

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Saturday, September 5, 2020

Houston, Texas, USA

**Deshaun Watson**

**Jack Easterby**

**Bill O'Brien**

Press Conference



**Q. Deshaun, congratulations. You've got some people on here that obviously are close to you. Have you had a chance to think about all the people who have helped you get where you are today, second highest paid player in NFL history?**

DESHAUN WATSON: I've tried to. It's a long list, honestly. There's so many people from back home, so many people from my college career, and so many people from my NFL career that's been helping me along the way.

I couldn't have done this by myself. This has definitely been a lot of sacrifice, a lot of attention to detail, discipline, and really just a lot of hard and passionate love just putting into everything that I can to get to this moment.

DABO SWINNEY: What's up, D-dub?

DESHAUN WATSON: What's up, Coach?

DABO SWINNEY: What a privilege this is. I know I got a chance to talk to you this morning. You didn't know I was going to get a chance to make a cameo tonight.

DESHAUN WATSON: Not at all.

DABO SWINNEY: You know what, you just said something, you just finished your opening statement with the word "moment," and here's what I would say, is, man, first of all, I'm so proud of you and I'm so thankful that I had a chance to be a part of a great moment your sophomore year in high school when you called me and said, Hey, Coach, I want to be your quarterback and I'm coming to Clemson.

D-dub, that was a great moment, and I'm so thankful that I had a chance to be a part of such a great moment when you came to Clemson. And I remember you broke your collarbone your first spring, but I remember you coming in

to tell me you were going to play against South Carolina with a torn ACL, and I looked at you like you were crazy.

DESHAUN WATSON: Right.

DABO SWINNEY: And you go out and get MVP of the game, and man, that was a great moment. That was a great moment your freshman year.

And then this right here (pointing to picture), in Tampa, with one second on the clock, you go out there with I think it was 2:01 when you took the field and you lead us down and we run a little orange crush there, a little Paul Wright wheel crush, to win the game to ol' Renfrow there with one second.

DESHAUN WATSON: Yes, sir.

DABO SWINNEY: Man, that was a great moment. It was a great moment.

I remember when your mom was declared cancer-free; that was a great moment. That was a great moment.

DESHAUN WATSON: Right.

DABO SWINNEY: I remember being at the draft with you when you got drafted, and I was mad as anything that night. I was mad. I was mad. And you were sitting there just like, Man, God's got this and he's going to take me where -- I'm sitting over there going, You're right, and meantime I'm punching tables.

But to hear your name called; that was a great moment.

DESHAUN WATSON: Yes, sir.

DABO SWINNEY: Man, I just am so proud of you. I'm so proud of you, and I'm so thankful that I get a chance to be a part of another great moment.

And what I would say to you, D-dub, and I told you this this morning, you're going to have a lot of great moments the rest of your life, but it's all about how you live between the moments.

DESHAUN WATSON: Right.

DABO SWINNEY: All about how you live between the moments, and you are the epitome of everything that's good and right in this world, all right, and I'm just so thankful to be a part of your life.

It's a blessing to just have a seat to observe and watch a young man just grow and mature and equip himself and transform his life. You're going to have a lot more great moments. Just continue to live daily for God, and I know you do that. God blesses you so you can bless others.

I think it's very fitting that the title of your book is Pass It on. So God trusts you and God is blessing you so you can bless others. You bless Alex with your resources, so you just continue to let that light shine, continue to smile, continue to be that leader that you are, and continue to be that legendary quarterback that you are, as well.

Hey, I love you. I'm so happy for Ms. Deann; I'm happy for Aunt Sonia. I'm happy for just everyone in your family, and I'm thankful to be a part of such a great moment and just be a part of your journey. This is what it's all about for me.

I love you. Enjoy the moment.

DESHAUN WATSON: Love you, too, Coach. Appreciate it.

DABO SWINNEY: Listen, we're taking pay cuts around here. I might just need a thousand. Just let me be first in line, just a small loan.

DESHAUN WATSON: You know I got you, Coach.

