

Houston Texans Media Conference

Friday, January 29, 2021

Houston, Texas, USA

Cal McNair

Nick Caserio

David Culley

Press Conference



CAL MCNAIR: Well, welcome everybody, and thank you for being here with us. Hopefully we can start doing these in person real soon. I just wanted to jump on this meeting because this is an incredibly exciting day for our franchise. We have added a very well respected and experienced member to our Texans family in our new head coach, David Culley.

We met with a lot of terrific candidates throughout the process, but David's vision and ability to bring people together made it obvious to us that he is our guy.

I'll kick it to Nick and David for opening statements, but I just wanted to start off by saying how excited my family is to welcome David and his family to the Houston Texans. Thank you, and go Texans.

NICK CASERIO: Thanks, Cal. Appreciate it. Good afternoon, welcome to everybody for being here. Appreciate you being here today with us.

As Cal mentioned, it's a great day to be a Texan and as the organization introduces David Culley as the next head coach of the Houston Texans.

Before we hear from David, I just want to take a few minutes and thank all the candidates that we visited with, for their cooperation, their time, their efforts throughout this process.

The NFL is littered with numerous great coaches, which we were able to see firsthand organizationally in our interactions, in our calls, with multiple, multiple people. In addition to those we met with one-on-one, there was significant interest around the league from many others, which reflects where we are headed organizationally. In the end, like we always will do, we made a decision that we feel is best for the Houston Texans and that decision led to us David Culley.

A coaching veteran of 43 years, David has been a part of some of the top programs in the NFL over the course of his 27-year NFL career. After a successful career, first in college and then with Tampa Bay and the Pittsburgh Steelers, David's subsequent stops reveal an intentional act by some of the top coaches in the league, coaches like Andy Reid, John Harbaugh, Sean McDermott, in identifying David as a key figure as those coaches put their programs in place. David was a part of Coach Reid's first staff in Philadelphia, which included Steve Spagnuolo, Coach McDermott, Coach Harbaugh, the late Jimmy Johnson, and Ron Rivera, all of whom have had a pretty big impact on the league, and then again, when Andy was named the head coach in Kansas City in 2013.

After four seasons in Kansas City, Sean McDermott hired David in 2017 as Sean worked to put his stamp on the Buffalo Bills.

And finally, what seemed like many years in the making, Coach Harbaugh finally had the opportunity to reunite with David in bringing him to be a part of the Ravens culture and winning organization.

When you listen to people talk about David Culley, there are themes that continually repeat themselves. Themes such as what a special person he is, how much positive energy he emanates, a prime example of an individual that believes in servant leadership, someone who conducts himself in a way that brings out the best in others, and an outstanding communicator and teacher. Perhaps the greatest quality David possesses is his ability to connect with people and the approach with which he motivates them each and every day. And when you spend time with David, which we have over the past few weeks, those qualities shine through very brightly.

It's funny, when we first met with David, we harkened back to -- my first interaction with David was at the scouting combine many, many years ago when I was a young coach who really didn't know much, who was just kind of finding his way, and when you're at the scouting combine, those of you that have seen it, the drills that take place on the field, you know, there's coaches that are involved in that, that are a part of that, right? And David has kind of been the, I would say, senior leader of the receiver group. So when I first started off, he embraced me with open arms, came



over, introduced himself, and he didn't know me, I didn't know him, and he really wasn't looking at anything -- for anything in return. It was just about who he is as a person. And when you sit here years later, nothing has changed, which speaks to who David is as a person.

You might be asking: What are the Houston Texans getting in David Culley? They're getting a great man with a passion and a joy that is singularly focused on getting the best out of people. David defines what it means to be a football coach and he takes great pride in being able to call himself coach. Coaching is ultimately about teaching, communicating, and leading people in any environment, and David Culley epitomizes those qualities to a T.

It's with great pleasure and it gives me great honor to introduce David Culley, head coach of the Houston Texans.

David.

