

Thursday, October 24, 2019

Redskins Interim Head Coach Bill Callahan



Q. When did you know that Case was going to be out and talk us through the conversation you had with Dwayne before you put him in?

A: Yeah. Well, first off, he was out at the half, he was examined at the half and he was then put into protocol at that time. So right at the half we made that change or let Dwayne [Haskins] know that he was going to be up for the second half.

Q. Did that happen on the sack right before half?

A: I think so, we think so, I wouldn't tell you one way or the other until I can confirm it, but I'm pretty sure it did, but again I won't know until we sit down tomorrow and look at it.

Q. Can you evaluate Dwayne's performance?

A: Yeah, I thought for the most part he went in there and did his best. I think he would like to have that interception back, that was a crucial part of the game. It was a tough situation, we were in a good situation, our defense just turned the ball over on downs on a fourth and one stop. It was still a seven-point game at that time and I really felt we had momentum, we had field position and it was unfortunate. I think that something to learn from. But yeah, it was one of the key plays, not all of them but one of the key plays that kind of hurt us in this game.

Q. What do you think specifically he could learn from that play? It looked like he just kind of sailed it. What do you feel he can learn?

A: I would have to really look at that, I think we'll all look at that and see. I thought the read was right, the route was good, the play call was excellent. You know, just got to make a play. I think he'll learn that as time moves forward. He made a couple good throws during the course of the game but that's a key throw and no question that he would love to have that back. But, yeah, we just didn't close out. We had a chance to close this one out or get it in there tight and close the deficit and we just didn't do a good enough job, we didn't close out. We didn't close out at the half and we didn't close out at the end of the third going into the fourth so that's something we got to fix and definitely got to work on and get better.

Q. Will you be going with Haskins going forward here now?

A: We'll see. We have got a little time here. Again, it's a Thursday night game so we have time to see where Case is at at this point. So I do believe Case is our quarterback and it's all based on how he comes out of the protocol. But, yeah, if we were playing next week and he was fine, Case would be the starting quarterback, no question.

Q. If Case couldn't go, would it just be Dwayne or would you consider Colt?

A: Dwayne would be the starter and Colt would definitely be the backup.

Q. How do you feel about the defense's performance tonight?

A: We played, I thought, pretty well early on and the only thing that we need to go back to work on is the screen game. I thought that by and large we really did a good job trying to contain the run in the first half and the big plays came off the screens. I know we got to work more diligently on that aspect. But you got to give them credit, I thought Minnesota made those plays and they were timely plays and they hurt us at a critical point. But no, I thought by and large the effort of our football team was there tonight and it was something we can keep working at and get better at but we just didn't close, that was the main takeaway of this game. As I told the team, if we can just keep working, the same type of effort but close stronger in critical situations, that's where it really comes down to.

Q. Could you talk about the red zone problems? You had the ball at the two-yard line and the five in the first half and couldn't punch it in for a touchdown.

A: Yeah, we could couldn't get it in. It's unfortunate, we had an opportunity to get it in and we just were inefficient at that point. But, no, I thought we had a good plan, I thought that the play selection was excellent, we just didn't knock it in. We just got to go back to work and fix it.

Q. Back to Dwayne, when you guys are practicing patience with him, what are a couple of things that you're wanting to see more from him to put him out there beyond the injury and where does sort of those --

A: I think it's a growing process with any young quarterback that comes in the league. I think all the quarterbacks that I can recall. I look at Troy Aikman when he was young and what he went through and Peyton [Manning] what he went through when he was a rookie. So those are growing pains. You can't pinpoint one specific thing. I wish I could, I wish I could say it's this or it's that. It's just a whole experience. There's something new every day that is going to come up for a rookie quarterback. The game is pretty complex. We try to simplify it and give him plays that he's comfortable with. Kevin [O'Connell] does a good job narrowing the list and giving things that he likes that we have discussed and communicated. So everything is prepared for. Now it's just a matter of getting better, executing the calls, executing the reads, things of that nature.

Q. What was the plan with Josh Norman tonight? The Quinton Dunbar injury, did that force you to play him on a night maybe you wouldn't?

A: Yeah, we did. We took him out early, we worked him out, he felt good, he felt like he could play. That was a plus. So when you have a corner of his caliber that can come out and give everything he's got, my hat goes off to him, playing hurt, playing injured, going out there and giving it his all. Yeah, it's quite an effort by him. We were down a corner when Dunbar went down with the hamstring, so we'll know a little bit more about his status as we go forward but yeah it was a good effort by Josh.

Q. I think it was the third quarter when I saw this, you guys were almost 65 percent pass. Knowing how committed you are to running the ball, what did you think of the play distribution?

A: Yeah, I thought we had a good plan and I thought that Kevin [O'Connell] put together a good plan of balance and we wanted to mix in some pass and take advantage of some of their coverage aspects and we did. I think, I thought Terry [McLaurin] had a pretty good day. I thought there was some wide open, some routes that were really open for us early on. And then the third quarter we were trying to push the ball a little bit and balance it up. But this is one aspect that kind of hurt us in that situation. But overall, I thought it was a good plan, we just need to execute a little bit better and make some plays and make the plays that count and close out.