DABO SWINNEY: In fact C.J. Spiller is over here, we're grilling burgers tonight, and I told him I was coming in here to do this call. He's actually my neighbor out here on Lake Keowee, so we're going to save a spot for you.

DESHAUN WATSON: Sounds good to me. Tell him I said what's up.

DABO SWINNEY: All right. Congrats, my man. I love you.

DESHAUN WATSON: I love you, too.

DABO SWINNEY: Now all this stuff is over, you've got to go perform now, right?

DESHAUN WATSON: That's the easy part. Good seeing you.

JUSTIN VERLANDER: Deshaun, what's up, my man.

DESHAUN WATSON: Hey, what's up, JV. I'm good.

JUSTIN VERLANDER: I'm sorry I didn't text you today. I saw the news but I wanted to wait to congratulate you on here. I got a call earlier today asking if I would do this, and I couldn't be happier to be able to be here and congratulate you on a moment in your career that -- you know, we don't work for this, but this is something that comes along with the hard work.

I saw your Instagram post earlier today where you mentioned your family and your friends and all those that have kind of blessed you and touched you along the way and made you who you are, and it's moments like these where you get the opportunity to thank those people, and I'm so happy that you were able to do that and go on in Houston.

Being able to go to these games the last couple years and sit in the stadium and see how much Houston loves you and how much you love them back and how much you've become part of this city, to see you be able to sign this extension, man, it's pretty special.

I haven't been here for long, but I feel like this city, I can tell the vibe that they have for you and how much they love you.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you, man. I appreciate it.

JUSTIN VERLANDER: From that dinner -- remember that dinner we had last year?

DESHAUN WATSON: Yeah, I do. Talking about all of it.

JUSTIN VERLANDER: Exactly, talking about all of it. It's crazy how fast it comes, and I'm thankful to be able to call you a friend and be able to watch you in Houston for a long time to come.

You know, man, I don't know what else to say but congratulations, dude.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you, man. Appreciate it. Tell the family I said hello, too.

JUSTIN VERLANDER: Of course I will. Congratulations, bro, and hope to see you soon.

DESHAUN WATSON: All right, we'll see each other.

ETHAN HUGHES: For people who don't know, I was diagnosed with leukemia two years ago, and I used to watch Deshaun from my hospital bed. And I just remember watching you escape all the sacks and just

throw touchdowns.

And so once when we found out I was able to have a Make a Wish, I was like, Of course it has to be Deshaun. This guy put me through like no matter how bad my day was going, I could always have a smile on my face knowing that Deshaun Watson is my quarterback.

So, yeah, and then when that day finally came for Make a Wish, you put me under your wing, man, and it was just amazing. And just thank you for all that you've done. I'm glad you got paid. You deserve it.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you, man. Thank you. I appreciate everything. I appreciate our friendship that we've been growing. You look good, man. You got your hair and everything.

ETHAN HUGHES: I know, man, look at this! I'm back. I feel great. I'm in the maintenance part of my treatment right now, and I will be free of treatment on January 2022.

DESHAUN WATSON: That's a blessing, man. Yes, sir. We'll both continue to work and get to the promised land for sure.

ETHAN HUGHES: Heck yeah, heck yeah. Congratulations, Deshaun.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you, man. Nice seeing you.

COACH PERRY: Man, I can't tell you, we actually had our picture day today.

DESHAUN WATSON: Really?

COACH PERRY: I saw on social media, I saw that, and everybody was like, Oh, my God, and I just can't tell you. Just like today is one of the happiest days of my life to see this happen for you and your family, because nobody deserves it more.

To see where you've come from, you are what's right about this game. You're what's right about what a role model is supposed to be. You're just such an inspiration to so many in this community, this state, everywhere, and I'm just so blessed to be a small part of your life.

I know my family, they're just ecstatic and we're so happy for your family.

I looked it up earlier today, in the last 50 years -- and somebody will have to check this and see if I'm right, but Joe Namath is like the only quarterback in the last 50 years to win a state championship in college, win the National

Championship, and then to win the Super Bowl.

Joe Namath, I guarantee you're going to win a Super Bowl in your career at some point.