DAVID CULLEY: Thank you, Nick. I appreciate it. If you think I'm excited and happy to be here, just look at my face. Just know this, during this process, after having the pleasure of going into the McNair family's house with Janice, Hannah, and Cal, if you haven't been around these people, you need to want to be around these people. And if you want to know why I'm so interested, was so interested in this job, and why this was so important to me to be a part of this, after going through this process, sitting down with those three, plus Nick, I said, I hope and I pray, if I'm blessed enough to be the head coach of the Houston Texans, this would be as good as anything that I could have ever asked for in my profession and what I do.

And it is an honor, it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of this organization because of this family. And not only by what they mean and what they do with this organization, but with what the Houstonians here understand about this family and what they mean to this community. And I can't tell you how happy I am to be here. And there's been a number of people that have had a big influence on me through this process. It's why I'm here today. And Nick has mentioned some of those people, and there are more. I would be here all day talking to you about the people that have helped me along my journey here. But all I want to say is that I am so happy and honored to be the head coach of the Houston Texans here in Houston.

NICK CASERIO: So before we take some questions, which I'm sure there's a few out there, I just want to address a couple things here quickly before we get started.

So organizationally, just want to reiterate our commitment to Deshaun Watson. He's had a great impact on this

organization, a great impact on a lot of people, a great impact on this team, and we look forward to the opportunity to spend more time with him here this spring once we get started. And we have zero interest in trading the player. We have a great plan, a great vision for him and for this team and his role on our team, and we look forward opportunity to spend more time with him here this spring.

So we'll take some questions, David and I will take some questions, and we'll go from there.

Q. First question is for Nick. Nick, how do you and David plan to salvage the relationship with Watson? And has anybody actually communicated with him yet?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would say, you know, when we talked about this a few weeks ago, the best way that you handle relationships is to communicate and be honest and be forthright, and we're going to do that with everybody that's in this building, from equipment to training staff to coaching staff to personnel to players. And this is kind of the initial stages of our program. This is the first day for David, and we're going to spend a lot of time together here, obviously, over the next few days and there's a number of things that we're going to address and that we're going to tackle.

I would say in the interim, staff construction will be at the forefront of that. So like anything, it's going to be through hard work, it's going to be through honest communication, and we're going to do the right thing by people because that's what we believe in.

Q. Nick, you talked about this decision you have to make with Deshaun Watson. Do you feel any pressure at all to make sure you get this right and kind of maybe one of your biggest decisions you'll have to make at the start of this job?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, great question. I would say, when you're in a position, organizationally, there's a million decisions you have to make on a daily basis. So is there going to be a number of things that come up? I would say today, moving forward, I think one thing that's pretty consistent when you look at the NFL, and especially where we are, kind of organizationally, there's a lot of transition that's taking place from front office to coaching staff, and there's going to be some player decisions that we're going to have to make. So I think right now we're just going to take it one day at a time, focus on what we can control and what we can handle. Today, the day is about David, and once we get through here today with David, the next thing we'll turn to is staff construction and we're going to spend as much time as possible on that and what the vision is for

the team and what the staff has in mind as well. So we're just going to take it one day at a time and just try to make good decisions one day at a time and do what we think is best for the organization.

Q. The question is for Nick. Nick, what's your sense for the team's reputation around the league among players, coaches, and front offices? And has it changed at all, your perception of the Texans reputation, since you got the job, and do you anticipate any of that being, making it difficult for you to do your job?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, quite frankly, there's been a lot of people, going back to a few weeks ago when I took the job, how excited they were, how they looked at it as a great opportunity. I would just say this, having been in the building two and a half weeks, you know, there's a lot of great people in this place. We're excited to get started. And there's going to be a lot of new people that are going to be in the building.

I think the most important thing for us is to do what we believe in, do what we think is right, and it's a great opportunity. Again, like, I think David and I, and David articulated this, I think we're both very fortunate to be in the position that we're in, and we have a lot of respect for a lot of people throughout the course of the league, and I think they have a lot of respect for what we're trying to do as well. I think that has come through into the conversations that we have had over the last few weeks.