Q. Did you get a chance to talk to Kirk [Cousins] at all and what was that conversation?

A: I didn't, I didn't, I was looking for him afterwards, but, no, I didn't get a chance. But, yeah, he did a nice job tonight and that.

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Redskins Quarterback Dwayne Haskins



Q. They come to you at halftime, tell you you're going in. What goes through mind, what do you say to yourself to get yourself ready to go out there?

A: Just prayed and just asked for Him to look over me and watch over me and it's all part of His plan.

Q. How different did you feel coming into this game compared to when you went in versus New York?

A: Anytime I go in the game I want to be confident and I felt confident. My guys believed in me. And so it's a process and we got to put a game together and win.

Q. Obviously you only threw five passes but overall command of the huddle, command of the run game, command of everything you did. How did it feel?

A: It felt good. There's just room for improvement and I want to be great, so keep working.

Q. How did it feel compared to the Giants game experience?

A: Football is football and I love everything about it as far as playing quarterback, the position and what it requires and what you need to do in order to be successful at it. I got to keep working and keep getting better and it's just a long journey for me.

Q. Could you walk us through the throw to Terry McLaurin. Was that just a simple sailing the ball over the middle there?

A: It happened so fast. It was there, I seen it, it was cover 2, Mike clamped down on the Hank route and threw the glance and wrapped it inside. I couldn't really step into it the way that I wanted to, but it came out higher than I thought and I missed him and I need to make it better.

Q. You also came in relief during that Giants game, but that was with a full week of prep for this opponent. This week was a short week, was there any extra challenge with that, not having as many days to get ready for a new team?

A: Definitely, it's tough. You don't get to practice the way you want to and you play a short week and it's tough environment, tough team, good defense, and everything that came into this week was going to be hard.

Q. How tough are you taking this right now? And then what will you do to kind of get yourself grounded again?

A: More than I should be, but I hate losing. I feel like I played a part in that and it's tough. But it's only year one for me. I got a lot of years left and this is all a learning experience.

Q. It almost feels like this one is feeling harder for you than the Giants one. Is that because this game was a little closer?

A: No, Giants game hurt too. Sentimental reasons for that one. But it's just competitive nature, competitive spirit. If you play football and you're comfortable with losing you shouldn't be playing football. So it's tough, I take it tough, I put it on me, and I got the weekend to get over it.

Q. Adrian Peterson grabbed you for a second there. Could you share some of the things that he talked about with you?

A: Yeah, it meant a lot to me. Just basically saying he's here for me and that I can rely on him.

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Redskins Running Back Adrian Peterson



Q. We'll start with that moment there at the end when they showed you on the big screen and the fans were giving you an ovation. What was that like for you?

A: It was special. It was kind of, obviously it was bittersweet because you come here to win a game. But just coming back and seeing the love that they still have for me and they showed, man, it felt good. It was definitely a great home welcome. They welcomed me with open arms and just showed the love that they have and they had for over a decade. So it was a special moment. I had to hold tears back, to be honest with you. But, yeah, it was special, a special moment.

Q. I know you've been back here once before with New Orleans, but do you have any moment where you look around and you see all the purple that you're used to and you look down and see that you're in that uniform and kind of have those thoughts run through your head?

A: Yeah there was a couple times throughout the game where I kind of caught myself singing the Skol song or whistling it. I catch myself because it's a natural instincts, but. But obviously that didn't have anything to do with the outcome of the game. But just, I was here for a decade and so some things just kind of triggered. But we just didn't do enough offensively to get it done today. We had a lot of opportunities and we just didn't execute, that's what it came down to.

Q. They have brought back a lot of alumni here in recent years. Have you ever thought about coming back and what that's going to be like when you're kind of here in purple again maybe?

A: I haven't thought about it yet because I plan on playing, God willing, at least three to four more years, so I have a little time to think about that. So, you know, it will be cool whenever that time comes around.

Q. What is the challenge like when the team is not winning and you're doing everything you can but it's not producing the results that you want?

A: What's the challenge? Just getting guys to understand that we're playing some good ball offensively, defensively. That third and 19 play, the defense don't give up a play like that. Offensively we had a couple plays that end up going dead in the red zone. And in this type of game you have to capitalize and get seven instead of three points on the board. So we had some critical plays and critical turnovers as well that cost us. Last week it was me that cost us from taking advantage of our opportunity to put points on the board. So we just need to correct those things, correct those things, and understand that we have what it takes offensively, defensively, special teams, they're doing a great job flipping the field. And we got to just got to feed off that. We have only won one game but when you look at the guys in this locker room we have the potential to roll off eight in a row.

Q. Obviously this was an emotional game for you, but you had the rookie quarterback come in, what did you think of Dwayne's play?

