

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer



Q. Last year your team after an emotional game in Green Bay did not bounce back. What's the difference this year that they bounced back?

A. You know, I don't know. I think this team has got a lot of heart. They were pretty focused all week and pretty focused in meetings last night. They seemed really focused in the locker room today, and we came out there and played with a lot of effort. You know, you do that, you make plays and good things usually happen when you play with great effort.

Q. Can you talk about the impact that Eric Kendricks has made over his first couple games?

A. Yeah, Eric is a good football player. We had a little communication problem with the headset in the second quarter there for a little while, and so that was a little bit of a struggle. But he makes plays, he's good in coverage, makes plays in the running game. The defensive line does a nice job to help him to do those things. I thought Eric Wilson played well today, too.

Q. How good and how important was it obviously for the defense to get off to such a good start in light of 21-0 last week?

A. Yeah, well, it's better than 21-0 for sure.

Q. This was another big game, of course, for Dalvin Cook. What is working so well for him right now in the running game?

A. I think our offensive line -- number one, our coaches are doing a good job scheming. Number two, I think the offensive line is doing a really good job of getting on the right people and creating some space. He doesn't need a lot of space, because he's really good at slithering through holes. Maybe the most impressive thing with him is toughness in the tackles. He doesn't ever want to go down, but he's a physical runner with great speed and home run ability.

Q. Did you get a pretty good preview of what Irv Smith can bring to this football team offensively?

A. Yeah, I think he showed some really good things today. His athleticism in the passing game, he beat man coverage once today, so I think that can be another important factor for us.

Q. Both he and Kyle had quite a bit more space today. What do you attribute that to? They seemed to be getting more open today.

A. Yeah, might have been the zones they were playing. I don't really know. But we're going to continue to use those guys. We have to continue to spread the ball around. We have to continue to -- like Kirk today ran a couple times. Those are all big plays because now the defense has to start covering the quarterback and playing tighter and on those. So that's really important.

Q. How do you think the defensive line played today? They seemed to have an impact.

A. I thought they played really well. I thought they rushed the quarterback very well today. They max protected on 3rd down just about every single time. I think they were afraid of the blitzes. And so they gave us a lot of maximum protection, and they were able to beat that.

Q. Do you see that often here with the crowd noise and your pass rush?

A. Yeah, well, we see maximum protection all the time. People do not want us to blitz them, so be it. We just get a chance to rush on tight ends, we get a chance to cover, we get a chance to do some other things.

Q. What was it like having the 1969 team here? Did you give them an old-style performance with strong defense and running game?

A. You know, those guys represent a lot of great things in the Vikings organization, and they were at practice yesterday, and it's great to have them back here. A lot of them haven't been back in 30 some years, I guess. But it was really nice to see a lot of them, and I think they really appreciated seeing one another, and hopefully our guys come back in 50 years and do the same thing.

Q. What kind of a lift do you think Mike Hughes provided today, his return?

A. You know, I think it was really good for Mike to get out there and get his feet wet. He missed some tackles. But I think the part about the apprehension -- you know, when you first go out there and you haven't played in over a year, I think it's important that you go out there, and I knew he was going to be a little rusty, but he's going to continue to get better and better now as it goes forward, once he starts continuing to build his confidence about his injury.

Q. Just when we kind of thought we'd seen everything out of Adam Thielen, how nice is it to have him run a TD?

A. Yeah, Adam does a lot of things, blocks, does the dirty work. Obviously he's got a lot of other things that we can do with him now that we haven't shown yet. But he's a great competitor. I've always said that about Adam. The catch he made on the sideline was outstanding. So we're glad he's ours.

Q. How important was it early to set that tone offensively and get that first score when you guys get the ball first?

A. Yeah, it was big. Being able to go down there and score, that team that we just played in the year and a half that they've been going, they've been the best team of scoring points on the first drive in the NFL. You know, it was a big emphasis for us today to go out there and play really well on offense, and then do a great job defensively.

Q. Ameer Abdullah aha big play on special teams. What have you seen from him this season embracing that role?

A. Yeah, he's really doing a nice job in the special teams phase. He did a good job last week. He's playing with great effort and gets down there and makes tackles, and you saw one today. He's really, really taking that role, and that's good. We need more guys that continue to do that.

Q. Chad muffed another punt after doing one last week. Is there some concern about him?

A. I don't know, I'll have to keep looking. We can't muff punts. I don't think that was a hard one to catch, so we'll look.

Q. With so much emphasis on passing in the NFL, if you can run the football and stop the run, is that still the key to success?