So again, this is about excitement. You can see David personality. It's about joy, it's about excitement, it's about honesty. And believe me, there's a lot worse things that could probably, that are happening in the world and we're going to approach this one day at a time and, again, control the things that we can control because that's the most important thing. That's all we can do. If we're the best version of ourselves each day, then I don't think anybody can question that.

Q. Congratulations on the job, David.

DAVID CULLEY: Thank you.

Q. I wanted to ask you about some stories from your past, being recruited by Bill Parcells, the time you spent with John Harbaugh and just, and Andy Reid and coaching players like Terrell Owens, and just if you could touch on some of those situations and just kind of your philosophy in all of those relationships and things you learned from those guys.

DAVID CULLEY: Well, the first thing, I'm going to go back

to the recruiting and, I mean, I'm going way back, is when Coach Parcells came into recruit me, again, I was being recruited at Vanderbilt University at the time. He had just come in to become the defense coordinator. Steve Sloan was the head coach. And I can remember the first time I met him. I met him at the Holidome. I don't know if they still have Holidomes anymore. And I remember coming and sitting down and talking with him, and I knew then, when I sat down and started talking with him, I felt like, at that time as an 18-year-old, there's something special about this guy. And to move forward with that, obviously, I saw the right things as an athlete in knowing that this guy was an excellent football coach and a teacher, and he convinced me that I wanted to be part of that.

But before he convinced me that I wanted to be a part of that, he end up giving me a nickname and he nicknamed me Double Cross. And don't take this the wrong way, he ended up giving me the nickname Double Cross simply because at that time, back in the 1972, 1973 when this is all going process, you could sign with two or three different conferences as long as it wasn't on the National Letter Day, if you all remember that. These kids today have no idea about that.

But at that point, I ended up signing, if I remember correctly, it was Middle Tennessee State University doing what they call the Letter of Intent Day. Well, when you sign, when did you that, that just meant that you were a part of -- that conference couldn't recruit you no more. Well, I just remember once I signed with them, I ended up getting a phone call later from Coach Parcells and he just said to me, David, I thought we had a situation where that, you know, you were going to be a Vanderbilt Commodores. I says, Coach, I am. I do understand the rules. I have signed with Middle Tennessee State University. I thought at that time that was the best thing for me, but when it gets down to the end, if you are what you say you are to me, which I believe you are, I'm going to be a Vanderbilt Commodores.

So at that time when I said that, well, he says, You know what? You just double-crossed Middle Tennessee State University. So at that point, that name has stuck with me, so every conversation I've had with Coach Parcells when I talk to him, he always, first thing he says to me, is Double Cross. I says, Coach, that's been 30 years ago. I don't do that anymore. I says, My word is my word now.

But that was my first interaction with him, but obviously everybody knows his career, his Hall of Fame career. I knew back then at that time that this guy was special and obviously if you go through his career now, you see that that's what it was. And you know what? That's something I wanted to be. I felt like that I wanted to be something like

that. And as I played for him and that team, I really began to understand what that was all about. And that's led me, right now, to why I'm here today, is simply because there was some teaching, there was some learning there that I carried with me as a player that when I got into this business as a coach, and why did I get into this business? I got into this business because when I went to college, my only goal when I went to college was, first, I wanted to get a degree, all right? The second thing was, when I got that degree, my goal was to come back to White County High School in Sparta, Tennessee, and be an assistant coach for the guy that coached me, and that's Dee Harris. And I said that's always been my goal.

Now, that's been a long time ago, but I still tell people to this day every time I go back home, One day I still may coach at White County High School. I may be 80 years old when I do, but I still may coach at White County High School. And if I do, I don't need to be the head coach. I just want to coach simply because of back when I was in Sparta, Tennessee, everything I am today has come from that town, those people. And, you know, you always hear, it takes a village to raise someone. I'm a perfect example of that and that happened for me back in Sparta, Tennessee.

