



Head Coach Dan Quinn

Opening statement:

“We have to learn and grow from this. You know, the lessons that go into it, they're incredible. I'll give you two examples that came to mind. The [WR] Deebo [Samuel Sr.] play in the first series for the pass that was 40 yards. It was one of my favorite plays by him this year and he's had a lot that I liked. It absolutely lit us up and we get inside the five-yard line and we have to kick a field goal defensively. The one that comes to mind, it's the fourth quarter, it's third-and-16, we allowed 14. We then allow the conversion on the fourth-and-two and at that point it is 20-27, like right into the battle of it. So created some negative plays on second down and so those are the winning time moments that I'm talking about. Looking at the game, there were, you know, things that certainly I liked. Like for [RB Jacory]]Bill Croskey-Meritt, to have a long run like that, that's hard to do. That distance you see long runs, but not that long by running backs. Then defensively, I just had a moment with [DE] Johnny Newton. I thought he was disruptive, wreaked some havoc in his space to go. And so those were some things that stood out to me. Coming into the game, it was going to be important for [QB] Josh Johnson taking care of the ball that we could extend some drives to keep their offense off. I thought he did a good job of that. It was just the opposite where they had the time of possession and converting the third downs, especially in the first half. That was, I thought, just a big deal. So, I wasn't surprised we fought back. The third downs were much better defensively in the second half. The fourths weren't to the standard that you want all game, but that was my message. That was what I wanted to get across to them. Love our fight, but the execution, you know, just isn't to the standard that needs to be to win the games and give credit to Dallas [Cowboys]. Not taking away from [Dallas Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott] and offensively any of them. They're not the point. So, that's where I'm at and I wanted to kind of share some of my messages with you, with the team and where we're at.”

On C Tyler Biadasz's injury:

“Tyler had both a knee and an ankle, so, hopefully sprains on both and we'll get a better sense, get an MRI and image into that tomorrow. But that's where we're at on him.”

On issues with winning time moments by the defense:

“I'd say a little bit of both. There was certainly one, like the touchdown was an execution one. The long one I'm talking about to [Dallas Cowboys WR KaVontae] Turpin in the first half. So yeah, there was certainly some that it was execution, certainly some, you know, let's get a better call into that space if we can. But there was a couple times like we doubled both, you know, 3 [WR George Pickens] and 88 [WR CeeDee Lamb] and you say as a coach they got to go win somewhere else. If they do, I can live with that. I can live with that. That's not execution. That's just competing and battling and you know, that part to go. So just kind of do what's best and see where you go. But I'd say a combination of both.”

On Croskey-Merritt and Newton's growth:

“Yeah, I think for Johnny, I felt like, like the football knowledge because I kind of questioned him on that too. ‘What did you see?’ Because most often when I see a player have a good game, I said, ‘I

want you to write some things down tonight that you saw, especially when it's a division game.' Because there'll be some things that could repeat and you don't want to have to wait until next year. And so when you have anticipation of plays, that's when you can really be at your best, you know, and there might be a set of a guard or a certain formation or something that can trigger you to say, 'I know what to do here, I know how to go make one'. So that part of the football knowledge, I thought instinctually those are big things. And so, I felt that from him. From Bill I felt, like the competitor's mindset, I guess it's no surprise. You know, our captain on offense missed the game. That's probably par for the course for where the hell we've been on some things this season. It was the right call, [RB] Chris [Rodriguez Jr.] is as tough as they get and he was not able to go. And so for an extended role for Bill going into it, I knew he was ready. You could see he's disappointed after the game and I know we'll get his best every time. So those are, you know, two of the guys that jumped out to me and I'm sure I'll have others to talk about for the game, but the winning time moments, that's the one that sticks out to me the most tonight. We had some chances to go for it on a fourth down, we false started. Those are ones that just, man, we've got to nail those and no one's going to play a perfect game, but we for sure can't just go hard. Like it has to be going hard and getting the job done. It's not just, no one cares if you just go hard. Like you got to do both."

On how Croskey-Merritt has handled the ups and downs of his rookie season:

"Yeah, the thing that comes to mind that I'm impressed by is like coming in, I know this was a short week, but some of the running backs told me this earlier. Like, he likes to meet early and get ahead. So, when we got to how we're doing blitz pickup meetings, he was the one answering like, he's so urgent about wanting to deliver for the guys. So, I think that's where I'm seeing the growth on the protection side, taking what's there in the running game. Early on the season it was, can I make a big play where it was second-and-one, can I get the first down? So, finding the end zone, that's a big deal in the long run. Getting outside and finishing those were some of the things, but I've seen him grow a lot in the knowledge of the game, the game plan, those were, those were big."

On being down three starters on the offensive line in the second half:

"You know, I was heading into it. We made [G] Nick Allegretti one of the captains today after Chris wasn't able to go and then with Tyler going down, moving Nick inside to go, [T] Brandon [Coleman] also into that spot. I wasn't surprised that they were able to function together completely. We've got good experience at the position and you don't know where you're at until you lean in on it at depth. And that's proven to be a position that we didn't have to lean in on. But now that we do, I'm comfortable with that group knowing that they've got experience to go compete and play and so you don't know until you're there, but for the season, I felt like that was going to be one that had good depth."