A: I thought he came in in the heat of a moment and handled himself well. Of course there's some things that we all could have done better. But I never seen him, I didn't see him rattled at all, to be honest with you, when I looked in his eyes. So he just got to continue to do a good job of getting better and taking over the role. I don't know how long Case [Case] is going to be out. We got Colt [McCoy], too. So I don't know, I think he did a good job coming into the heat of the battle.

Q. How did he handle calling the plays and just running the huddle specifically?

A: He did a good job. Obviously there was some miscommunication on one play out there and those are the opportunities that I'm talking about, whether it's me missing a read on a duo or not setting in motion. We have to understand that, hey, we can't make these kind of errors when we're playing a good defense like the Minnesota Vikings. And a prime time game, we have to be crossing our T's and dotting our I's and we just didn't do that as a group, we didn't do that.

Q. Did you feel like, because it looked like there was some runs that you if you get the ball a little bit more you had some chances to break some. Did you feel like there were some things there that maybe you could have or did you feel like it was going to happen?

A: Yeah, I felt like it was going to happen. The offensive line did it a great job of, man, they was getting some movement up front and there was a couple of opportunities that I wish I could have back, but I felt like one of was going to break out eventually. So just credit to the Vikings defense. They did a great job of containing us today. But we were definitely moving the ball four yards, five yards here. The guys up front, tight ends, they did an awesome job, the receivers, they did an awesome job in the run game.

Q. Revisiting that ovation for you, when you say it was bittersweet, but what is going through your mind as you're hearing that stuff?

A: Just love. Even in a moment of defeat I'm able to, I was able to embrace it and take it for what it was and it meant a lot. I spent a decade here, so just to see that ovation and, yeah, the love that they showed, it was meaningful. It was special.

Q. Sixth all time on the NFL rushing list. What does it mean for that, to be sixth all time, sixth most rushing yards in NFL history?

A: It means a lot. Came to this game expecting to climb ladder and these guys that I'm passing are the ones that paved the way for me, [Jerome] Bettis, LT [LaDainian Tomlinson], a Texas guy, you know, like, I loved LT growing up. And Bettis, big boy running that ball extremely hard. That's kind of how I got some of my motivation to be really aggressive, watching him banging in there. So to look up on the screen and see that I passed those guys, man, it's like, it's humbling, but this is what I set forth to accomplish, so it's bittersweet, but it's special.

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Washington Safety Landon Collins



Q: That last drive where they marched down the field what was the biggest challenge there?

A: Yeah screens, there were I think two that we needed to stop.

Q: Seeing what happened tonight with Adrian [Peterson] moving up to number six, do you think you are playing with a future hall of famer?

A: I know I am. It's awesome, I think I was in high school when he was playing. It's a great honor for him.

Q: How did he handle coming back tonight?

A: Tremendously. I know he wanted to get the win, everyone did.

Q: Did you see a different guy tonight than you have when he was playing with the Redskins?

A: I know him. Playing with him for so many years, it just felt like back in the day.

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Washington Defensive Line Matt Ionnidis



Q: How were they able to run the ball on you?

A: I don't know I'll have to check the film. The first half we did pretty good against their run, but the second half kind of got away from us a little. The 9-10-yard runs pumped those numbers up, but if we kept them to 3-4-yard runs the numbers wouldn't look so bad after the game.

Q: At the end of the game they put Adrian [Peterson] up on the screen and he became the 6th all-time rusher in NFL history. What was that like for him?

A: That was an amazing moment. It was so cool to see how much he still means to everyone here because he is a generational player.

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Redskins Right Tackle Morgan Moses



Q: Does it feel like you're developing more of an identity now?

A: I mean of course, I don't know how many yards Adrian Peterson rushed but obviously when you move the ball and the sticks and you're third and short you have the opportunities, and they are there, we just have to capitalize on them. Obviously, we just have to do a better job capitalizing on our opportunities. When we have a turnover and it's a short field we have to score and at least get three out of the situation. We have to just keep on pushing forward.

Q: I know you guys wanted to get in the endzone for Adrian Peterson tonight, when you sit back and see the ovation he gets and he's on the screen, what goes through your mind?

A: Those are chilly moments, those are moments that you can't put a price-tag on. He deserves it as he comes in everyday and works his tail off. For a guy like that [Peterson] that didn't pretty much practice all week with an injury and everyone was thinking that he was going to miss tonight, I was like, I know him, and I knew that he was not going to miss this game. To come out and run the ball successfully like he did, it just speaks to the character of the guy and what these moments stand for to him. He is an all-in guy and its more than his road to the Hall of Fame. He's a team player and you saw when he broke down with the team today he stressed how we have to take care of the opportunities and that this was one of the toughest teams we've been around, but just nothing matters if we don't capitalize on things.

Q: Dwayne Haskins was able to come in today and what did you think of how he handled this game, compared to the game against New York? Did you see different things?

A: Obviously the Vikings were able to keep the ball for a long period of time in that second half and it kept the offense off the field. The key is that when you go against a great defense that has every look in the book, for him to handle that defense and keep a poised attitude on the road, on a Thursday night game, he's growing, and I like the way that he is growing as a player. We have to stay true to the process, everybody has been here in those situations and I look back on my rookie year and where I was and where I am today and its our job to help younger guys like him understand the process and bring him along.

