CINCINNATI (AP) — An ugly performance has left the Cincinnati Bengals in trouble.
The Bengals self-destructed in the second half of a 34-24 loss to the Browns on Sunday that dropped them to 3-3, which is not at all where they wanted to be heading into the toughest stretch of their schedule.
And their coach thinks a lot of it comes down to attitude.

Marvin Lewis suggested after the loss on Sunday that his team was too nice at times and needed to get tougher when it has a chance to put an opponent away. He didn't change his assessment after watching video of the loss.
"I told them: You've got to be able to stomp on the back of somebody's neck and go," Lewis said Monday. "That's what this is all about. We don't get mulligans. We are playing for lunch tickets and we are playing for keeps. You've got to go when it is time to go you got to put them away in every way."
The loss in Cleveland ended a stretch of five consecutive games against opponents with quarterbacks who were either rookies or in their second season. The Bengals went only 3-2 during that favorable part of the schedule.
Up next are home games against Pittsburgh, Denver and the Giants. Cincinnati finishes the season with games against San Diego, Dallas, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Baltimore, which leads the AFC North at 5-1 and has already beaten the Bengals.
Cincinnati won a wild card berth last season with a 9-7 mark and lost to Houston in the first round of the playoffs. The goal this season was to try for the division title and only the second set of back-to-back playoff appearances in franchise history.
The Bengals were in good shape when they opened 3-1. They've crumbled in the second half of losses to Miami and Cleveland, dropping them back into the large pack of teams trying to get above break-even.
"It's not time to jump ship," offensive tackle Andrew Whitworth said. "We're 3-3 just like everybody else in our conference. At the end of the day, it's not about wins and losses, it's about who makes the playoffs.
"Our goals are all still right there in front of us. Somebody that's 3-3 has to go win some games and get in the playoffs. Why not be us?"
There are a few reasons why at the moment.
The offense has become overly reliant on big plays to get points. The Bengals had a couple more of those on Sunday — Andy Dalton threw a 55-yard touchdown pass to Jermaine Gresham and a 57-yarder to A.J. Green. But Cincinnati had trouble moving the ball consistently for the third game in a row.
During the last three games, Cincinnati is only 9 of 39 on third down conversions. The lack of a running game has been a major factor. BenJarvus Green-Ellis, brought in to replace Cedric Benson, is averaging only 3.4 yards per carry.
"I've been harping on it — it's about running the football," Lewis said. "In the first half we had 10 carries and averaged about 4.5 yards per carry. It was a good start."
Green-Ellis was limited to 17 yards on six carries in the second half, and the Bengals finished with a total of only 76 yards on the ground.
Dalton was 31 of 46 for 381 yards, but threw three interceptions, including one that Sheldon Brown returned for a touchdown that put the Browns in control. Dalton also was sacked and fumbled in the closing minutes, ending any chance of a comeback.

The Bengals have scored 10 points in the third quarter this season, a factor in the last two losses.

“If you look in the past, that’s been a strength,” Lewis said. “I can look at years past, particularly last year, and it was a strength of ours. It was a strength of ours in the preseason. But right now, it’s not. And it’s not that the defense has been dreadful, it’s just that we’ve been dreadful on offense in the third quarter.” __PUBLIC__