed up again today. Showed up in practice really throughout camp so far. We'll continue to challenge him to find a defined role there on special teams where he can help us out the most there. And then pass protection, how do we continue to improve? When you're a little bit smaller as a running back... that's always what I'm looking for is, how well, how stout are we holding up to a blitzing linebacker as well."

On DB Beanie Bishop Jr.:

"I think it's a credit to him. He doesn't say a whole lot. He's just learning and trying to absorb the system right now. I think (Defensive Coordinator Dennis Allen) DA has been pretty clear with how our pass defense works together. It's the rush upfront, combined with the coverage in the back end. And when you feel that front coming off the ball and affecting the quarterback to the degree that they did, move him off his spot, that's where you get some overthrows and things of that nature. And Beanie's in great position and he took advantage of it twice, you know? Thought he had a great return afterwards as well. It was awesome to see. We'll continue to evaluate him as we get going. Also, where we have to get better as a team is, we have to score some touchdowns when we get those takeaways. There's a lot of good tape from today. I know what the score says, and yet we have a lot to learn from and grow from as well."

On what his 'list of trustworthy offensive guys looks like now'

"Yeah, I don't know if I could put a number on it, but these guys understand what the expectation is. I think they study their tails off. I mean, they're professionals. You bring in some new guys, some young guys, like take (WR) Zavion (Thomas), for example now you can just say, 'Hey, just do what (WR) Rome (Odunze) does. Just do what (WR) Kalif (Raymond) does. That's where this thing really takes off. And Zavion is on his stuff because he's just watching them and doing what they do. There's not a number on it, but there's a lot of confidence right now with where we are, where we're heading, and what we can potentially become here as we keep going through this thing. I love the fact that we take all the bells and whistles off today and we're more static, not a whole

lots of motions and all that and these guys can just cut it loose and play fast. I thought their play speed showed up today.”

On DL Montez Sweat’s timeline to return to play

“Sooner, sooner, sooner, sooner. Like, within this week.”

On OL Braxton Jones timeline:

“Same thing.”

On DB Kyler Gordon timeline to return:

“Unknown.”

BROWNS HEAD COACH TODD MONKEN

Opening Statement: “Man, that was a lot of fun, that was. Getting out there with our guys, watching them play. All the fruits of their labor from the spring and then camp, watching our guys compete. Obviously, not the result you want, you’re playing to win and at the end of the day we didn’t do that. We didn’t finish the game; we didn’t play very well in the second half really on either side of the ball. But I do believe the season is a marathon; our marathon starts in Jacksonville; we’re just still in training. We went out there today, and we were 13 miles into our training; and we’ll get closer the week, and there’s a lot to clean up. There is. Coaching and playing. So, again, frustrating at certain levels; certainly, you can’t turn the ball over three times. You certainly can’t do that. There were some things operationally that I know we can clean up, but I thought at moments we threw that ball well, and that’s what we needed to see; we’ll be able to run the football. So, there were certain things that we wanted to at least keep simple today. I wanted to see how we would be being able to throw it, and I thought our quarterbacks played well in that regard.”

On QB Deshaun Watson in the first half:

“Oh, it was awesome. I mean, it was so cool to watch him play. I get all of the frustration by fans, himself, but for him to come back and work like he did is an unbelievable credit to him. And then to go out there; he was having fun today. And that is so cool. And I thought he really functioned at a high level. Certainly, we don’t want to be taking timeouts. We sure as heck can’t take delay of games. But it was fun watching him play and watching us take the next step forward and see where we’re at.”

On if the plan was to keep it ‘simple’ for Watson:

“Sure. And, we had some other things called and they got us out of it. Again, we were trying to stay as simple as we could, but yet give the quarterbacks opportunities to play and to function. And we didn’t gameplan for Chicago. We certainly wanted to run the things that our quarterbacks felt comfortable with where we were at. We’re certainly going build off that moving forward. But it was fun watching him, again, operate, give him some completions, and get his feet wet a little bit.”

On Watson’s hand:

“He’s fine.”

On WR KC Concepcion Jr.:

“We were trying to do a number of things offensively. First and foremost, we were trying to get some of our skill guy’s touches. You could see the explosiveness, whether it was the punt return or the fly sweep that we got into. So, I’m happy for him. He’s worked awfully hard and he got a few opportunities and made the most of it.”

On OL Spencer Fano's playing time:

"The plan was to let him continue to play, get some of the other starters out, and allow him to continue to play through pretty much the first half."

On the 'next step' in the QB competition:

"When we practice against Buffalo, we will give both of the quarterbacks opportunities with the ones against the (Buffalo) Bills. (QB) Shedeur (Sanders) will start against the Bills. Deshaun will play in the third quarter and (QB) Dillon (Gabriel) will play in the fourth. It's just flipped."

On Sanders' interception:

"I'll have to see it. I'll have to see if there was a little push that got in his face. Looked like we had a clear-out with a dagger concept and looked like he was open. Looked like the ball sailed a little bit on him. A little bit like what happened with Dillon. The positive thing is they were both in the right place. I believe that. Again, I'll have to see the film, but I believe they were in the right spot, both interceptions. We had (WR) Gage (Larvadain) on the one from Dillon; just let it sail. Maybe the ball got a little bit wet. It was humid out there, but I like that part of it, that we're in the right spot."