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Redskins Wide Receiver Terry McLaurin



Q: How frustrating is it that you guys are moving the ball, but not getting into the end zone?

A: It is frustrating. In this league, when you get down into the red zone, you have to score points. Touchdowns, not just field goals. [Dustin] Hopkins did a great job keeping us in it but going forward we are going to look at how we can be more efficient in the red zone and score touchdowns.

Q: They put Adrian Peterson on the board during the game announcing that he moved into 6th place on the all-time rushing list. What does that tell you about him?

A: He is a walking Hall of Famer. 1st ballot, no doubt in my mind. It is pretty cool to be in my rookie year and to be walking with a guy like that. I remember coming in the first day and saying, "That is Adrian Peterson." He is such a good teammate and such a great leader. He gives me a lot of confidence as a rookie to go out there and be successful. I am glad he got to be honored in a place where he did so much.

Q: What is the mood in here like because you guys are not getting blown out, yet you do not have the record to show it?

A: At the end of the day, it comes down to wins and losses, but as a team we are looking at how we can get over that hump. I do not think we had as many self-inflicted things, but red zone execution is what we are going to try to do better. We are not pointing fingers, we are just looking at ourselves in the mirror, seeing what we can do better, and seeing what is slowing us down so we can get over that hump.

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Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer



Good win tonight. I thought, obviously, there was a lot of things we have to clean up. For us to be able to take the ball and run eight minutes off the clock there at the end was big. We have to do a better job, obviously, with penalties. We have to play better pass defense than we did in the first half. Defensively, we played much better in the second. So overall it was a good win. I liked the toughness of this football team. They fight. I think it showed in a lot of different ways. I told them at the end there, we got 10 minutes left, we got a 10-point lead, let's go put this thing away. But I think that's a sign of a good football team.

Q. Last week Bill Belichick talked about intentionally committing offense penalties to take time off --

A: Yeah, we did that tonight. (Laughing) they didn't decline them though, so. They took the penalty.

Q. How do you feel about being 6-2 and in relatively good health?

A: Well that's good. It's been a little bit against my nature, but I've taken care of these players pretty good, so hopefully we can continue to stay healthy. I think there's a good chance Adam [Thielen] will be back next week. And we're pretty healthy tonight, I believe.

Q. What can you say about Dalvin Cook, mainly receiving on a night you didn't have Adam Thielen, he helped in the pass game, obviously.

A: Yeah, Dalvin's a great player. He can do pretty much anything he needs to do. We thought we had an opportunity to get some screens in against them tonight and that showed up quite a few times. So that was one of our goals is to get some big plays on screens. But it was nice. And Dalvin made some great runs, I thought [Alexander] Mattison made some great runs, but none of it could happen without the way the offensive line continues to fight and scratch and open up some seams.

Q. How much confidence did you have that you could punch it in right before halftime with the run there?

A: Well, they got a good defensive front and they play hard. They got some very good players. They got an extra guy in the box almost every single play. And so I don't know how much confidence we had in it, but I always have confidence when Dalvin or Matty's got the ball.

Q. Kirk's play, Mike, his performance?

A: I thought he played outstanding, really. He was 23 out of 26 or something. He made some really good plays. The one play that he was getting pressure and he threw the ball to, I guess, it was somebody over the middle, maybe Irv [Smith Jr.], and got the first down. That was big. They were taking away a lot of the shot plays that we had tonight, so we had to be a little bit more methodical as we went along.

Q. That third and nine play from your own 10-yard line that he hit Diggs for the 39-yard gain. Is that a throw that maybe he doesn't make last year that's, it's really tight window throw, is he more confident?

A: Are you talking about the long one or the --

Q. Yeah, it was the 39 yards, third quarter.

A: Was it the down the sideline or was it the slant?

Q. Yeah, down the sideline.

A: No, I don't think so. I think he throws a really good deep ball and the timing on that one was pretty good. The guy had [Stefon] Diggs covered pretty well, but Stefon went up and made a nice play on it.

Q. With the offensive line last week you said you heard a little extra chatter from them. And again tonight it seemed like they were almost getting under the skin of the defensive line. Did you sense that same kind of edge this week?

A: Well, I know defensive players do not like to get cut and the more times we get those guys on the ground and they have to get up, they don't like it. So I think that leads to a lot of it.

Q. How did you feel about Adrian Peterson coming back and it was kind of, he was the past and Dalvin was the future, and then they kind of embraced there after the game.

A: Yeah, I didn't see them embrace. But, yeah, I thought Adrian ran the ball hard tonight.

Q. You always try to get game plans against backups in case they come in, but on a short week how much were you able to game plan for Dwayne Haskins?

A: Well, we saw him in the one game, so we had a little bit of an idea. So short week, obviously, is a lot harder, but we, our coaches do a good job.

Q. How do you feel like Kirk handled making sure he executed what you guys wanted to do on offense versus him and the motivation of him facing his old team?