A. I think every team is different. For us it might be -- that might be the key. But you still have -- you stop the run, you've still got to be able to rush the passer, and I think we have some guys that can rush the passer. You know, and we're running the ball so well today that we're popping eight, nine, 10 yards, 12 yards, and when you do that, it makes it a little more conducive to sticking with it. They won't all be like that. Chicago will be very difficult to run the football on, I'm sure. But we're going to go in there and give it a shot.

Q. Seems like holding penalties on a lot of those running plays are being called a lot more not just here but league-wide?

A. I was on a conference call Friday about a lot of this stuff, and supposedly if a guy gets his hand outside the framework, as long as he brings it back inside right away, which I thought Riley [Reif] did, then it's not supposed to be called. You know, I think it's still a work in progress for the league and they'll figure it out.

Q. Kirk has spoken about wanting to make more plays kind of on the fly, if you will --

A. Off schedule.

Q. Off schedule, yes, sir. How does he build on the couple that he was able to do today?

A. Yeah, well, I think you do it and then you get more comfortable with it. He's been practicing it a little bit more in practice and then some things opened up for him in the game today. And so the more that you do that, the more your confidence builds and the more chance that you will continue to do that.

Q. Was that a designed quarterback run near the goal line at the beginning of the game?

A. Yeah.

Q. Is there some concern with quarterback injury?

A. Well, he probably shouldn't have took that hit. He probably should have went down, but I think he thought he was going to stroll in. He was wrong.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Quarterback Kirk Cousins



Great team win. Feels a lot like week one the we got out ahead early and they defense played so well early, kept getting us the ball back. The turnover really helped, for us to have a short field. Again, the way we ran the ball made a big difference and really told the story of the game. You know, just can't say enough good things about the way Dalvin Cook and Alexander Mattison are running the football, the way our offensive line, our tight ends, our receivers are blocking for them, and really the game planning that our coaching staff is doing, Coach Dennison, Kevin, Gary, Janocko, putting together a run game plan that now for three weeks in a row has been highly effective. It's a bit of a learning process. I said in training camp that you don't really know what kind of a team you have until maybe week four or week five, and I think what's interesting is we're starting to learn and I think you're starting to learn what kind of a team we have and who we're going to be and what our best brand of football is going to be on offense, and that I think is going to be very different from what it's been last year. So we're learning, and we're learning about guys like Irv Smith and Alex Mattison, who going into the season you just don't really know, and you have to go play. You know, I think every week we're getting a better feel for that, and any time you run the ball the way we did and our defense plays the way they did, you're going to be in a lot of football games and have a chance to do something and be pretty dangerous. That's something we're pleased with this week. But with that, I'll take any questions you have.

Q. The long drives today, you had three long drives. What does that do for an offense's psyche?

A. Well, it's very important when you're backed up on a third down that you convert so you're not punting - not only giving the ball back and your defense not having much time to catch their breath on the sideline, but you're also giving them great field position. Even a third down conversion or gaining a couple first downs at least flips the field, but then to continue to drive, to be able to come away with points, that's a big deal. To go 90 yards, it really helps. We were able to do that a couple of times today, but there were penalties that helped us, that were to our advantage that they called on the opponent, and so some of those things were timely, too, that helped sustain those drives.

Q. Are you finding the play action to be kind of what you hoped after going on the ground, like that first touchdown they bit pretty hard on that?

A. Yeah, I think there were a couple others I'd probably give as better examples of how the play action game can be benefitted from the run game, the catch to Irv on a corner route. But the bootleg there, was just able to get the edge, had a clean edge, and then Adam did a really good job of winning across the field, and we got the right look. When I can get the edge and stand there and be able to wait on Adam to cross the field, that's the key to the play. And you know, last week they were taking away those edges or those clean edges. You couldn't get them, so those plays weren't able to develop.

Q. How do you feel personally about bouncing back and having a much better game than last week at Green Bay?

A. I'm just happy to win. That's really all that matters. If we had won last week and I basically had played the way I had, yeah, there would be some upset personally, but you'd be really happy that you found a way to win. That's really all that matters. Winning is what's going to tell the story, and I'm thrilled that we came away with a win.

Q. How important was it just to start fast and get the ball in the opening drive and score just to set the tone?

A. I think a fast start is crucial. I think a strong finish is even more important, but a fast start will always be something we try to emphasize, and our coaches work hard on planning out the first 15 plays of the game, the first third downs we want to get to when we get in those situations, and we as players study those plays and study the looks we're going to get and take pride in coming out of the gates quickly. For us to be a good football team, hopefully that's part of our identity week in and week out, that we can come out right away and put pressure on our opponent.