So at this point, I've carried that with me and I've carried that with every job I had. And I basically, from that, basically became a teacher. I, my job happens to be teacher. I just happen to coach football. But here's the thing about that when I say about a job. I've been in this business 43 years. I do not consider what I do a job. This is a passion for me. So the only job I've ever had, I had a job when I was at Vanderbilt during the summer. I worked for North American Van Lines moving people, and I wasn't very good at it when I did it. So at this point, I realized what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do and then I've gotten to this point right now because of those lessons that I've learned there. And as I moved across this profession, Nick just mentioned some guys that have been very influential with me during this business, I was very fortunate that in 1999 to become a part of Andy Reid's staff. I was very fortunate to be able to move with him to Kansas City. From there, I was able to go on and move to Buffalo with Sean McDermott, and then from there with John Harbaugh. You say, okay, moving, you don't, I actually spent 18 years with Andy.

But at some point, I said to myself, there's something about what we do here. And what I found was, there was a consistency and there was a trust that he had and all those people that Nick mentioned earlier they had, that allowed their franchises to be successful. And as you look today, the common thread with all of that is there as I've gone through that process from Kansas City, to Buffalo, to

Baltimore. And as everybody knows, it works, and that's who I am. And that's who I am. And that same thing, I'm bringing here to the Houston Texans because I know it works, and it's going to work here with us.

NICK CASERIO: I think we might have a new sponsor, North American Van Lines. Get them on the phone. (Laughing.)

Q. How did you get the news, where were you when you got the news that you were the head coach? And what was the process like? What did you do? How did you deal with it with your emotions?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, I'm a big boxing fan, a huge boxing fan, and I've followed boxing my whole life. I actually have a passion for that. And I can remember, I had had some meetings with the McNairs, very good meetings. Coming out of those meetings, I didn't feel one way or the other, I just felt like when I came out of those meetings was, I says, if I'm fortunate enough and blessed enough to be a part of this organization right here, then everything that I've ever worked for during my career would be, right now, the epitome of why I have been doing what I have been doing.

Now, that night we had some other conversations again with Nick and we sat down and we started talking and we said we'll get back together. We were in a room. I was sitting there, and this is why I almost went down, and I use the reference of boxing, is because I felt like somebody hit me with a right hook, you know, and the way it happened was, Nick was on the phone, he made a Facetime call, he made, I didn't know who he was calling. He called Cal, and all of a sudden he says, Here. He gave me the phone. He gave me the phone and Mr. McNair said to me, he says, David, how would you like to be the head football coach of the Houston Texans? Well, I almost at that point, I was standing and I was by a rail, I almost went down, but I caught the rail before I went down. And never in this profession and in my career have I been more excited and felt so good about my journey to this point when he told me he wanted me to do that. And after sitting in and visiting with that family, I said, I am at the right place at this point in my life where I need to be and where I want to be with my family.

Q. There's obviously a lot of talk about Deshaun Watson and his future, and I know you have, you're just joining this team. I'm just curious, during all these negotiations, were you aware or were you informed that Deshaun had put in a trade request, and if so, how did that factor in to your decision to take this job?

DAVID CULLEY: The only thing I knew about this whole situation at that point was is that I was being interviewed

for this job to be the head coach. And I did know at that point Deshaun Watson's a Houston Texan. He's the quarterback of the Houston Texans. And that's all that I was concerned about, and that's all I knew. And whatever has been said about what was, what he wanted to do or he didn't want to do, all I knew is this, having been in this business this long, he is a Houston Texan and I want him to be a Houston Texan. And the reason I'm in this position today is because I knew he's going to be a Houston Texan. And so that, the outside stuff that was being said was irrelevant to me because the most important thing to me is that, at that time, was figuring out what can I do, after talking with Nick and this family, to become the head coach of the Houston Texans.