A: I thought he handled it well. We talked during the week. And you always have a little extra motivation when you're playing your old team. You're always trying to prove that they were wrong for letting you go or whatever the reason was. And so I thought he handled it really well. He's playing outstanding right now. He's been on a nice roll for the last four ball games and we're hoping it continues to stay that way.

Q. Coming into this week, did you have any sense that could be like a 19-9 type of a game?

A: I knew it would be tough, I really knew that. I was shocked when I looked up at the scoreboard and it said we had 428 yards and they had 200 and the score was a 10-point game. So I figured it would be a tough game, but sometimes you just don't know when you get, when you're facing a team that is 1-6 or whatever they were, but they fought, they played hard.

Q. You had the short week this week. Now you've got extra time for the next game. How do you make the best use of that time?

A: I think the players need some time off. We're halfway through the season. I'll bring them back Monday. Give them off this weekend and get them back Monday and we'll work out and watch tape and do the things that we need to do and then get ready for Kansas City.

Q. You mentioned the screen passes. How much did the aggressiveness of their front, the way they played things, kind of give you a sense that you could do that?

A: A lot of it did. Trying to get -- and I think one of the things you saw in our screen passes is the offensive line got out and they cut. And, again, they don't like that. And most of the offensive linemen don't like to do it either, but they understand how important it is now.

Q. Xavier had a couple of penalties in that first half before you had him come out. Are you seeing enough from him --

A: Who?

Q. Xavier Rhodes. Is he playing hurt?

A: Honestly, there was a couple plays in there that they're catching a hitch and they got it for the first down. I'm talking to him about being over the top on receivers because that's what we're trying to do. And I always tell them, if they throw those balls then I need to change the coverage. Now the one down the sideline that was pass interference, whew, I don't know. I mean, I would have challenged it if I thought that there was any chance of them overturning it, but I got a thing in the e-mail today they haven't overturned any so I said screw it.

Q. Are you seeing him, is he frustrated at that point with a lot of those calls? He's had seven in eight games, seven penalties in eight games but especially the --

A: Hey, this guy has to play like a power forward. That's how he has to play. That's his game. If he doesn't play like a power forward -- he's not going to play like Mackensie [Alexander] or Mike Hughes or one of these little guys. He's got to play as a power forward and if he gets some penalties he's going to get some. We talk to him about getting his hands in the right place and don't grab and those things like that. But his game is being a power forward and that's what he has to do.

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Vikings Quarterback Kirk Cousins



I'll just start by saying it was a great team win. Every week is different and we got the ball with eight and a half minutes left whatever it was and we said, "Hey let's put together a drive here and run the football," and we did it. Would have loved to have been better in the red zone. I think we had a couple penalties there that made it hard on us to get touchdowns and there were probably a couple of plays I would like back in the red zone, couple plays here or there. But for the most part I think we played the game that was called and did a great job converting some long third downs. Defense made a tremendous play on the interception to get us out of the hole when we didn't get it on that fourth down. I think good teams can win a variety of ways and I think we have didn't doing that the last few weeks and I continue to just be impressed with the way we have run the ball. I think that's going to be important for us as we look to the second half of the season. So just continue to be pleased with our team, our offense, our plan, and we just got to keep going from here.

Q. You were number one in red zone percentage heading into this game. What didn't work today that had worked before?

A: I think penalties hurt us. When you get to first and 20, that's tough. And then I think if you watch the tape, you'll see there were, I think there were guys open a couple times where I could have probably cut it loose. I was trying to work somebody else and sometimes you go through your reads too quickly and you say no to a guy and you don't wait long enough to let him create separation. So there were probably a couple of those. But ultimately you get a couple penalties and you're kind of hamstrung down there.

Q. Given how tumultuous the first few weeks of the season felt how do you feel about being 6-2 and on a pretty good run with a relatively healthy team right now?

A: Yeah, you know, pleased with where we're at. We could easily be worse; we could easily be better. We're 6-2. I think we have got everything in front of us, and we got to go out and prove it the second half of the season. But we have put ourselves in a position now where the second half of the season is going to be there for the taking and so that's a really good thing.

Q. Given how aggressive their front is, how much did that make you feel like the screen game was going to be there to try to develop that?

A: A couple of those screens were hit in two minute, so that's a very different situation than a second and long when you're selling play action or whatever it may be. But we had a couple screens where we were off play action, a couple were off a drop back, a couple were just in the two minute. And the key is what those guys do with the ball in their hands once they get it. And then the ability of our linemen to get out on people and our receivers and tight ends to block. So those are big plays throughout the night and really set up that touchdown at the end of the half.

Q. Nice to beat the team that didn't give you a long-term contract?

A: No, I think that we won the game and that's all that matters and that's all my focus is on. And they were a tremendous place to go to work for six years and I just have the best of memories of my time there.

Q. So nothing special about that, though, beating them?

A: I'm just happy we won. I'm just thrilled that we won the game. That's what it's all about.

Q. The third and four touchdown run by Dalvin Cook at the end of the second quarter when that call comes in, what are you seeing, what confidence level do you have that you can get in on it?