Q. That first touchdown was a boot to the left and a throw back to the right. That's a difficult throw, isn't it?

A. What's key is having the edge. The edge being clean, and so I was able to get outside and then set up. You do have a lot of grass over there to work with, so that also helps. When you have a receiver like Adam you really trust putting the ball out there and him making you right.

Q. Could you tell pretty much early on just how much they were selling out for the run and that that was going to give you a lot more opportunities to sell play action more successfully?

A. I don't know. I think if they were really overly selling out for the run, we probably wouldn't have run the ball as well as we did. I think to some degree they were still going split safety and taking away a couple of our opportunities to take some shots. There were a couple times I checked the play to run the ball because they were getting back and preventing other plays down the field. But it's a beautiful thing when you can run the football effectively, get some single high looks, get some loaded boxes and then hit an explosive to a guy like Irv Smith. That's a great thing when you don't even have to get into third down, you can just, first, second, first, second, first, second. That's not usually reality, but if you can do it, it's a great thing.

Q. Can you talk about Irv Smith as a weapon? I know you've seen him through practice and preseason, but this is the first week you've really seen him here in the regular season get out and bust a move. Talk about his skills.

A. Yeah, I think his skills are what they've been from day one, which is he's got great movement skills, he's got speed. Even on the play that I believe ended up being nullified because of the penalty he's shown he's got some great speed down the sideline after catching the football. You know, a young player who you bring along and one of those players that you do start to learn about as you're playing, and you realize maybe that you have something there and you can't just know that day one. You have to play through a season and learn how he can fit in and how he can help us, and I think that's going to be a fun piece of our development this year is kind of learning who we are as an offense, what we do well, and already I've seen it's been a very different system offensive approach than last season, and I think that's just fine. That's a really good thing, and as we get to the latter part of the season, could really help us.

Q. Talk a little bit more about that change. You guys have about 600 yards rushing in three games. Talk about the offensive line.

A. Yeah, there's a commitment to running the ball from our coaches philosophically and the way they game plan and the way they call plays, so that's first of all given us a chance. We have a very special running back in Dalvin Cook. He's shown that. So those are two big pieces. And then our offensive line is executing the plays. They're making the blocks. They're sustaining the blocks, and that includes tight ends, that includes wide receivers, and I even take a little pride in my bootlegs, trying to sell the keeper so that a backside defender has to wonder, "Is he keeping it or is he handing it off," and hopefully opening a gap for our guys now and then. It takes 11, as cliché as that sounds. We try to focus on how 11 guys help the run game, and then our coaches do a good job of putting us in a position to run it effectively. I know Coach Zimmer, I think that's an important piece for him, too, is to see an offense that's running the football well. Really three weeks in a row we've done that. We're going against a really good football team next weekend who's well known for stopping the run, so that will be a big challenge.

Q. On the goal line run did you think you were going to get there?

A. Yeah, it was a big hit. I looked down, I said, "Boy, 5-yard line, this is going to be a little further than I would have liked." The seas parted. I took off, and I saw the safety, and I thought, "Uh-oh." They told me to get down, but I didn't really know what to do. When you're on the goal line, where am I going to slide? Where am I going to go? So I figured, let's just play football and probably safest if I take him on like a football player. That's probably the safest way to play this. You do get hit, but you've got gear on and you get up and play the next play.

Q. Some holes look really big and then they close really quickly?

A. Well, they close fast because there's no vertical grass to defend, so when you're on the 5-yard line, he doesn't have to get any depth so he can fill his gap quickly, and he did a good job there keeping me out, but great play calling, great design to get us in on the 3rd down. That was outstanding.

Q. You talked about the sweep motion and why it works so well in this offense. On the goal line with Adam, kind of what does that do to a defense when they're not necessarily anticipating a jet sweep with a receiver there?

A. Well, you'd like to think it's a play that can put somebody off balance. That's really the design of the play is it's a little bit -- I don't know if gimmicky is the right word, but hopefully trying to unsettle them with the way it presents to the defense. Diggsy comes on a fly motion and doesn't get it, and then we bring it to Adam on a similar motion. Well blocked, Adam did a great job finishing the play, and it was well designed. Credit the coaches again with giving us something on the goal line that can keep a defense off balance.

Q. Those couple plays aside, it's been a lot of bread-and-butter runs, a lot of outside zone kind of stuff. What is the key to withstanding that when it's kind of the base stuff that you go to over and over?

