

Chargers, Steelers to meet in battle of unbeatens

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Technically, Mike Tomlin was talking about what goes on behind closed doors.

Given the way the Pittsburgh Steelers are playing during their unbeaten start, he might as well have been talking about what's happening on the field, too.

"I can't give you all the ingredients to the hot dog," the NFL's longest-tenured head coach said with a smile this week when asked about the process of handing out a game ball following a victory. "You might not like it."

Except, of course, the taste of the finished product. Tomlin knows that as long as it tastes good, who cares what's in it?

So forgive him if he's unapologetic about the way the Steelers have played through the first two weeks.

Yes, the offense remains a work in progress. Yes, the wide receivers not named George Pickens need to start producing.

Yes, quarterback Justin Fields has been focused more on not losing games than winning them while filling in for injured Russell Wilson.

It doesn't matter to Tomlin, who

has no plans to abandon the physical, throwback approach to winning.

No wonder he sees a kindred spirit of sorts in Jim Harbaugh.

The first-year Los Angeles Chargers coach is in the early stages of what could be a quick turnaround much like the one he orchestrated in San Francisco over a decade ago.

Los Angeles has physically dominated the Las Vegas Raiders and Carolina Panthers in Harbaugh's first two games, relying on running back JK Dobbins and a thudding defense more than the arms and legs of uber-talented quarterback Justin Herbert.

While Harbaugh is encouraged about the progress he's seen, he understands the Steelers and their star-laden defense represent a step up in class from what the Chargers faced last week against the over-matched Panthers.

"We'll really find out about our team this week," Harbaugh said. "So far it's been great. I'm excited about so many different areas. The togetherness is really coming."

Flourishing Fields

Fields will make his third straight

start while Wilson rehabs a calf injury he aggravated a few days before the season opener earlier this month.

The 25-year-old Fields has offered hints of his considerable physical talent. He unleashed a 51-yard strike to Pickens while rolling to his right against Denver last week, though the play was called back because of offensive holding.

More importantly for the Steelers, Fields has avoided the mistakes that cropped up frequently during his three uneven seasons in Chicago. The player who had 41 turnovers in 40 games with the Bears has yet to give it away in Pittsburgh.

Asked this week how he felt about Fields' decision-making, Tomlin offered an endorsement and a challenge at the same time.

"It's been really good," Tomlin said before adding, "but I expect it to be."

Whither, Herbert?

Herbert had his right ankle rolled up late in the third quarter against the Panthers when he tried to move up in the pocket to avoid a sack and got caught from behind.

The fifth-year quarterback did not

practice on Wednesday but told Harbaugh the ankle was improving. Herbert has been lauded for his toughness and pain threshold, but this is the second time in three seasons he is questionable going into a Week 3 game. The fifth-year quarterback had fractured rib cartilage after taking a hard hit during the fourth quarter of a game against the Chiefs.

Easton Stick, who has four regular-season starts in five-plus seasons, is the backup even though the Chargers acquired Taylor Heinicke from the Atlanta Falcons at the end of the preseason.

Tackle trouble?

Tomlin's plan to rotate Broderick Jones and rookie first-round pick Troy Fautanu at right tackle took a bit of a detour last week when Jones was flagged three times in the span of a handful of plays and watched the rest of the game from the bench.

Fautanu will make his second straight start against the Chargers and a defensive line that includes star edge rusher Joey Bosa, who has picked up a sack in each of the Chargers' first two games.

Tomlin will give Jones — a first-

round selection in 2023 — a chance to rebound, though it appears he now has far less wiggle room than he did last season when he played solidly after getting inserted into the lineup in October.

"I am sure he suffered some disappointment in terms of Troy starting," Tomlin said. "It's a natural thing. But he has to move past it and I have to give him an opportunity to move past it as a leader."

East Coast bias

The Chargers have won eight straight games when they played in the Eastern time zone, tied for the second-longest winning streak since the merger by a Pacific time zone team when they come cross country.

San Francisco holds the mark with 13 from 1987 through 1990.

Los Angeles has five games in the Eastern time zone this season, its most since 2005. With two consecutive games out East for the first time in 20 years, they elected to remain in Charlotte, North Carolina, after drilling the Panthers last week and practice at UNC Charlotte before flying to Pittsburgh on Saturday.

THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

MLB STANDINGS

AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
z-New York	89	64	.582	—
Baltimore	86	68	.558	3½
Boston	76	78	.494	13½
Tampa Bay	76	78	.494	13½
Toronto	73	81	.474	16½

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
z-Cleveland	90	65	.581	—
Kansas City	82	72	.532	7½
Minnesota	81	73	.526	8½
Detroit	80	74	.519	9½
Chicago	36	117	.235	53

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Houston	84	70	.545	—
Seattle	79	75	.513	5
Texas	73	81	.474	11
Oakland	67	86	.438	16½
Los Angeles	62	92	.403	22

NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phila.	92	62	.597	—
New York	85	69	.552	7
Atlanta	83	71	.539	9
Washington	68	86	.442	24
Miami	57	97	.370	35

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
x-Milwaukee	88	66	.571	—
Chicago	79	75	.513	9
St. Louis	77	77	.500	11
Cincinnati	75	80	.484	13½
Pittsburgh	72	82	.468	16

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
z-Los Angeles	91	62	.595	—
San Diego	87	66	.569	4
Arizona	86	68	.558	5½
San Francisco	75	79	.487	16½
Colorado	59	94	.386	32

x-clinched division

z-clinched playoff berth

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Thursday's Games
 Baltimore 5, San Francisco 3
 Cleveland 3, Minnesota 2, 10 innings
 Toronto 4, Texas 0
 Seattle 3, N.Y. Yankees 2
 Tampa Bay 2, Boston 0
 Houston 3, L.A. Angels 1

Friday's Games
 Tampa Bay 1, Toronto 0
 Baltimore 7, Detroit 1
 Cleveland 5, St. Louis 1
 Seattle 8, Texas 2
 San Francisco 2, Kansas City 1
 Houston 9, L.A. Angels 7
 Minnesota 4, Boston 2, 12 innings
 Chicago White Sox at San Diego, late
 N.Y. Yankees at Oakland, late

Saturday's Games
 Detroit (Olson 4-8) at Baltimore (Povich 2-9), 4:05 p.m.
 Minnesota (López 15-8) at Boston (Crawford 8-15), 4:10 p.m.
 Toronto (Rodríguez 1-6) at Tampa Bay (Bradley 6-11), 4:10 p.m.
 San Francisco (Roupp 0-1) at Kansas City (Singer 9-11), 5:10 p.m.
 Seattle (Hancock 3-4) at Texas (Scherzer 2-4), 7:05 p.m.
 L.A. Angels (Detmers 4-7) at Houston (Blanco 11-6), 7:10 p.m.
 Cleveland (Boyd 2-1) at St. Louis (Mikolas 8-11), 7:15 p.m.
 Chicago White Sox (Flexen 2-14) at San Diego (Pérez 4-5), 8:40 p.m.
 N.Y. Yankees (Rodón 15-9) at Oakland (Sears 11-11), 9:07 p.m.

Sunday's Games
 Detroit at Baltimore, 1:35 p.m.
 Minnesota at Boston, 1:35 p.m.
 Toronto at Tampa Bay, 1:40 p.m.
 L.A. Angels at Houston, 2:10 p.m.
 San Francisco at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
 Cleveland at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
 Seattle at Texas, 2:35 p.m.
 N.Y. Yankees at Oakland, 4:07 p.m.
 Chicago White Sox at San Diego, 4:10 p.m.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Thursday's Games
 Baltimore 5, San Francisco 3
 Atlanta 15, Cincinnati 3
 L.A. Dodgers 20, Miami 4
Pittsburgh 3, St. Louis 2
 N.Y. Mets 10, Phila. 6
 Arizona 5, Milwaukee 1
 Chicago Cubs 7, Washington 6

Friday's Games
 Chicago Cubs 3, Washington 1
Cincinnati 8, Pittsburgh 3
 Miami 4, Atlanta 3
 Phila. 12, N.Y. Mets 2
 Cleveland 5, St. Louis 1
 San Francisco 2, Kansas City 1
 Arizona 7, Milwaukee 4
 Chicago White Sox at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
 Colorado at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Pittsburgh (Jones 6-7) at Cincinnati (Lowder 1-2), 1:10 p.m.
 Washington (Gore 9-12) at Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 4-11), 2:20 p.m.
 Atlanta (Fried 9-10) at Miami (Oller 1-4), 4:10 p.m.
 Phila. (Suárez 12-7) at N.Y. Mets (Manaea 11-5), 4:10 p.m.
 San Francisco (Roupp 0-1) at Kansas City (Singer 9-11), 5:10 p.m.
 Arizona (Kelly 4-0) at Milwaukee (Civale 7-8), 7:10 p.m.
 Cleveland (Boyd 2-1) at St. Louis (Mikolas 8-11), 7:15 p.m.
 Chicago White Sox (Flexen 2-14) at San Diego (Pérez 4-5), 8:40 p.m.
 Colorado (Quattrill 8-10) at L.A. Dodgers (Buehler 1-5), 9:10 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 1:10 p.m.
 Atlanta at Miami, 1:40 p.m.
 Arizona at Milwaukee, 2:10 p.m.
 San Francisco at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
 Cleveland at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
 Washington at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
 Chicago White Sox at San Diego, 4:10 p.m.
 Colorado at L.A. Dodgers, 4:10 p.m.
 Phila. at N.Y. Mets, 7:15 p.m.