Q. Nick, I'm wondering, I know you obviously are hopeful that Deshaun is, you have your position on that, but is there a time line in which you feel you need to have a commitment or just feel firm one way or the other about things? Do you feel like you need to know before the draft where you stand with him as this whole saga unfolds?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, our timeline is, we're a one-day-at-a-time organization, and we're all about work, and we're all about doing the best thing -- whatever we can do to maximize that day, that's what we're focused on. So anything beyond that, like, we're only granted one day, right, we only get one Friday. We have one Friday today. We're going to try to take advantage and make it the best Friday possible and we'll deal with tomorrow tomorrow. So that's where our focus is and that's where the commitment's going to remain.

Q. Nick and David, when you guys say that Deshaun is a, he's the Houston Texans quarterback, now, you know the issues right now with him and the issues he has with what's going on. Do you appreciate with how that sounds when, it kind of makes it seem like you're saying, he has no choice but to be a Houston Texan, and how that might play out. I mean, that doesn't sound like a happy marriage for a guy who is supposed to be the face of the franchise.

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, again, kind of what I mentioned earlier, we're focused on putting the best team together possible for the Houston Texans and there's a multitude of things that are going to take place here today, tomorrow, this off-season. And again, we'll control the things that we can control and focus on maximizing each day. Again, I think the next thing for us is to work through some of the staff construction, which David and I have already had some discussions on that. And I think once we have the staff in place, we're going to -- their staff -- the staff's going to have an opportunity to go through our team and

evaluate our team. There will be decisions that we have to make on some different areas and different things relative to start of the off-season, which is March 18th or whenever it is.

So again, the most important thing is for us to just take it one day at a time. David and I have had a lot of discussions about a lot of different things. We'll continue to have discussions. And again, our focus is trying to do what we always feel is right for the Houston Texans, which that's what David believes in and that's what I believe in.

Q. David, welcome to Houston.

DAVID CULLEY: Thank you. Glad to be here.

Q. Do you take this job believing that this is a rebuilding situation or do you take this job as the head coach of the Texans believing that you can make changes and make this into a contending team quickly?

DAVID CULLEY: I took this job simply because there's 32 of these in this league. And it is a pleasure, it is a privilege, it is an honor to be the head coach of one of these franchises. And I happen to have that opportunity to do that now.

And again, obviously I'm here simply because this is a bottom-line business and regardless of what had happened in the past, I've been put in a situation here to be the head coach of this football team.

Our goal, every team's goal in this league is to win a Super Bowl. Every year. Every team thinks that that can happen every year, regardless of what happened the year before, it's always the goal.

And that's always the goal that we'll have when everybody walks through that door, when everybody in the building, everybody here, that's our one goal.

And when the season is over, you start over. You evaluate, you look at things, you see what you need to do to be able to get better. And that's what Nick and this staff and everybody we have here is going to do during this process.

I look at it as a way as, this is a new year, this is a new start and what we're getting ready to do now will have nothing to do with what happened in the past as we're going forward right now to do the things that we need to do to be the best franchise that we can be and go and try to accomplish those goals. And I still like that this franchise has the inner workings to do that and that's why I'm here.

Q. I wonder how you feel about where the NFL is at as far as minority hiring and the top positions, considering only two of the seven open positions this off-season were filled by minority candidates?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, my feeling is, is that I'm one of those and I'm the head coach here for a reason. And I don't feel like I'm the head coach here at the Houston Texans because I'm a minority, I feel like I'm the head coach here with the Houston Texans because the McNair family and Nick, with a collaborative effort felt like I was the best guy for the job.

What does that mean? That means that David Culley was the best hire for this job for this family and this franchise, who just happens to be African American. And that's how I look at that. And that's how I look at it all the way across the league.

Do we need to have that to happen more? Yes. And it's happening. And it's happening. And I feel like, again, that's not why I'm here, I'm here simply because they felt like I'm the best fit for this organization.