A. Yeah, I just think that they've been -- when you study this scheme, Coach Dennison, Coach Kubiak, Mike Shanahan, going back to the Denver days, it's been around. It's not a surprise, and that's what they do. You can ask Arian Foster, you can ask Terrell Davis, there's been some guys who have benefitted from this scheme. That was the first thing that I knew when they were brought in was it's going to have an impact on our run game, and it is outside zone, it's inside zone. We obviously do some other things, do some gap schemes and some double teams, but that outside zone is kind of where it starts. Again, just great to see it get going and can't say enough about not only the coaches but the players executing it, and when you get a really good scheme and then you have a really good back, that can be a really good marriage to have an effective run game.

Q. You had the 1969 Super Bowl team here. Did you get a chance to chat with those guys?

A. I just love it. I love seeing those players I love, the history, the Purple People Eaters, the great names, because they've made this game what it is. The blessings that we get to enjoy, whether it's the stadium, all that comes with the amazing facility we work at, our entire lives as pro football players is because of what they did and what they built and the brand they created for the Minnesota Vikings. I love having them come back. I love asking them questions, and fortunately they were still on the sidelines as we were taking the field for the second half and they were shaking our hands and high fiving us and telling us to finish the game, so that was great. I can't say enough about that National Anthem. I thought that was outstanding, one of the better National Anthems I've ever been a part of to have a 96-year-old World War II veteran play the harmonica. That was pretty cool, and I loved the way the crowd received him. Jake Browning said to me, "When I saw that National Anthem, it was game over. We had won." I said, "I don't know if it was that easy, but I felt pretty good, too."

Q. You mentioned the Bears, the two games against them last year were not fun, and if you want to win the division, these are crucial. I'm sure you're looking at next week as an early critical game.

A. Absolutely. They're the division champs. We're going into their place, and it'll be an absolute battle. If we are to win, it'll be because it's an absolute dogfight and we find a way to scratch and claw and get a win. It's not going to be a walk in there and have a 21-point lead at halftime. I just don't think it'll play out like that. They have excellent players across the whole defense, an excellent scheme, and we'll have our hands full. It's really what the NFC North and when people think Vikings-Bears, NFC North, I think that's the kind of game you're going to get, and we're looking forward to it.

Q. Mike said that watching you work this week, he knew that you were going to have a better game than last week. How much easier is it to have that bounce-back game, block out the outside noise when you have that kind of backing from the head coach?

A. Well, you hope to have backing on one down game. If you don't have it, then there must be something wrong with your preparation or the way you've practiced or things -- so I'd like to think you've built up credibility beyond one bad game. And so they were in my corner, and you just go back to work. It wasn't the first time I had laid an egg professionally or even before playing professionally, and you learn what it means to come back and play. But more importantly than anything was when your teammates play at such a high level, it gives you a chance to bounce back, and that was what really separates you.

Q. When the sample size for the receivers is a lot smaller when you have a great running game, for them it's a good problem to have, but it's hard for you to get into a rhythm, and they can make less mistakes. How do you find that balance and not get uptight about that?

A. So I think it ultimately comes down to winning. If you win, it's hard to be disappointed with what's happening or not happening. We had two 1,000-yard receivers last year. We also threw the ball a lot. We had 600 attempts. We had a lot of drop-backs from the shotgun a lot and dropping back. That's going to give them opportunities to have a 1,000-yard season. With what we're doing offensively, this year may not call for that, and it doesn't mean they're less players. It doesn't mean we don't trust them or whatever; it just means that we're going to play the game that's called and we're going to try to win the game and have a great year, and if you do that, that's really all that matters. I do think there's going to come a game where we're not running the ball well and we're going to have to drop back and throw it 45 times, and we've got to be ready for that. So we just stay ready. We know it's a long season, and when you have really good football players like we do, they're going to show it, and it's going to come to the surface at some point this year.

Q. What does it feel like to be really an anomaly in today's NFL that is so predicated on the pass being one of the very few if not the only teams that have more rushing yards than passing yards?

A. It's unique. Certainly wasn't what I was expecting. I knew we'd run the ball better, but this has been unique, how effectively we've done it. Small sample size still a little bit, only three games. I think that will probably even itself out as the year goes on. But if it doesn't, I would shrug my shoulders and say, "Who cares? We don't need to. Let's just win, however we have to do that." So we'll try to take advantage of the opportunities when we get them, and hopefully they're really good opportunities and really good looks because we are running the ball well.

Q. So it's not a mental adjustment for a quarterback like you when everything says throwing and suddenly you're run dependent?

A. Yeah, I don't think it's an adjustment. I think if anything it's a chance to catch your breath. You say, all right, Dalvin is carrying the load. You run the play that's called. I'm ready. I've got a game plan memorized, studied, and if it had been a game where we get in the shotgun and open it up, you know those plays and you're ready to execute them. You have to react to whatever the game requires, and the small sample size we've had so far, we've been able to run the ball really well.