A: From the four-yard line I had my doubts, but you also have, there's other options I can do on that play and they gave us the defense to keep the run on. If they hadn't then you're obviously going to have an answer, but they gave us a defense and we ran it and just a great job by him to finish the run and a great call. I thought it was really helpful to manage the clock in such a way that we moved down the field, got a touchdown, but also didn't give them enough time to be able to do something with it once we kicked off. So really well-managed two minute. I think a lot of the credit goes to Kevin for the screens he called, the things he dialed up, and then the final run was a tremendous run by Dalvin.

Q. Are you surprised by how good Stefon Diggs is running, maybe he's a lot more open than you think on certain routes?

A: Yeah, I mean I've played with some great receivers. He's right up there with any of them and he was big time tonight. I think the biggest play he made was probably the go ball he caught on third down when we were backed up near our own end zone. If you have to punt from your own end zone and you don't have a lot of momentum and then it's third and long, and he runs that go ball and makes a big play and basically he gets us out to midfield as a result. That was enormous. And that's just a special player who can run by somebody and make a great catch. He's very, very talented.

Q. What did you see on a play like that when he's covered and just like the probability of making that catch? You have to have a special trust in somebody. What do you see when you know he can make that play?

A: Yeah, we hit one similar last week down the same sideline against the Lions to him. It's just a belief that he'll track the ball, he'll have that extra gear when the ball's in the air, he'll find it and go get it and I got to trust him. You got to throw the anticipation and that's what go balls or double moves are all about. He hit a couple the last couple weeks. And you also hope that when he can do that and go over someone's head that you can throw some underneath stuff because they have to be ready for the fact that you've proven you can run by them.

Q. You greeted a few Washington teammates after the game. What did you say to those guys you had gone to war with so many years?

A: I just saw, Morgan Moses was an example, and he was a young right tackle in 2015 when I was in my last year of my contract as a rookie and I was going to start and he stepped up and played his butt off for the entire season and just did a phenomenal job. And his growth and his hard work was a big reason why I was able to have the success I had and then go on and be able to be in the position I'm in. So I just wanted to say to him, "Thank you. Thank you for the way you worked, the way you developed yourself because of what it did for me in my career and my family." And I went on and on with guys, Ryan Kerrigan, Matt Ioannidis, Jonathan Allen, they're really good football players and really good people over there, and I just wanted to tell them I appreciated them and the impact they had on me.

Q. With those guys on the field, was it anything different than a normal game because you know so many of those guys?

A: Yeah, you know them. I honestly just wanted to go about my business so I wasn't trying to chat them up in between timeouts or breaks, that kind of a thing or in warmups pregame. I just wanted to go to work and get the job done. And then after the game certainly tell them how much they mean to me and also try to convey that this week, too, leading up to the game.

Q. Dalvin had 171 total yards today. What makes him so special?

A: He's hard to bring down. He's obviously got some elite movement skills and he's just as dangerous catching the football because once the ball's in his hands, whether it's a hand off or a reception, the ball's still in his hands. And so that's the key is just finding ways to get him touching the football. Once it's in his hands good things happen. So he's just got elite movement skills; he's hard to bring down.

Q. How do you feel being 6-2 at the mid-point, especially since a month ago you guys were 2-2 and people were questioning the team?

A: We put ourselves in a position for the second half of the season. It's going to be right there for us and we got to go out and do it. 6-2 doesn't mean a whole lot if you don't turn the last eight games into something special. And we got some big-time games up ahead. These aren't going to be easy opponents. We're going to be playing in tough environments against really good football teams, so the work doesn't get any easier from here.

Q. The way things transpired offensively tonight, did it feel different from the last three weeks? Coach Zimmer said he looked up at some point in the second half and he was like, "Wow, 400 yards, 10 point game."

A: Yeah, we did so many things so right and we just -- the game is about points. That's why we were so happy last week with 42 points because that's all that matters. You can talk about different stats but when you're 5-5 in the red zone and have 42 points, that's the most important stat. So to only have 19 even though we felt like we were doing great things offensively all game long, converting third downs and moving the football, completing passes, yeah, it's a little frustrating to leave stuff out there and it was a variety of reasons. But, again, when you get in the second half of the season we have got to be able to get down the field, get past midfield, get to the red zone. We got to get touchdowns and not settle for field goals or worse.

Q. That quarterback sneak there, what did you see from your vantage point? Why that didn't develop?

A: Yeah, you know, I thought it was there. That nose guard over the center and both my guards were uncovered, so I felt like it was basically a three-on-one. And the key is how much do you need to get? I basically needed to get three quarters of a yard, I mean, this wasn't a yard and a half. So I thought, if they load up those gaps you can't do it. But I thought it was a three-on-one basically with my guard, two guards and our center on the nose and I just got to find the soft spot, and for whatever reason it didn't happen. Credit the nose guard for the Redskins. He must have done a great job holding his ground and he's a good player. But that one was tough, obviously interception bailed us out, but I would have loved to have hit that and then been able to get kept that drive alive.