DESHAUN WATSON: Yes, sir. Most definitely. I appreciate that, Coach. You're going to make me cry, man.

COACH PERRY: You still got that little notebook of our first ever meeting?

DESHAUN WATSON: I do. I do. We used to be the Peyton Manning of high school football.

COACH PERRY: Yep, yep. I was telling my wife about that today. I love you, man, and congratulations.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you, Coach.

WATSON FAMILY: Congratulations, bro.

DESHAUN WATSON: Thank you! Appreciate it.

WATSON FAMILY: Glad it paid off, boy. I'm proud of you.

DESHAUN WATSON: (Tearing up.)

WATSON FAMILY: You're going to the Super Bowl! Congratulations, Deshaun. I love you, and Auntie just got to say something over here, but your mama and this whole family, your mama is so proud of you for what you have become, and we know God going to keep doing great things in your life, and you just live, honey, and be happy and accept whatever he brings your way and just keep going.

We just want you to know we love you very much.

DESHAUN WATSON: You know I love y'all, too. Thank you. Thank you, appreciate it. I appreciate everything. I can't wait to see y'all.

WATSON FAMILY: We can't wait to see you, too.

BILL O'BRIEN: Obviously this is a very special night for the Houston Texans, a special day. To be able to have a quarterback and a person of the caliber of Deshaun Watson under contract for multiple, multiple years is just great.

Obviously this is Deshaun's night, and it's a hard act to follow right there watching all those people that had such a tremendous influence on his life, and then obviously his family and how much his family means to him. It's a great

night.

I want to obviously thank the McNairs, Cal and Janice McNair are here tonight, their support of what we're trying to do here with Deshaun has just been awesome. It's just been tremendous support, and we've only started this journey really.

You know, I also want to thank Jack Easterby. He's standing here too. Jack Easterby be a tremendous job. Along with Deshaun's representative, David Mulugheta. Deshaun and Jack and David worked together a lot on this contract and were able to come to an agreement this morning.

And so obviously we're thrilled, and with that, I'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Bill, what does it say, the message that it sends to your fans, but also your other players when you get a deal like this done?**

BILL O'BRIEN: Well, I think it's all about, like we always talk about the type of people that we want on this team and in this organization. Deshaun Watson is a shining example of that. He's just a tremendously hard-working young man, a very bright guy. He's a winner, and he's a winner at the most important position in football.

So I just think it's a reflection to the team of what we're trying to do here and the commitment that both sides have, the commitment that he has to winning here and being who he is both on and off the field and the commitment that we have to him relative to our belief in him since the day I met him at the combine years ago.

Tremendous belief in him as a quarterback and as a person, and just really looking forward to starting the season.

**Q. I have a question about the roster. That was another thing you guys worked on today. How do you feel about the team now that it's the initial 53-man, but some of the moves you made, and how much do you hope to get some of these guys back including some veterans that you released today?**

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, no, look, these are always tough days. These are days that really don't end. We go from here to back upstairs, Jack and I, with the scouting staff and continue to look at the roster and always try to make decisions that are in the best interest of the team. There was a lot going on today, obviously, and so we were able to make some moves that we believe will help our team, but there's more moves to be made.

I think you know that about us over the last several years that we'll continue to try to do every minute of the day to do what's in the best interest of the team, what's the best decision for the team.

I think over time here you'll see over the next let's just call it 24 hours there will be more roster moves that will be made relative to practice squad, relative to the 53, all in the best interests of the team.

**Q. I know you said we asked this question a couple days ago, the significance of timing. How important is it that you were able to get the Deshaun Watson deal done before the season starts and it's behind you now?**

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, I thought that that was a goal of Jack and I to really -- and Kevin Krajcovic. I have to mention him, too. He did a great job in this whole process.

But yeah, I think we felt that it was important to get this done before the season. We worked hard on it, like I said, with Deshaun's agent David Mulugheta, and both sides worked very hard on it. I think it's great that it's done before the season. You have to obviously quickly turn the page to the Kansas City Chiefs, which we started that process tonight, and that's what we'll work hard towards all week leading up to Thursday night.