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
East						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Buffalo	2	0	0	1.000	65	38
N.Y. Jets	2	1	0	.667	67	52
Miami	1	1	0	.500	30	48
New England	1	2	0	.333	39	57

South						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Houston	2	0	0	1.000	48	40
Indianapolis	0	2	0	.000	37	45
Jacksonville	0	2	0	.000	30	38
Tennessee	0	2	0	.000	34	48

North						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Pittsburgh	2	0	0	1.000	51	16
Cleveland	1	1	0	.500	35	46
Baltimore	0	2	0	.000	43	53
Cincinnati	0	2	0	.000	35	42

West						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Kansas City	2	0	0	1.000	53	45
L.A. Chargers	2	0	0	1.000	48	13
Las Vegas	1	1	0	.500	36	45
Denver	0	2	0	.000	26	39

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Dallas	1	1	0	.500	52	61
Phila.	1	1	0	.500	55	51
Washington	1	1	0	.500	41	55
N.Y. Giants	0	2	0	.000	24	49

South						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
New Orleans	2	0	0	1.000	91	29
Tampa Bay	2	0	0	1.000	57	36
Atlanta	1	1	0	.500	32	39
Carolina	0	2	0	.000	13	73

North						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Minnesota	2	0	0	1.000	51	23
Chicago	1	1	0	.500	37	36
Detroit	1	1	0	.500	42	40
Green Bay	1	1	0	.500	45	44

West						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Seattle	2	0	0	1.000	49	40
Arizona	1	1	0	.500	69	44
San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	49	42
L.A. Rams	0	2	0	.000	30	67

Thursday's Games
 N.Y. Jets 24, New England 3

Sunday's Games
 Chicago at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.
 Denver at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.
 Green Bay at Tennessee, 1 p.m.
 Houston at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
L.A. Chargers at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
 N.Y. Giants at Cleveland, 1 p.m.
 Phila. at New Orleans, 1 p.m.
 Carolina at Las Vegas, 4:05 p.m.
 Miami at Seattle, 4:05 p.m.
 Baltimore at Dallas, 4:25 p.m.
 Detroit at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.
 San Francisco at L.A. Rams, 4:25 p.m.
 Kansas City at Atlanta, 8:20 p.m.

Monday's Games
 Jacksonville at Buffalo, 7:30 p.m.
 Washington at Cincinnati, 8:15 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 26
 Dallas at N.Y. Giants, 8:15 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 29
 Cincinnati at Carolina, 1 p.m.
 Denver at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.
 Jacksonville at Houston, 1 p.m.
 L.A. Rams at Chicago, 1 p.m.
 Minnesota at Green Bay, 1 p.m.
 New Orleans at Atlanta, 1 p.m.
 Phila. at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.

Pittsburgh at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.
 New England at San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.
 Washington at Arizona, 4:05 p.m.
 Cleveland at Las Vegas, 4:25 p.m.
 Kansas City at L.A. Chargers, 4:25 p.m.
 Buffalo at Baltimore, 8:20 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 30
 Tennessee at Miami, 7:30 p.m.
 Seattle at Detroit, 8:15 p.m.

PIRATES BOXSCORE

Cincinnati 8, Pittsburgh 3										
	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.			
Kiner-Falefa ss	4	0	0	0	0	2	.249			
Reynolds lf	4	0	0	0	0	2	.278			
O.Cruz cf	4	2	2	1	0	1	.267			
McCutchchen dh	3	1	1	0	1	0	.238			
Bart c	4	0	2	1	0	1	.261			
Gonzales 2b	4	0	1	0	0	0	.272			
Tellez 1b	4	0	2	1	0	0	.245			
Triolo 3b	4	0	1	0	2	2	.218			
Cook rf	3	0	0	0	0	3	.185			
Totals	34	3	9	3	1	11				

Cincinnati 104, Pittsburgh 8										
	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.			
India 2b	4	2	2	1	1	0	.247			
E.De La Cruz ss	4	2	1	0	1	2	.260			
Stephenson c	5	3	3	5	0	2	.265			
Steer dh	4	0	1	0	0	0	.230			
Friedl cf	2	0	0	1	2	1	.229			
France 1b	3	0	0	1	0	0	.274			
France rf	3	0	1	0	1	0	.278			
Marte 3b	4	0	0	0	0	0	.208			
Benson if	3	1	0	0</						