Sunday, September 22, 2019
Vikings Safety Anthony Harris



Q: What was the key to the defense playing physical football?

A: We know they were going to come in and try to run the ball. Same for our mindset, try to come in and try to establish the run offensively. We knew it was going to be a physical game and a lot of back and forth. It felt good to go out and get a team win, to play together, and to play complementary football.

Q: How important was it to get off to a fast start on defense today?

A: It was great. I think it definitely helped to have the offense start off by establishing the run and starting that momentum. As a team, the offense set the tone early for us by getting out to a fast start. As a defense, we tried to come out and keep that pace.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Running Back Alexander Mattison



Q: Did it feel like you were in the air as long as it felt like to fans?

A: It depends on how long it felt like to fans because it felt pretty long to me. I felt like I was in the air a pretty long time.

Q: Is it (jumping into end zone) instinctual or did you see it coming?

A: It's instinctual. I ran hurdles and did long jump in high school so it's something natural. I got it in my back pocket and just keep it there until it's time to bring it out.

Q: 200 yards on the ground, more than that actually, that's a huge effort by your running game. What went right today with the running game?

A: The guys up front did an amazing job of getting out there and being physical. They came off the ball fast and were physical and establishing that run game we want to establish. Along with that, in the running back room we take pride in that and making sure we are picking up first downs and scoring touchdowns. That's something we were able to do today and extremely proud of those guys up front for doing that. Extremely proud of the running back room for the way that we performed today as well.

Q: You're now going to have to let Adam Thielen into the running backs room, now aren't you?

A: Adam Thielen does an amazing job at not only if we want to give him those plays but blocking as well. The receiver room does a great job of being on the perimeter and trying to get those blocks. It is collectively a team effort.

Q: What's it been like to watch Dalvin Cook in his first three games and everything he has been able to do?

A: He is amazing and explosive. His intensity and his energy are amazing, so he provides that big dose of energy that we need as a running back room, as an offense, so it's amazing for him to get out there and get things rolling the ways he does. We then just try to carry the team.

Q: There were quite a few young guys that made impacts today. Whether that was you, Irv Smith Jr., or Eric Wilson coming in. What is that mentality with the other guys on your team?

A: We just have that mentality. It doesn't matter where you are at on the depth chart, it doesn't matter where you are at in your career, you got to be ready to play. We got to be ready to come out there and execute and do our job. That is a part of our preparation each week is just going to work and doing the things necessary to be ready for those moments like that.

Q: What is it like to see your rookie classmate, like Irv Smith Jr., make a couple of those big catches?

A: It was awesome to see that, and the energy was amazing. It was one of those things where you're jumping up and running down the sideline with them. It's awesome to see him out there and open up and do some things. I can't wait for him to have more opportunities like that and can't wait for this offense to continue to get back to work and do great things.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Right Tackle Brian O'Neil



Q: How much pride does an offensive line have for a 200 yard rushing game?

A: It was fun, but there were many parts to the reason we had so much success. The wide receivers were blocking, coaches were putting us in good positions, and Dalvin hitting the hole hard. It takes a group effort and I am proud of the guys and how hard we fought.

Q: It seemed like Oakland was anticipating trying to stop Dalvin Cook and maybe selling out the run early on. How much of that do you feel that opened up what you guys could do with the play-action and what you guys could do with that up-front?

A: Yes, I feel that it did. If you're able to run the ball consistently and they think it's coming again and then you run the play action, it's an awesome feeling because you're not sitting back there getting teed off on walking backwards because you're passing so much. I appreciate Coach Stefanski for running that play and hopefully we can keep running the ball it at that level.

Q: Is running the ball an emphasis that you guys discuss every week?

A: Yes, it's an emphasis every week to be able to run the ball. If you look back on last year you see what happens when you can't. I have been a part of it when my group isn't executing at a high enough level to run the ball so at the same time it makes it easier because we are executing on the field, but we have a lot of work to do.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Running Back Dalvin Cook



Q: Do you feel like you're just scratching the surface?

A: Yes, and I give credit to guys like [Adam] Thielen and the guys in the locker room for having my back. That makes me want to work and leave it all on the line for those guys because they stood behind me through my ups and downs. Going through adversity is part of this game but I credit my teammates for being there for me.

Q: You talked about the ups and downs and [Adam] Thielen discussed how important of a figure you are in this locker room, were you that guy when you got here, or have you grown into that figure?