**Q. I had a question also about the roster just in relation to tight end. I know you've talked about Jordan and Colin being in competition there. What made you comfortable picking Collie and keeping him on your team?**

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, I would say that that's an ongoing process at that position. We'll see -- we spoke to Jordan this afternoon, and we'd love to have Jordan back in a certain roster capacity. Look, I think at the end of the day that's an evolving situation.

I think that we're always going to be looking at that position. We feel good about the guys that we have there, and hopefully there's a chance we could get Jordan back.

**Q. In terms of stability, that's where the NFL in general let alone at the quarterback position and obviously early on in your tenure, it was almost impossible to have stability at that position. What does it do for this franchise big picture, especially with what you were trying to build, Jack is trying to build, Cal is trying to build, to know that you have Deshaun Watson locked in through 2025?**



BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, that's an important -- that's a very, very important part of the conversation that you have a quarterback in place. I mean, it's just -- obviously, like I said earlier, since the day he walked in here, he has been who we believed he would be when we first met him, and then some.

To have consistency in the quarterback position along with consistency in the offensive system I think is really good because he feels so comfortable, and every year he's gotten better and better at understanding not only what he's seeing on the other side of the ball but what we're trying to do. He's got the thing mastered relative to our playbook. That consistency working together is very important.

I think Timmy Kelly has done a really good job with him this year. T.J. Yates has been a good addition in that quarterback room. I'll let Deshaun talk about that. But I think those guys work very well together, and I think that's been good relative to where we're at right now, but consistency is definitely a huge key at that position.

**Q. Jack, congratulations on getting the deal done. Kevin and you were just given praise by Bill for getting this deal done. Could you take us through say the last week after you got Cunningham and when the pace picked up, and at any time were you worried that you might not be able to get it done before the season?**

JACK EASTERBY: Let me just speak generally before we get into those types of specifics and say what a special day for the Houston Texans, what a special day for the Watson family. This really comes down to two awesome families. It starts with a family in the McNairs who had a vision to get this team back to Houston and give Houston something to celebrate, the game of football, faith, family, football, an awesome family that really had a vision to entertain this city through great football, and then an awesome family in Gainesville, Georgia, to celebrate athletes as a way to have camaraderie amongst their family and a way to have fun together in their community and then a way to celebrate Friday nights in the small town of Gainesville.

Those two families met through the draft, and then as they met and began to work together over the past several years, it culminated in a moment like this. Before specifics of the contract, I think we just really need to celebrate those two families and what those families did to get to this moment.

Specifically for the contract, I think that Deshaun and his representatives and our communication was very fluid. We communicated well together. We told truth to each other. We worked together, and it was a project, right. You're

trying to do what's best for both sides to come to a good agreement. I don't think it really overlapped necessarily with what Zach was doing. It was independent, and we worked really hard on it to get it right.

Excited about where we are now with this structure.

**Q. Congratulations on the deal. In getting these contracts done and kind of mapping it out, how much does the future cap and kind of the flexibility you guys are trying to create because one deal is not independent of another, how much does that come into play as you think about your roster and what you were trying to do with other core players that will be eligible in coming years?**

JACK EASTERBY: Yeah, that's a good question. I would say the first thing I think you've seen is we've been blessed to invest in some great people. I think when you invest in great people, they produce. They're loyal. They care for not only the people in the locker room, but they care for the coaching staff. They care for the community, and I think what that does is creates a domino effect. With other people in the locker room it creates a unity and excitement and a culture people want to be a part of.

I do think it's important to get those pieces in place now so that as we continue to add, we'll add one by one, people that fit that culture and can celebrate together what we're doing.

Overall I would say just from the cap and the structure where we are, I think we're very happy with the moves we've made to get to this point. I think it took some other things to get to where we are now, but we're very happy with that, and then we're happy pressing forward. We're very prepared for what could happen in the future with having some space still left but also knowing that every action that we have can't stand alone. It has to go with the other dominos of other decisions.