On where the QB competition stands heading into Buffalo:

"I'm not ready to say it yet. I mean, the plan was always to get through the Bills game; switch up who was going to start, who's going to play in the second half. And then we'll go from there. Every day's important. Monday's going to be important. Being in the meeting rooms are going to be important. Listening to the players talk about what they saw. That's part of it too. What they saw, how they feel. We'll go back to work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and have a great practice against Buffalo. Then we'll walk through on Friday and then we'll go compete our rear ends off against the Bills and see where we're at. And then we'll reevaluate them. We'll certainly watch it tomorrow and have an idea of how we thought our guys played. That's a part of it. We're always in the evaluation process, and we're going to do the same thing as a coaching staff. I mean, there's certainly things we're going to look back at and say, 'How do we coach that better? How do we scheme it better moving forward? Who do we want to be moving forward?'"

On injuries at corner:

"Well, everybody at this point in the year has injuries. Some longer than others, some nagging injuries that you're going to work through. That's just happens to be the position group right now. So again, we've got good depth there. We'll just (be) next man up and go out there and compete."

On Watson and if we will play against the Bills:

"Oh yeah, he's going to play against Bills. He'll play the third quarter. What I wanted to see was how comfortable he was leading up to the game. How comfortable he was in the huddle. Certainly, there were things from an operational standpoint we can do better, but I wanted to see if he was enjoying himself. Was this still fun for him? To play through the ups and the downs? Sure he's not happy about certain throws that he could have made, a couple of them that would've

extended drills. (Not) sure he's thrilled about a quarterback sneak that we threw on him there to get a first down. But it was fun watching him play. It was fun."

On if he 'answered those questions positively':

"In my mind, he did."

On Watson running QB Sneak:

"He said he can sneak. He said, 'I'm a powerful dude man, just give me the ball. I'll get you inches.' I said, 'Great, let's roll.'"

On the play in the second half:

"Again, I love watching our guys play. I mean, all they do is they show up and say, 'spot the ball.' I know I say that all the time, but it is so fun to watch those guys play. We just got worn down. After the first drive, I think that Shedeur got in there and we got stopped on fourth down. We just never got any traction until the last drive, we turned the ball over and our guys just got tired over there. That's not a good recipe for success, turning the ball over, they score, turn it over, they score. We just couldn't stack any plays together to help ourselves out."

On Watson 'overcoming adversity' in the game:

"It's all part of it. We were trying to get him a two-minute at the end. I would've never called that time out if that was a regular game. We wouldn't have done that, but we were trying to get a two-minute. It didn't turn out great, but I wouldn't have done that in (the) regular (season). I would've let them decide whether they were going to let the clock run down. But we were trying to get the ball back. If we get a stop there, we get another opportunity to go two-minute there. Because I wanted to see Deshaun go out there and play and get a two-minute, which we did. We did right before that, but I wanted to get another opportunity for him to go out there and play because the number one evaluation we have is the quarterback position. So why not try and get more plays? Obviously, it gave them a field goal at halftime. And again, if that was a regular game, we would not have done that."

On the plan for the offensive line against Buffalo:

"We'll see, because we practice with them Thursday. We have to talk about the reps we're going to have Thursday. I'll talk with (Bills Head Coach) Joe Brady tomorrow. We're going to talk about how the practice goes. But if it's really heavy in terms of our ones and our upper-level twos, then I could see a world where a number of those guys don't play in the game because of the work they got on Thursday. We would certainly not want to work them at a high level on Thursday and then expect them to turn around, especially against a team like Buffalo and their players and then play on Saturday."

On if splitting reps for quarterbacks in practice is about 'keeping it as fair as possible':

"As best as we can. The hardest part is you're not going to have similar blocks. You could have a rundown period and get back on track, third downs, two-minute. You're not going to have two different blocks or two similar blocks where the quarterbacks get the equality. It's just what you

have to do. It's the closest you get. We want to see them compete as much as we can. And both of them had a turnover. One was a fumble, but I was really pleased with our quarterback play. It's not going to feel like that. Turn it over three times, that's never going to be ideal. But to me, it felt like we are going to be able to throw the football, be effective in that. Certainly do a better job coaching in the run game and the protections and our play actions. And everything that we do, we're going to get better at. I was pleased with our quarterback play. I mean, for Shedeur not to play the first half and to come right out and we open it up with a throw hits Gage, I think, if I have it right. And then we get a big third down and they go zero and we block it up and he hits our slot on a crossing route. Obviously, we didn't finish. Gotta call it better, got to coach better, got to play better. But those are the things you're looking for. I mean, did anybody not see that and say, "Wow, I think we might be okay there. I think our quarterbacks are pretty good. We've just got to do a better job coaching them and playing around them."

On if the game 'gave him confidence' in Watson:

"100%. Now I mean it's a preseason game. It's the closest thing we have. But it beats the alternative. What's the alternative? They didn't play good. We didn't complete passes. We didn't look like we could halfway function as an offense. That we didn't have enough skill – not true, we do. That we don't have tailbacks, we do. We certainly didn't run it very well. You're not going to score a lot if you can't run the football, and you can't control the game. We kept ourselves in long-yardage situations, and that's going to be very difficult. I give the quarterbacks a lot of credit for what we put them through in terms of the down and distances we had. Certainly, like I said, no one's going to make more mistakes than I do in a game. Nobody. There's not one player in terms of one, calls back. Other than the red flag, my first red flag, I'm one-for-one. Make sure you -holy cow, I know you guys when I don't get it right, you're going to say that (*laughter*). So at least get out one-for-one on the challenge. I'm fired up. I think our team is only going to continue to get better and we're going to continue to develop our young players and continue to progress. But I was hoping our quarterbacks would play like that and function like that. From our sideline, I saw our guys competing. I'm fired up. I'm fired up to see where we're at coming this week."

"Thank you everybody."