A: I was always this player that I am. I try to figure things out and I try to grow on people. I am a caring guy and I like to see my teammates have success and that's just the kind of guy that I have always been. I think over the past three years, whether I was out there or not, I just grew on these guys. They see the type of work that I put in and the type of player that I try to be for this team. I come into the locker room and put my hat on ready to work every day. I think that it doesn't go unnoticed with teammates like them.

Q: You guys want to keep your mindset thinking one game at a time, but how good does it feel to come out of these games with your offense working all together?

A: Coach Zimmer harps about playing as one group and once we play good on offense, special teams, and the defense you can see what kind of potential this team has. We try to obtain this outcome each and every week. We know it's not going to be perfect, we know there will be some hiccups and mistakes here and there, but we try to be as clean as we can be and play as a whole unit.

Q: Did you feel like a proud papa seeing Alexander Mattison go out and score his first touchdown today?

A: We have been grinding since he came into the league and it hasn't ever been his show or my show, it has about all of us as a collective group. Seeing Alexander score his first touchdown made me proud.

Q: You are the first Vikings running back to rush for 100 yards in the first three games on the season. Three games into it, how do you feel? Has the workload been about right for you?

A: I feel great. I go back to work tomorrow and get my body ready to play another football game. It has been part of my routine, it has been drilled into me since pre-season. I have been getting ready to get into playing shape and I am ready to play. So, it has been part of my routine to get my body ready to play a football game but to answer your question, I feel great.

Q: What does the accomplishment mean to you to be the first Viking to rush for 100 yards in the first three games of the season?

A: It's great. Chuck [Foreman] has been through this organization, Adrian Peterson as well. Those are some household names and to just be mentioned along with those guys is great.

Sunday, September 22, 2019
Vikings Defensive End Danielle Hunter



Q: What are your takeaways from today's game?

A: We went out there and played fundamental football. We started fast on offense and we started fast on defense. That was the game plan all week, to be fundamentally sound.

Q: Do you feel like you have been fundamentally sound on defense all year?

A: I feel great about today. We had a couple of mistakes today, but we kept playing football.

Q: The defense allowed two scores. What are your thoughts on those drives?

A: It's football. They are going to make plays sometimes, but we just have to move on to the next play. If we focus on our keys, we will be able to shut them down.

Q: How do you feel about the way this defense has progressed this year?

A: We feel great about where we have come. We go in and we work. We don't look ahead. We focus on this team, then we game plan against the next team.

Sunday, September 22, 2019 **Vikings Defensive End Everson Griffen**



Q: Were you satisfied with today's game?

A: We won the game, but we need to eliminate the penalties. We started fast, but the penalties are hurting us. We can keep on giving up penalties and moving back. We aren't going to be able to get out of those situations all of the time, so we have to eliminate the penalties.

Q: How was the pass rush today?

A: We were behind today, but (Derek) Carr was getting the ball out of his hand quick today. He knew we were coming. We had four sacks today and we always want more. Carr didn't allow us to get back there often because he was getting the ball out quick. We won the game, that is what matters most.

Q: What are you going to do at practice to keep this momentum?

A: We need to keep on doing what we are doing. We need to keep running to the football, executing, hustling, and being accountable for the guy next to you.

Q: How did the turnover today help the outcome of the game?

A: Harrison (Smith) had a pick. We have to keep on doing that and keep on executing to help the offense. The offense did great. Dalvin (Cook) ran the ball great. Kirk (Cousins) was prime time. He stepped up in the pocket, throwing the ball, and hitting passes. We need that Kirk (Cousins) each and every weekend. He did an awesome job. Hats off to Kirk and the offense, Dalvin and the running game, and all the wide receivers.

Q: Going into Chicago next week, this is a big week leading into a big game isn't it?

A: Yes, it's huge. We have to go out there and execute. We are going to enjoy this win, then we are going to prepare for Chicago.

Sunday, September 22, 2019
Vikings Linebacker Eric Kendricks



Q: Having Anthony Barr out is not ideal, do have the confidence that you can sub in?

A: Absolutely, you know it's a thing in football. Injuries are a thing and they will happen. It's about how deep you are as a team.

Q: Talk about the 4th down stop, you and Danielle Hunter were jawing at each other while the Oakland player was still on the ground. What was he saying?

A: They ran power flip earlier in the game, so I figured they had to come back to it. We were just really aggressive and as soon as they ran it, I knew we had it stopped. It was a lot of fun.

Q: Harrison Smith's interception had the crowd going nuts. Tell me about how important a play like that is and the energy it creates.