On why it's important to play hard even when eliminated from playoff contention and on QB Josh Johnson being emotional about the loss:

"I definitely can. And I wish, yeah, I could share some insights to you to see all five quarterbacks in the meal room this morning at 7:45 or eight o'clock, going through another walkthrough together to push to get it right. And so, I think that kind of speaks to [Offensive Coordinator] Kliff [Kingsbury] and the calls and going through things again. When you get your moments, you want to establish what you can do and prove it. And I think that's at the core of it, the prove it moments. Those are so important. And so, that's why I was bummed for [QB] Marcus [Mariota] when he was injured. He had these games to go prove it and we'll see where he goes to next week, but that's what you want when you're in that space and it's unlikely you get your chance as the third. And so, especially at this stage in his career knowing, 'Alright, this may be my last chance to go show I can do this.' And

so, taking care of the ball. We played differently today. I think you probably noticed that in terms of huddling more and going into that. And I thought that was by design to say for all the players, what are their strengths? All these guys bring a lot of different things to the table and how we can feature them in that way. And so, for us it was going to be important to execute, take care of the ball. And so, with the flip of plays, I think that was the hardest space. Just not to get enough shots and cracks at it but to show that man, I'm in it. I'm capable of doing this with the full week's prep and showing that, and everybody else leaning in around him to find that. Yeah, it hurt hurts because it's about the win."

On Dallas' fourth down success:

"Yeah, to have six out of six, man, that was impressive to see. I attribute a lot of that to Dak. To where they're going to go when you get into those short ones. Thought their line did a nice job moving us off to create the movements, the moments to sneak inside styles or runs. And then on another one, like I said, we had doubled some other players and so I think they went one to [Dallas Cowboys WR Jalen] Tolbert but that's hard to do and they did it for sure. But yeah, the fourth down wins, that was as big a factor in the game as any because those are possessions that end there, no points, no extension, no time. And so, it's a big deal. We had a couple from our end that we were prepared to, like I said in the second half and we were willing to go up to four. It was, I don't know, second-and-one, third-and-two, then it's a penalty on a false start that went to like fourth and-sixth or seven. But I thought the third and fourth downs was the difference in the game there as much as they ran the ball, extending the drives was that way to me."

On Newton's performance and on his confidence in Newton moving forward:

"I think the disruption, the quickness, so those are the skills that he has. And so, to hear him put all the pieces together, anticipation of plays, how to go execute it to go, I felt that. And that's some of that's instinctual to go, it's pass, it's a run, where can I go? And so, it does take some time to learn that. And when you do as a ballplayer, the game slows down because now you can anticipate a little better. I know the defensive call, I got that. Now how can I apply my skills into this call? What you don't want, we had some of this early in the year, 'I'll go make a play, I'll go over try on one.' And that's part of instincts, knowing when and when not to, much like a quarterback, 'Can I fit this one in or can't I? On a tight throw. And so, it's no different at other positions. 'Do I go take my shot to run through? Can I notice to pass to hit a move?' So, to see those instincts come through and it can slow down. And if you're offensively and don't convert, those are hard. And then conversely the same thing, you're so ready to get going to go get another possession and so to finish with under 45 plays, you don't get enough cracks at that. And so, those are significant changes in it, double the amount of plays. And so, yeah, it does have an effect, not an effect of morale or that, just not enough cracks at bat. And so, I think it's definitely a factor in the game but not in the emotional pull. It's more if you're on the offensive or defensive side that's either converting, not converting, those are a bigger pull or factor, I think."

QB Josh Johnson

On how this loss feels:

"It hurts. It hurts, man. Like, because even though it was a short week, we prepared well. The things that were out there that we wanted to get done, and we just had a couple of plays here and there that we left on the field. Like, me knowing myself, it's going to sit on me for a couple of days. So it hurts. It hurts."

On RB Jacory Croskey-Merritt's performance:

“Awesome. Bill's been awesome all year. We connected. We have our connection through an uncle of mine, Alonzo Carter, [Arizona] State's head coach, and Bill played for him at [the University of] Arizona. And so we made a natural connection when Bill first got drafted. Man, Bill goes out every day to get better. And so I'm happy for him that he got to have his moment. It's great that people get to see his talents, and he went out there and showcased them well.”

On his comfort level during the game:

“As the game went on, things got more comfortable. You start to learn more football. Like, I tried to just play as clean as possible; that was my goal. I had to give myself grace to understand that the gray area moments, where it's hard, and that's where you really change games though. But it's hard to really, in those gray area moments, where you don't have a lot of time on tasks with the guys, so I was just trying to play clean and just give us a chance to win the game. We had a chance, unfortunately, we just came up short.”

On what clicked offensively throughout the game:

“Just getting in a rhythm with each other. The guys, it's some of those little things that go into it, from the way I call a play, you know how I operate, you know how I see things, you know how they run routes in real time. We didn't really get a lot of full-speed reps this week; it's been a short week. So as the game went on, we just started playing football. I felt like we started playing football out there. [Offensive Coordinator] Kliff [Kingsbury] getting a flow for how I process games and throw the ball. So, all those things we had to discern as the game was going on. And I'm just grateful for everybody in this organization for supporting me this week in a tough situation. And this just hurts.”

