

Takeaways from Thursday Night Football

By: Eric Fenstermaker

CINCINNATI – Evan McPherson knocked in his second game-winning field goal of the season to lift the Cincinnati Bengals past the Jacksonville Jaguars in a come-from-behind 24-21 victory Thursday night. Here are five takeaways from the matchup.

Tale of two halves

The Bengals found themselves in the locker room at the break down 14-0, the team's largest halftime deficit of the season. From there, Cincinnati's offense exploded for 24 second-half points. The Bengals scored on all four of their possessions in the second half, including touchdowns on the team's first three drives. Cincinnati's defense also held Jacksonville rusher James Robinson in check giving up only 14 rushing yards and a touchdown after allowing Robinson to register 64 first half rushing yards and a score.

The future is now

The NFL's last two No. 1 overall picks each took the field under center Thursday as Joe Burrow (the 2020 No. 1 overall pick by the Bengals) squared off against Trevor Lawrence, whom Jacksonville selected No. 1 overall in the 2021 NFL Draft. Lawrence finished the day 17 for 24 for 204 yards and found the end zone on a 7-yard rush in the second quarter. Burrow tossed two touchdowns – both to tight end C.J. Uzomah – and went 25 for 32 for 348 yards.

Eliminating defensive opportunities

While Cincinnati's offense has enough playmakers to be competitive, the main concern has been the offensive line. Against the Jaguars on Thursday, the Bengals' offensive line allowed just one sack and three quarterback hits. After giving up five sacks in each of Cincinnati's first two games, the Bengals have responded with just one sack allowed through the last two weeks of play. With Burrow missing a large amount of last season due to an ACL injury, the Bengals' offensive line has shown it can dig deep and protect the team's most valuable asset.

Road woes

Away games have not been very kind to Jacksonville since the Patriots knocked the Jaguars out of the playoffs during the 2017-2018 season. After losing that playoff matchup, the Jaguars have been 5-21 in road games. Jacksonville's last road win dates back to Dec. 15, 2019, when quarterback Gardner Minshew led the Jaguars to a 20-16 win over Derek Carr and the then Oakland Raiders (now the Las Vegas Raiders).

Unfamiliar territory

At Clemson, Lawrence was the star quarterback that led the Tigers to a College Football Playoff Championship in 2018. Through four games with the Jaguars, Lawrence remains winless.

Following the loss against the Bengals, Lawrence has now lost as many games in the NFL as he did in high school and college combined where he went 86-4 as a starter. Lawrence will look to record his first NFL victory in week five as the Jaguars return home to take on the Tennessee Titans.