

Houston Texans Media Conference

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TJ Yates

Press Conference



Q. Could you talk about what impresses you the most about the way Watson is playing right now please?

TJ YATES: Yeah, he's playing at an extremely high level right now. It's fun to coach him every day. It's fun to see his energy that he brings to practice and how he comes to work every single day trying to get better. It's showing for us on the field.

Obviously we can all do a lot of things better, him included. We got to do whatever we got to do to get back in the win column.

Q. At this point he's not running the ball nearly as much as he has in the past. Is that by design?

TJ YATES: Sometimes it is. Sometimes it's how the game plan shakes out. We have a lot of plays where he makes decisions whether or not he wants to run it. The defense knows. They try to take him away as much as possible. Sometimes by game plan, sometimes not.

He's doing a good job as a quarterback to become a smarter player, take care of himself when he was in those adverse situations where he could take big hits.

It's not something that we're trying to do on purpose one way or the other. It's just kind of how the games are going.

Q. What are some keys to keeping AJ up to speed, available, ready, all that sort of stuff when you got a guy who is going to play every play like Deshaun does?

TJ YATES: That's always tough. Me and AJ talk about this a lot. I've been in the position that he's in in my playing career. It's very weird because you only get scout team reps. There's only so many reps that go around during a week of practice. Those are all dedicated to the starter.

I've tried, and AJ has done a really good job of us working after practice every single day, going through the script, trying to simulate those game reps as much as possible,

even though he practices as much as he can, to keep him as ready as possible.

In this COVID world, you never know. He could be up there in no time. He's been a very good professional. He's been great for Deshaun, helping him out. He's been great in the room. He'll be ready to play if that time ever needs to come.

Q. You mentioned earlier how Deshaun has done a good job of becoming a smarter player. You also mentioned he can improve as the rest of you can. What are some examples of him becoming a smarter player and what areas can you see I am improving in?

TJ YATES: From year to year a quarterback learns different things that you can really only learn from experience, whether it's doing a better job of throwing the ball away when you need to or not taking a sack when you need to, checking it down when you need to. He's just become a more mature player in almost every single way.

I think it's helping him out. It's helping us out. Like when I was mentioning before, we all have to get better in some form or fashion because we're not winning. Deshaun knows that. He takes that to heart. He's always looking for things that he can do better to help this team win because that's all he cares about. That's the delight of really coaching a guy like that, us having a guy like that as our leader.

Q. Seems like Deshaun and the offense has made it through a transition period with these new receivers to be clicking now. What are some of the nuances, the little things that they had to get on the same page about to see the production we're now seeing?

TJ YATES: Yeah, it's never easy and it's very tough when you have a group or a couple new receivers, especially in the COVID time that we had, not having really any live game reps. Sometimes you get some of that in pre-season, some simulated game-speed-type things.

Going straight into a season with a couple new receivers is never easy because it never really clicks until you do it full speed in the game.

I think the way Randall and Brandin and Deshaun have



grown together just over these first couple weeks of the season has been evident. They're starting to click more and more as the season goes on. He's already had that type of feel with Kenny and Will already, just trying to get them all up to speed, get them all on the same page as much as possible. When you have those four guys out there catching passes for you, we can be problems for defenses.

Q. With the transition from DeAndre Hopkins to a more multi-target approach, what do you see from Shaun in terms of reading, as far as going from different progressions, spreading the football around? How would you rate his adjustment now that we're almost halfway through the season?

TJ YATES: Yeah, it's a little bit different for him. When you have that big-time X receiver that we had in Hop, sometimes you can get locked in on only throwing to one guy. That's what you're kind of used to.

You kind of go to the style we are now, we're distributing the ball. Deshaun is becoming a little more of a point guard back there. His mental aspect of the game has helped in that, being able to read coverages, knowing where to go with the ball versus which coverage. He's doing a good job of getting the ball around to all of our play-makers, he's doing a good job of that.

Q. For those who don't know what an assistant quarterbacks coach does, could you describe your role and task during the week and on game day, what it is you're exactly doing? Also, what have you learned and how have you grown in that role?

TJ YATES: Yeah, just the difference from my role last year to this year, it's more in the game-planning aspect as far as breaking down film, stuff like that. Our main goal, no matter what, in the quarterback room with me and Tim is trying to get Deshaun as ready as possible for whatever game, whatever situation that we're in.

It's definitely been a transition for me going from playing to coaching, but it's been awesome so far. You learn so much about the game that you thought you knew before, but you don't.

I try to instill that on Deshaun as much as I can, just kind of the difference of what I thought I knew and what I know now, trying to get him as prepared as possible from week-to-week, whether that's footwork or film or reads or anything. We're all a pretty close-knit group in the quarterback room, and we all help each other out.

Q. What is it like from time to time when you watch

Deshaun take the impossible and make it possible?

TJ YATES: It's very fun to see. We know at some point in every single game Deshaun is going to have one of those moments where he gets us out of a bad situation, he makes an incredible play, incredible throw, where you just kind of have to sit back and enjoy it because that's some stuff you can't coach. And he does a lot of things that I don't think anybody can coach because he's such a remarkable player.

At times it makes it fun to watch, but we try to get him in the best position where he doesn't have to do those amazing plays all the time, try to get him to throw the ball away every once in a while, where he doesn't have to take huge hits from these guys. That's the stuff you don't want to coach out of him because he's special in a way and he can make plays you can't coach.

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