On what happened on the missed red zone drives:

“Like I said, those are just the gray area moments. Like, the one with [WR] Terry [McLaurin], when they said two guys over there, there was nothing in the world that would say he would win. Terry's the best receiver. And now, I'm gonna go watch it on film and look back and see him win, it's going to eat me up. I mean, but just trying to play clean, you don't chase those things, you try to play, stay in rhythm, play fast, just keep giving us a chance to win. Then the first one, these make good plays. The other one, they made a good play on the sack, but we want to finish those drives, so that's all I got.”

On how the adjustment from C Tyler Biadasz to G Nick Allegretti:

“Honestly, I didn't even worry about it. I get more reps with [G] Nicky [Nick Allegretti] than [C] Tyler [Biadasz], (if) we're being honest. It was kind of natural for me to just go in there with Nicky. And my biggest thing for both of us was just (to) keep it simple. Nick, he's a hell of a guy, a great player, played in his sleep for a long time. I trust him. I trust all those guys out there. So, at that point, man, we weren't even worried about it anymore. We're always more worried about Tyler and making sure he's okay.”

On the team's leadership:

“I mean, it starts with our leadership. I think I said this earlier in the week, like, you would never tell our record. You can never tell our record. I think you guys feel that when you come into our locker room. And that's a credit to [HC] DQ [Dan Quinn], [General Manager] Adam [Peters], [Offensive Coordinator] Kliff Kingsbury, [Defensive Coordinator] Coach [Joe] Whitt [Jr.]. All of our leaders, [QB] Jayden Daniels, [QB] Marcus [Mariota], [LB] Bobby [Wagner], so many different guys that take pride in what they do. And at the end of the day, we got a job to do. And for some of us, you know, this might be the only opportunity we get. And so you can't take these things for granted, and you

gotta go out there and try to make the best of it.

On the future of RB Jacory Croskey-Merritt:

“I mean, I see it all the time. He works on those moves every day. And it shows up in the game. [RB] C-Rod [Chris Rodriguez Jr.] was down today, so he had to really carry a load. And I just think that the sky is the limit for Bill. Bill can be as great as he wants to be. And you gotta have a big off-season, then come back in there next year. I think he is going to just keep going up.”

On the effect of the Dallas Cowboy's offense:

“Honestly, like, it probably has an effect, but, when you're in the middle of the game, you're not really focused on that. You're just kind of focused on, all right, staying in it, staying warm, staying loose, and it's going out there. For me, I just kept telling myself, ‘Process what they're doing and do your job, and just let it play out.’”

On what he learned about himself after starting this game:

“What I learned about myself is what I always believe. I know I can play at a high level. But I also know it takes – what comes with playing at a high level. So, I'm not really out here trying to prove nothing anymore. God has put me in this position for a reason. Whatever this game is giving me, to absorb it, and produce good food into the world. And football has blessed me with a lot, not just my family, but my community. Every year that I've gone to, every coach I've ever played for. So it's not even about proving myself as a player anymore. Either you don't believe in me or you're not. Every time I go on the field, I just want to show the gratitude to the man above that I'm grateful to be in this position, because, you know, most backup quarterbacks never last this long. They never get these opportunities and I'm grateful for that.”

RB Jacory Croskey-Merritt

On playing on Christmas Day:

“It would have been excellent if we would have got the win. But I thought we fought hard. We just got to finish strong.”

On what he saw on his long 72-yard touchdown run:

“I saw daylight, and I was like, ‘This is my chance to show when it's open field, I can take it the distance.’ And I mean, it worked out, it worked out perfect.”

On what it means to be here with this team:

“It means a lot to me. I just feel like I got to keep growing, and I'm thankful to have this team around, especially in my running back room. They keep me going, telling me what they see. And I feel like it's a growing process for me every day. And I'm just thankful to have a group of guys like this on the team.”

DT Jer'Zhan Newton

On getting three sacks:

“Oh, you know, they come in bunches, as [DE] Jacob Martin would say, but I just had a great feeling of the game today. Run or pass, I feel like with the film I watched, I feel like I had a great feeling of what they were doing the whole day, so I was just reacting to the play and making plays.”

On his mindset during the game:

“Yeah, in my zone. Whenever I catch fire, it's hard to cool me off.”

On his feelings towards having increased playing time:

“Yeah, always happy for opportunity. I was talking to [WR Robbie] Chosen, and he was like, just always be grateful of every opportunity that you get, even in a meeting. So, I feel like that stuck with me since last night. I got a brother who would kill to be in this position. So that stuck with me all day. And I was like—since the morning—I was like, man, I just got to go in there and ball out, because I know my brother would do the same if he had the opportunity.”

On what Head Coach Dan Quinn’s confidence in him means:

“Oh, yeah, for sure. [Head Coach] DQ the man. DQ our guy. We believe in him, and his belief in us fuels our fire. So, it's a mutual relationship with that.”