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Vikings Tight End Irv Smith Jr.



Q: It did not seem like that big hit affected you very much. Did it?

A: It didn't really. I try to pride myself in being a tough player out there whether it's in the run game or the pass game. Whatever I have to do to make plays and help the team win, I am all for it.

Q: How does it make you feel to see Dalvin [Cook] and the offensive line do so well?

A: It's special. This whole group is special. I am a young guy coming in, but they have embraced me, and I have embraced them. I just try to come and show them that I am one of the guys too and that I can come out and make plays as well.

Q: What did you think about the standing ovation the fans gave Adrian Peterson?

A: It was definitely cool to see. Growing up as a kid, I have watched Adrian [Peterson] run the ball like no other, so it is crazy to have the opportunity to be on the same field as him. It's cool seeing guys that I grew up watching playing against.

Q: How do these last few wins help build momentum for the road game at Kansas City?

A: This was a big win for us. It was a short week, but it just shows how we wanted to come out with a W and move on to the next week.

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Vikings Wide Receiver Stefon Diggs



Q: Do you understand that some games are going to be ugly?

A: Yeah, I realize that's going to happen. I will always take a win 100%. It was a short week, so you have to take that into account. We still got to execute the best we can. We got off to a shaky start. I will take all the blame for that because of my fumble.

Q: What do you think about tonight's game?

A: I left some yards out there on the field. It was a good day team-wise. We ran the ball efficiently, and Dalvin (Cook) caught the ball efficiently. We had a solid night and time to move forward now. We got a big game next week.

Q: Did you notice any differences in the coverages without Adam Thielen out there tonight?

A: No, not really. They just played the same defense that we expected. They have played a match up defense all year, so I expected that no matter who was playing. The scouting report said some guys were injured, so I had to watch enough tape that prepared me for everything.

Q: Is it hard to stay focused when you guys aren't in a rhythm on offense?

A: The biggest thing is focusing when the offense is struggling. The main reason for that is not executing well. My main focus is to take it one play at a time and that's how you're going to have success.

Q: How much spark does it provide you on the sideline when Anthony Harris gets that interception?

A: That was big because we just came off a bad drive. He came up with a big interception after the ball was thrown high. He made a play for the team. It's the same thing that the defense always does. They have our backs and make big plays.

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Vikings Safety Anthony Harris



Q: How do you feel the defense played tonight?

A: We didn't give up a touchdown, but I think we all expect to play better. They made some plays, were able to drive and get in field goal range, so ideally, we want to be able to hold them early on the downs so that way we can force them into a punting situation and keep them from getting points.

Q: Adrian Peterson keeps on going. How was it facing him?

A: He seems like he is still in solid youth. He is still out there hitting some amazing jump cuts, still playing at a high level. Hats off to him for continuing to go on, continuing to battle.

Q: Are you happy with a 6-2 record going now into basically 10 days off?

A: Anytime you can get a win is good. Right now, to be sitting at 6-2, we realize we still have a lot of work to do. We are halfway through the season, so we just got to keep our head down and keep plugging.

Q: What can this defense get better at in your eyes?

A: Today we didn't do as good on first and second downs. We let them drive the ball a little bit even though we were able to hold them from scoring touchdown drives. We still feel like we can improve in that area.

Q: You talked about how big of a play your interception was, how much do you think that created another spark for the offense to get back out there after not getting the fourth down attempt.

A: Here we are just continuing to believe in each other. Last week the offense helped us out, put a lot of points on the board so the defense was able to gather ourselves. Anytime we go out there we tell them to play and let it all loose and we got their back.

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Vikings Linebacker Anthony Barr



Q: Are you happy with the defensive effort tonight?

A: We gave up four touchdowns last week in the red zone so limiting those was a big emphasis coming into tonight. I was glad that we kept it to none.

Q: Was it a big change when Case Keenum left and the rookie Dwayne Haskins came in?

A: They ran a lot of the same stuff and I don't think that they were attacking the football vertically down the field as much, which is expected when a young guy comes into the middle of the game. Overall, we did a good job of limiting their play in the second half.

Q: How does it feel to be 6-2?

A: It feels good. We are giving ourselves a good chance and putting ourselves in a good position. It is only half way through the season, so we have to finish strong and stay on the gas.

Q: You guys seem to keep on winning, whether that's gutting one out, an ugly win or a pretty one?

A: It is important. We must keep the momentum going, continue to ride the wave, and keep playing together which I think is the biggest thing. We played together today, and I think that showed.

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Vikings Left Guard Pat Elflein



Q: What do you think about being able to run the ball even when the other team knows you're going to run?

A: Being able to eat the clock up and run the ball was huge. It is something we try to do on a consistent basis. The biggest thing is establishing the run game and getting it done when it counts. There is still a lot of stuff to clean up. It is very tough to get wins in this league, so we will take them anyway we can get them.

Q: It is an offensive lineman's dream to play in a game where there is only two punts?

A: That is very good. I just want to keep improving. We had a good win, but all I can think about now is all the stuff we need to correct for next week's game. There is still a lot left in this season. We need to take it one game at a time and keep piling up wins.

