

# **Monday, December 16, 2019**

## **Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer**



Okay, good afternoon. Good team win yesterday. I thought as a team we played well. Obviously, the turnovers defensively were big. Being able to flip the field positions on special teams was big, the blocked punt with Eric Wilson did a good job. Offensively, we made some big plays in the game. The throw to (Stefon) Diggs late in the ballgame was big, keep the clock moving and be able to go down there and score. (Mike) Boone coming in and helping with some of the running game and then the offensive line I thought protected very well and did a nice job there. Good overall effort and looking forward for more.

**Q: What stood out to you about how the running game fared after Dalvin Cook went out?**

A: I thought (Mike) Boone really did a nice job. He ran hard. When Dalvin (Cook) was in there, it was a little tougher sledging just because some guys out-ran some of our guys to get to some of the plays, but overall, I thought it was good. To get some carries out of Ameer (Abdullah) and then out of Boone were good.

**Q: How are you feeling about the state of the backfield with the injuries and with what the young guys are showing?**

A: Yeah, I like these guys. They can do a lot of different things, that helps. Helps in the passing game and they're good runners.

**Q: Is this the kind of depth you envisioned for this point of the season when you chose to keep as many running backs and fullbacks?**

A: Yeah, well we were hoping we didn't have to, but we felt like we had some guys that were talented runners. Ameer (Abdullah) and (Mike) Boone have been playing really good on special teams, so that helped them to stay and once they got the opportunity, and I really felt like for a couple weeks, Boone's been wanting to have a chip on his shoulder the way he's been running, showing in practice and the things that he's been doing.

**Q: Are Dalvin's new injuries things he can play through?**

A: Yeah, feels good today.

**Q: How much of the offensive line's ability to limit sacks is helped by the run game and how much is just improvement across the line?**

A: I think it's more than one area. I think Kevin (Stefanski) has done a nice job calling the game, which helps, helps the quarterback getting the ball out on time, helps he's not sitting back there and patting it. The offensive line has done a nice job as well. I think if you put all those three things together, it's a combination of not getting negative plays.

**Q: What does getting the ball to the receivers in the run game really do to stress opposing defenses?**

A: It just keeps them honest. It could be sometimes we kind of call it eye violations—linebackers have to get to another gap—or if it's a man-to-man, a guy has to run with them, so that kind of opens up other areas in the running game as well and sometimes off the play actions.

**Q: What stood out to you the most about the day Eric Kendricks had yesterday?**

A: Eric's (Kendricks) played really well all year long, very instinctive. He made a couple really nice plays in the running game to the perimeter, but probably the passing game, he really showed. They tried to run, really it was the same play the Rams ran on us a year ago, he made a good play on that one. He made a good play on the tight end on the fumble. He had a couple tough matchups with Keenan Allen inside a couple times in the zones. I think probably that part, he's really a really good pass defender.

**Q: How did you feel Adam Thielen got back into things in his first game back?**

A: I think it wasn't any issue with him. There was probably a couple times we could have got the ball to him a little bit more. I thought he made a really nice adjustment on one of the routes Kirk (Cousins) hit him on. He was coming to the sideline, then came back for the ball and I think we got a first down on that one. The rest of it was kind of do your job.

**Q: Did you have a sense it could be a big day for turnovers with your defense or was it a matter of guys being in the right spot at the right time?**

A: I hoped. They had turned the ball over some. They're a timing based offense and he's going to throw the ball before the receivers break a lot of times, so if you can disrupt some of the timing, if you can be in the right place and anticipate some of those throws, you have a chance to get some.

**Q: How has your relationship with Harrison Smith grown over the time that he's been here? Has it reached a point where he can voice his opinion on plays?**

A: I mean he doesn't really voice his opinion too much, but once in a while it will come up like that. Most of the time he's asking me questions more so than telling me what I should be calling.

**Q: How important is it to see Holton Hill in games like you have recently? What can he offer you down the stretch?**

A: He does some really good things, and then there's times where he just kind of loses his focus. But that's part of it, getting him back out there. It was good to see (Kris) Boyd get out there some yesterday. These guys got to get their feet wet, because we may end up needing them a little bit more. But Holton did some good things, and then there's some areas where we still have to, really with all the guys, we have to continue to work on technique and getting in position where I want them, the alignments, everything perfect. So we're going to work extremely hard on that these next couple of weeks, and try to get everything clicking in the right direction.

**Q: Is there a thought of not playing Xavier Rhodes until he's completely healthy, if he was indeed playing through some things yesterday?**

A: No, he was fine. He was fine. I don't think that had anything to do with it.

**Q: Was he dealing with an ankle or calf injury that limited his snaps?**

A: No. That was just the plan going in.

**Q: What was it like to see Ifeadi Odenigbo get the scoop-and-score?**

A: Yeah, it was a big swing. And then for us to score with seven seconds left, I thought that was big to go up right before the half. Honestly, it was a great play by Danielle (Hunter), and then Ifeadi (Odenigbo) got in on it. Then he knocked the ball out, (Eric) Kendricks knocked the ball out again and held on to the player so he couldn't get up. Then Danielle caught up to the offensive lineman so he (Odenigbo) couldn't get caught. Yeah, it was big, and those are typically game-changing plays.

**Q: Do you think Dalvin Cook will be able to handle a full load on Monday?**

A: It's too early, but I think an extra day obviously helps. We'll just have to see how the week goes.

**Q: Odenigbo was playing three-technique on the big play, correct?**

A: I believe so, yeah.

**Q: Why does that role fit Odenigbo so well?**

A: Well, a long time ago we felt like he (Odenigbo) might be an inside pass rusher. I think he's kind of grown into that role a little bit, where we're using him some more with that. Really with Ifeadi, he wasn't ready a year or two ago, and so we released and came back and got him on the practice squad. Really it started showing up last year, kind of toward the end of the season when he was on the practice squad. He was having a lot of good battles with Riley (Reiff) and some of those offensive linemen. And he's just continued, he worked his rear end off this offseason and just kind of continued to progress to that point where he's able to play a little bit more at end. He has good quickness and power to be inside, and so I think in this last week we tried to get him on some of the guards a little bit more than some of the other people. He just continues to get better, and I'm not comparing him to Everson (Griffen), but he has some of the same traits. He's got violence, suddenness, quickness and strength. Those things are always good for a defensive lineman.

**Q: Is Danielle Hunter beyond the learning stage and just in the playing stage?**

A: No, because if he ever gets one more thing, two more things, he's going to be unstoppable. We're talking to him about those things all the time, hopefully that will come with maturity. But he likes to rely on what he feels comfortable with right now.

**Q: What are those one or two more things?**

A: We're not going to tell the opponents those two things.

**Q: Do you feel good about where the team is at heading into the final few games of the regular season?**

A: I like this team. I like how they're playing. We seem to find a different way to win - last ten minutes of the fourth quarter, or if we lose one it's a close one and its right at the buzzer. I think we're eight and two in the last 10, or something like that. I think the quarterback is playing really well. I think we're doing a good job scheming offensively. Defensively we've played a little bit better the last couple of weeks. If we can ever get it to the point where I really feel good about it, we could do some damage.

**Q: Do you even know your playoff scenarios? Do you care much about them at this point?**

A: I know if we win, we're in. That's all I know, really. There's still two weeks left, we got to win. That's all I know.