**Q. As Bill said you had some tough calls today. It's never easy to put together the roster. That process, now that you guys have really the bulk of your team together with some changes still coming, how do you feel just in general about the team as you head into the first game of the season?**

JACK EASTERBY: Well, I feel really good about the team. I think it's been an unprecedented year, right, so we've got -- we had limited practices. We had limited time together relative to install, things on the field. You obviously don't know exactly where you are, but this time of year the goal is to have people that can execute what you're doing, people that you can count on, and like we say all the time,



tough, smart and dependable players and people that can produce hopefully in clutch moments.

So I feel really good about where we are, but it's a construction project. As you well know, you have to get it day after day and continue to improve. So the goal is to improve each week both off-season and in season so that we get better each week and each year.

**Q. Jack, how would you describe the effect that Deshaun Watson has on other people around him and their lives?**

JACK EASTERBY: Hmm, great question. I don't know if we have enough time. I think these cameras would go dead.

You know, I think if you study what a person does with their gifts you will be revealed what they will do with their treasures. So if you study how a person carefully uses and hones and works on their gifts, then when they're given more treasure, more responsibility, they'll probably get that same result.

And so what I've been blessed to witness is probably the newest member of this franchise is how Deshaun has used his gifts, his gifts of presence. He has a gift of presence when he's with other people. His gift of being a good listener. He listens to his teammates really well. A gift of being consistent because he's a consistent person.

So people know what they're going to get out of him. I think a gift of being a good friend because you have to be a friend and teammate from the position. A gift of being a good communicator both verbally and nonverbally which I think really matters at the quarterback position.

He's got gifts, and he used those gifts to now then gain an opportunity to have treasure. Now he'll use the continued treasure both in leadership and financial wealth to influence this city and a lot of people for the right things, and we believe that wholeheartedly.

**Q. Deshaun, how much does it mean to you personally to have your contract done, and did you ever worry that it might not get done before that first game?**

DESHAUN WATSON: First, I just want to start off by thanking a couple people, Janice, Cal, Coach OB, Jack, the coaching staff, teammates, everyone that was a part of this organization that really just -- I'm lost for words, honestly. Been crying a little bit, a lot of bit, really.

It's just an amazing moment for me to be able to extend my

career in a location, in a place, in a home, I would say, that my family loves, that I love. I want to continue to dive into the community most of all and just continue to build my legacy, just build our legacy as a whole and do something that we've never been done before.

Growing up my word has always been legendary, and for me at Gainesville High School, we never won a state championship and I was the first quarterback to do it. Clemson University never won a National Championship since who knows when. I was the first one to do it. And the Houston Texans organization, being so new we haven't even got to that stage yet.

For me to be able to have that opportunity with a whole bunch of great other teammates, a great coaching staff, a great organization and people up front, I want to be able to have that on my statue, too. That's what I've been working for.

You know, to answer your question, that was my last and least concern, honestly. The money is amazing. It's life-changing. It's great. But the biggest thing is for the McNair family, OB, Jack, to just trust in me and believe in me that I'm their guy, I'm their quarterback is the biggest thing that really touches me.

Growing up, from where I'm from, there's not too many people that make it out, and so for them to -- (tearing up) for them to just trust me really means the most. That's the biggest thing. The contract, I knew that was going to take care of itself. My biggest thing was the locker room and just my performance on the field, because that's -- I mean, that's been something that really just got me from all the -- just really all the negative stuff that we had experienced growing up.

No, that wasn't my biggest concern.

**Q. I guess along the lines of what you're kind of working around, have you had much time to reflect on how far you've come and what this means to you now and going forward in the future and the fact that you can take care of your family for many, many, many years? Have you had a chance to reflect on all of that?**

DESHAUN WATSON: Yeah, I mean, that's really the only reason why I'm crying is just the moments, the good, the bad, the ugly, the sacrifice from day one, since I was a little kid in Gainesville, Georgia, until now.

I mean, this is -- like I said before, the money is fine. It's cool. But my family told me last night, I didn't do it for the money. That's just something that comes with it. I mean, it's just -- it's a lot right now for sure.