A: Turnovers lead to winning games in the NFL. Turnovers are huge. Finding the ball like that is huge. We need to make a return out of it, but we will worry about that later. We will watch film and make adjustments accordingly.

Q: Do you think the pass rush on that play affected Derek Carr?

A: I'm not too sure, but you know the opportunity of the play arose and he threw it right over the tight end. Harrison made a nice play to be there.

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Vikings Linebacker Eric Wilson



Q: You had (Derek) Carr all lined up, but he slid right in front of you. How hard is it to pull up on a play like that?

A: You have to be careful for the quarterback because you never really know if the refs will have a quick trigger. You definitely have to know when to be smart.

Q: On your sack, you got through pretty clean. Walk me through that play.

A: We moved around. It was a blitz and it opened up wide and he got away on the last one, so I was determined to not let him evade.

Q: Talk about your defensive line, with Everson Griffen getting a sack, Danielle (Hunter) getting a sack?

A: Yeah they did a phenomenal job of putting pressure on him. It is very important because they try to get the ball out quick, so the fact that they were able to put pressure on him in space, we really needed that.

Q: Talk about the Bears next week. Talk about getting ready for this huge divisional matchup.

A: Divisional matchup and they are the defending champs, so we can't take anything lightly. We should start preparing as soon as possible.

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Vikings Safety Harrison Smith



Q: How did the defense perform today?

A: We started pretty fast. We had some chances in the second quarter to get off the field, but they ended up scoring there on a nice play call. We have to get off the field when we get the chance.

Q: What were the keys in today's win?

A: Nothing out of the ordinary, just running, hitting, and executing. When we do that, when we take care of what we can do, we are pretty good.

Q: Did it feel like an old-style football game by running the ball and playing great defense, especially with the 1969 team at the game?

A: That is the brand that we like. We like to be a grind it out team. It's always good to see that guys that came before you. We have a ton of respect for them. We try to emulate them.

Q: What did you see on your interception?

A: Nothing crazy. We have some good guys upfront. That tends to help us on the back end. The ball got away from (Derek) Carr a little bit. I had a chance to make a play.

Q: What did you think about the contribution from the young guys today?

A: Eric (Wilson) has come in to play great for us prior to today. I don't think there was any doubt in him. We have a ton of guys that when their number is called, step in and play great. Jayron Kearse is always making plays when his number is called. The same with guys like Stephen Weatherly. I could go on and on. Those guys are preparing without getting as many reps and executing. It's a lot of hard work that goes unseen but comes to fruition on game day.

Sunday, September 22, 2019
Vikings Tight End Irv Smith Jr.



Q: How do you stay ready as a tight end during the run game on offense? What is the effect of having three tight end sets like you guys did sometimes today?

A: It keep the defense on their toes, so they don't know what we're going to do. On that first catch (touchdown) we were in a three tight end set. They more than likely thought we were going to run the ball, but instead we threw it. It's tough for a defense to be able to stop that.

Q: How does it feel to make a great catch and take a hard hit?

A: It is part of football. If you like physicality, if you like to hit, that is fun. Obviously, I like to make them miss and get in the endzone, but just getting your feet and making plays like that is fun.

Q: How much of an asset do you think having Dalvin Cook is?

A: You all have seen the first three games how electric he can be. In my eyes, I think he is one of the best, if not the best running back in the whole league. He is going to keep proving to everybody each week on, we are going to keep watching what he is doing and continuing to go out there and block for him.

Q: Kyle Rudolph talked about how he was not able to get inside the line. Are you going to give him any words of advice?

A: I thought he had it for sure. I was looking behind and thought it was a touchdown. His foot barely stepped out of the bounds. It's fun and games, but I know that he wanted that touchdown.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Vikings Tight End Kyle Rudolph



Q: 200 yards rushing, that's pretty significant in this day and age?

A: It is. It's a testament to our offensive line, but also those runners. You look at some of the runs they make, and you make sure you do everything you can to make sure your guy doesn't make the tackle because they could hit a homerun at any time.

Q: You guys, tight ends, were able to get a lot more balls in the passing game this week.

A: Irv Smith Jr. had a great week. He had a lot of great plays that opened up for him and it's exciting when you see that because a lot of what we do is predicated on the run game and things that come off the run game. Irv had a few big plays for us and unfortunately the one got called back by penalty otherwise he would've had a pretty big day.

Q: Are you proud of Kirk Cousins and the way he responds, he had a lot of criticism flying around after last week's game, but he bounced back nicely it seemed?