Q: How do you stay focused when the offense isn't in rhythm?

A: It is important to focus in on one play at a time. This league is so competitive that if you make one mistake bad things are going to happen out there. We realize mistakes are going to happen. It's all about moving onto the next play very quickly. It can't be just one person either, the whole team has to move on.

Q: How do you guys feel when Dalvin Cook gives you guys the props?

A: Dalvin (Cook) definitely appreciates us. We appreciate him a lot too. He can do a lot of special things out there with the ball. It's fun to watch. We bounce off his momentum.



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Vikings Running Back Dalvin Cook

Q: After the great win how do you feel?

A: I feel good. The win wasn't as pretty as I would like. Short week but we got it done, which was the most important part.

Q: How good did those last couple of drives feel?

A: To wear those guys out and play old school football felt nice. Running down their throats and keeping them on the field makes the offensive line feel good.

Q: Post-game you and Adrian Peterson met on the field. How did that feel to share a moment with him?

A: Means a lot. A guy like that who is still going and still got it in him. I love sharing the field with him. This is my second time (meeting him) and it's always good, because that was one of the guys I watched growing up. He is a special talent and has still got it.

Q: How do you feel about this team being 6-2 and relatively healthy at this point of the season?

A: Yeah we get (Adam) Thielen back and I think we are right there with everybody else in the league.

Q: That pass rush was stopping stuff up field, did that open up some things for screens underneath when they were getting aggressive?

A: Yeah, but we knew that. We knew what type of guys we were playing. A bunch of first round and second round guys, a talented group overall. They are just having a down year. Good group, but we knew what we were facing all week because Coach Zimmer prepared us well.

Q: Is the defensive line being visibly frustrated at the end of the games a result of what you have been doing to them in the ground game?

A: You know it's a mixture of things. When it comes down to it it's the third and fourth quarter. Guys start to get worn down inside and they really don't think we are going to keep running the football. It's all about sticking to the schedule and staying with it.

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Vikings Kicker Dan Bailey



Q: Did you feel like the whole kicking operation went smoothly tonight?

A: Yeah, I did. I think these short weeks can be tough because you still want to get some days of practice in there, but you also want to save it for the game. I think we did good work given the short week that we had, and I had a lot of confidence going into the game.

Q: How do you approach Thursday games in terms of practice? Have you had a lot of experience with Thursday games?

A: I have had a lot of Thursday night games. For the first part of my career, I was always playing a game on Thanksgiving Day which is a Thursday. It really is no different, it is just the game comes a little quicker and you have to make sure you are recovering the right way and staying on a healthy regimen throughout the week. Other than that, once the lights come up on gameday, all of that goes away and you get back into this groove on gameday.

Thursday, October 24, 2019

Vikings Linebacker Erik Kendricks



Q: Did the group defensively tighten up after giving up the four scores in Detroit last week?

A: We know what we are capable of and we still gave up a lot of things we should not have in that game. We are not always going to be perfect, but we stay together always, and we always fight. You can count on that.

Q: What was it like to see Case Keenum and then Adrian Peterson? A couple of guys we know well here in Minnesota.

A: It was good, but anytime they are in a different jersey I just try to get after them.

Q: How does it feel to be 6-2 at the halfway point?

A: It feels good. Starting off the season 2-2, everybody was doubting us, but we know what we are capable of and we got to clean some things up. It definitely shows our hard work. I am ready to play again honestly.

Q: If I tell you are going to be in a game where there is only two punts and the final score is only going to be 19-9, how does that work?

A: Football is weird. It was one of those games where it was just kind of weird. We stuck to our game plan and try to get after them any chance we got.

Q: Is there some distraction in a game like that where any one play they could've connected them it would've changed the complexion of the whole game?

A: We kept warning each other on the sideline that it is a close game, but we don't ever back down from that kind of challenge. They got to play against a good defense, and we know what kind of defense we are. Communication started flowing and things started clicking



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Vikings Tackle Brian O'Neill

Q: Did Dalvin Cook grinding it out show what kind of all around back he is?

A: We were using him in all kinds of ways tonight, which is smart because he is a great player.

Q: This was an offensive lineman's dream game, only two punts but the final score was 19-9, how does that make you feel?

A: Yeah, until we look at the film we don't really know. We had way too many penalties too and that's not acceptable at all. We need to finish drives in the red zone. We need to score a lot more. My group will take that one. We need to finish these drives. We have 7-10 play drives so we need to finish them.

Q: Those last two drives where both teams know you are going to run the ball, how were you still able to run the ball?

A: Yeah, definitely some satisfaction coming from those drives, but we would love to finish that last drive. If we had the ball for 8 minutes and finished with a touchdown I would feel really good, but to be honest I don't feel that good. We will look at the film and get better from it and take it into this long 10-day break that we have.

Q: Did you get the spike on that Dalvin touchdown?

A: He handed it to me, but I gave it to Pat (Elflein) to give him his moment. I just wanted him to have the moment.