**Q. Grown men do cry, don't they?**

DESHAUN WATSON: For sure, yeah.

**Q. What was going through your mind when you saw those familiar faces at the start of the Zoom call?**

DESHAUN WATSON: Just a lot of memories, a lot of talks, a lot of sacrifice, discipline. I mean, all those people were -- even including JV, had something to relate to me, had a big part of my career. It's just flashbacks. Just continue to just pile up so many special moments.

It was awesome. I appreciate Amy and the whole staff and everyone that was a part of that. That means a lot.

**Q. It's clear that you're going to remain humble. It's clear you're going to remain driven. You see all this and Howie motional you are and how driven you are, but from a football perspective -- I know it, it's just hearing it is powerful in itself. How committed are you to getting this organization to the next level, which you mentioned earlier, that they haven't been to? And ultimately this is why you're getting this life-changing contract.**

DESHAUN WATSON: I mean, everything, a broken rib, a punctured lung, torn ACL, whatever it takes. I mean, they have to really keep me off the field. I mean, kicked in the eye, eyeball coming out, whatever it takes (laughter), I'm on that field.

Until that doctor is forcing me and holding me down, I'm on the field trying to win. I'm trying to win at every -- just at life in general. Never trying to compare myself to other people. I'm focusing on my situation, Deshaun Watson of the Houston Texans, and that's what I'm focused on and locked in on.

So whatever it takes, I'm doing whatever it takes to get to where we want to get to.

**Q. When you think about one of the things you've done it's a lot of charity, a lot of things with the community. Your thoughts on kind of what you can do with that kind of generational wealth to do more in Houston, back in Georgia? And I understand that you're going to be a business owner and be a restaurant guy now, too.**

DESHAUN WATSON: Oh, for sure. I mean, that's another priority for me to be able to tie back in in the communities, especially with a lot of things going on, just being able to give people foundations in their home, because that was

something that changed my life, the direction of my life with Ward Dunn and what he did for me and my family giving us that foundation, that home.

Honestly if I would have stayed in the environment that I was growing up in and going down, I probably wouldn't be sitting in this chair or it would have been in a lot more tough to get to this position.

So that change, that structure and that foundation of me seeing that the world was bigger than what it is or what it was at that time, and for me to be able to have the opportunity and be so blessed, I definitely want to tap into as much as I can.

Of course my job in football is firsthand, but whenever I can get in these communities and help families out back home, Gainesville and Clemson and Houston, everywhere I can, to be able to share and pass the love and just the energy on into this world.

And then of course with the franchise with Lefty, my idea -- I don't like a lot of change, and growing up, sticking with Gainesville, that's all I knew. Clemson, committed as a 14 year old to Dabo Swinney. That's what I am. Committed to the Houston Texans, McNair family, Coach OB, Jack, all my teammates, I'm committed here. I don't like a lot of change.

Once I was drafted here, I said to myself that I want to be in Houston as my next home. Houston is my foundation, my home. Of course having equity ownership into an organization or a franchise like Lefty's that's in Detroit. I want to be able to share that, bring cheese steaks down to Houston and do some charity work with the franchise and be able to just expand the community and the city.

**Q. On Twitter you said that your mom taught you to overcome obstacles, and I know you two are very close. What was it like to call your mom and tell her that you had gotten this deal done?**

DESHAUN WATSON: I was crying. I mean, it was just -- it was amazing. When I found out, she found out. No, she was very excited, but she already knew that her son was special, and whatever it came with -- she wasn't looking at the numbers, she wasn't looking at that. Her biggest thing was I love to do something -- I've been doing something that I love to do for so long, and to be able to see the rewards that come with it was her biggest thing, and to see the tears, she was just like, hey, don't worry about us, we're going to be fine, you go win the championship.

That literally was the first thing she said. Congratulations, but you've got a game to win Thursday and you've got a

championship to go get, and then she started getting into all the other stuff.

I mean, having that mother that understands my priorities and my goals in life, I mean, it's amazing. It makes life a lot more easier, so it was awesome.

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