And for all that you have been reading about with the minority hires and those kinds of things, throughout the league, I think the league is doing a great job. I think the franchises and everybody is doing a wonderful job of trying to get that to happen.

Hey, it didn't happen. It didn't happen. But all I know is it happened for me. But I know it didn't happen for that reason. And I know that the league is doing everything that they can and everybody involved to make that happen.

But, again, understand, I got this job simply because I was the best football coach that they wanted in this situation and I happen to be African American, I'm proud of that, I'm happy for that, and I hope, if me getting this job because of that reason allows other teams to in this league to see that, with all the other African American head coaches that are in this business right now, then so be it. And I'm part of that and I'm for that.

Q. Going to miss you in Baltimore.

DAVID CULLEY: Well thank you. I'm going to miss that too.

Q. Just wondering, a couple weeks ago -- two questions, a couple weeks ago John Harbaugh gave you a ringing endorsement, saying that any team that would want a head coach would be crazy not to take look at you. What did that mean to you. And number

two, you kind of answered it before, but as enthusiastic as you are to get this job, there's been a lot of talk about, is he young enough, he's never been a coordinator. So, one I want to talk about what John Harbaugh's endorsement meant to you, and two, what do you say to the naysayers who seemingly don't think like, for whatever reason, you're not ready for this challenge?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, I don't know anything about naysayers, simply because I don't deal with naysayers. I deal with the people inside the building where I'm at, I deal in the league with the people that are in this league that understand what it's all about.

I'm very fortunate to have had the opportunity to come to the Baltimore Ravens with John Harbaugh, knowing the kind of human being he is, the kind of coach that he is, going back to his family -- I knew his daddy before I knew him. I coached against Jim.

Now I know I'm telling you all this kind of stuff now you know that where I'm at and how long I've been in this league. Well, again, and then I worked with John for seven years in Philadelphia. I know what he was all about.

And again, when he left us to go to Baltimore Ravens to be the head coach there, obviously his record speaks for itself. He's one of the top guys in this league. When he asked me to come with him the one thing that I love about John Harbaugh is -- and I've taken this with me -- is the honesty is so there with him in everything that he does and whether he's dealing with a player, whether he's dealing with a coach, whether he's dealing with you all. You may not like what you hear, but what you get is you get the honesty.

And you know what? I've got that, I've learned that, I appreciate that and that's what I'm all about and that's why I'm glad to be there and I appreciate him for being that for me.

Q. On behalf of the Texans season ticket holders, my question is, last season was tough and there's been a lot of talk circulating around the Texans recently. The fan base would like to hear some positive news. What are a few optimistic reasons why you are excited about our future?

DAVID CULLEY: Well first of all let me go back to why I'm here. The McNair family. That's the first thing.

The second thing is why I feel that way is the general manager here, Nick. Been there, done that. I've known Nick for 20 years. He knows what it's all about in this

league.

We know it's a bottom line business, we know it's about winning. When the McNair family brought Nick in to be the general manager of this organization, I knew then that anybody that was in the position that to be the head coach of the Houston Texans was going to have an opportunity to do the things that I just mentioned earlier about our goals, about winning a Super Bowl being your first goal.

But to win a Super Bowl you got to win your division, you got to win your next game. And I can assure you that right now with me being here, with what's in place with this family and Nick and everybody involved in this organization, we're going to do everything possible every day I walk in this building, every day you walk out of this building, it's going to be about and it's going to be for the Houston Texans.

And if you can't get excited about that and you don't believe that right there, we will show you.

NICK CASERIO: And I would just say, Melissa, I don't know how you can't be excited when you listen to this man talk. So his energy, his joy, his juice, his pride. It all starts there. It all starts with David, who he is as a person, and that's going to permeate the rest of the organization and that's why he's here.

So if you can't get excited listening to him then you probably need to get some coffee to get a little bit more juice, or some 5-hour Energy or something to get you going.

DAVID CULLEY: You see that smile you got now? That smile you got right now? That's what we're going to do for you. Keep that smile. And believing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....