A: Absolutely, we are always going to rally around him and do everything we can, so he doesn't have to put all the pressure on himself. If we can take the pressure off of him he just lets his natural ability take over. That's what we saw all spring and summer was him back there, comfortable, and he's got an unbelievable amount of ability. When we can take that unwanted pressure off of him and let him just play, he's phenomenal.

Q: The defense talked this week about wanting to start faster and they did that.

A: This team and our success is predicated off starting fast, running the football, playing good defense, and we did all that today. When we get a lead and we allow those guys to pin their ears back and rush the passer, and I've played against them for the past five months, it's not fun. They are really good at getting after the quarterback and they did that today.

Q: When you see Dalvin Cook run like he does, he never stops moving his feet, but he can also catch balls and tip toe the line.

A: Dalvin Cook is unbelievable. As a blocker, you never want to let your guy go because Dalvin is never down and you always want to play through the whistle because at any time he can pop out of a pile and you'd hate to turn on the film on Monday and see if you would've stayed on your guy, it would've been a homerun.

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Vikings Cornerback Mike Hughes



Q: Did you feel like you were 100 percent?

A: Yeah, I feel like I put in a lot of hard work. They wouldn't put me out there if I weren't 100 percent. I feel like I'm healthy.

Q: Were you thinking about your injury at all?

A: I wasn't thinking about it. I'm just trying to go out there and play football. I have been doing it my whole life.

Q: How did it feel with the brace?

A: I've been practicing with the brace for a couple months now, so I'm used to it. I am ready for it to come off though.

Q: Having to wait the last couple of weeks to get back on the field, how hard was that for you?

A: It was pretty frustrating. Just waiting that long without playing football was killing me. You know I just had to stay patient, trust the process, and just doing everything the trainers and my coaches wanted me to do and I think everything worked out.

Q: How do you feel you handled the speed at that nickel position?

A: We have had a plan all week. I have been playing inside all week. Nothing that they did out there surprised me, and I was ready for everything they threw at us. My mindset was good and I was ready to go.

Q: Did it take time to catch up to the speed of the game?

A: Not really, being hurt gave me a lot of time to really dig my head in the playbook. It really slowed the game down a lot for me. Especially playing nickel, you have a lot of responsibilities to handle and to adjust to, so being hurt gave me a lot of time to dig into the playbook.

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Vikings Wide Receiver Adam Thielen



Q: How did it feel to get your first rushing touchdown?

A: Yeah, obviously we have been having that one up for a while, and it worked. It's nice to help this team win football games, and be a part of the running back room. Those guys are special.

Q: A fast start was obviously crucial to this game.

A: It's so important for us, as an offense, to start fast. It allows us to do what we do really well, and play to our strengths. It's something we will have to continue to do, and make some of those plays early.

Q: Do you feel the passing game worked a little better today?

A: Yeah, again we didn't have a whole lot of opportunity, but that's a good thing when we're controlling the ball. That is our strength, we can play off of that and its going to open up things in the pass game. We have to keep getting better. There was a lot of missed opportunities in the pass game where I could have done a lot better. It's good to come out of a victory and have things to clean up.

Q: I'm starting to get the impression that Dalvin Cook has a chance to be a pretty special football player. You see him every day, I assume you're not surprised by what he's done these last few games?

A: I'm not surprised at all. He is a special guy. On and off the field, he is such a great teammate. People don't really get to see that, but he just busts his tail for us and his football team. It's fun to see clips of him just working and working. We need to have more guys play like he does because it will help us in the long run.

Q: Irv Smith is a special player, it seemed like you guys were able to get him the ball effectively.

A: Yeah, another guy that busts his tail. He doesn't talk about getting the ball, he does some of the dirty work, and then when he gets his opportunities he does a great job of getting open, catching the football, and running with it. Obviously, they liked him coming out, and now we can all see why.

Q: Winning by 20 after a loss on the road last week, that's a good bounce back for you guys.

A: It is a good bounce back, but it's still week to week. We don't care about what happened last week, we don't really care about this game anymore, we're on to Chicago, and we know we will have a tough test there. They have kind of had our number as far as their defense against our offense, so we got a lot of work to do.

Q: What do you think about the creativity about the play calling with your runs today?

A: Yeah, we have been seeing that and we really feel comfortable in this offense. It just really comes down to our play makers making plays. We obviously did well today, but we need to keep working and making the most of our opportunities because the plays are there.

Q: How did that rushing play you had come to be?

A: I'm not really sure. Its something we have been working on for a while, and kind of had up in that area of the field. When we ran it in practice it felt like it would be a really good play. It was an awkward spot for me to be in, but it's kind of fun too. Credit to the coaches, again, for putting us in the position to help this team win.