

Houston Texans Media Conference

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David Culley

Press Conference



Q. Hi, David. When you met with Deshaun Watson, what did you learn from that conversation, and I was wondering if you could kind of take us through that.

DAVID CULLEY: Well, any conversations that we have with any of our players are always private conversations, and those conversations that we have, basically, we keep between us and the player. Not just with him, but with all the other players that I have talked to the same way.

Q. David, when a player submits a trade request, how do you guys handle that? Because, obviously, you want everyone to be all in and excited about playing for you guys. So how do you handle when a player does request a trade like Deshaun Watson, and make that known how he feels?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, that's just something that you'd have to talk to Nick about. I'm here to coach the football team. Those kind of situations, I revert to Nick.

Q. David, when we talked to you last time, you were adamant about Watson being the quarterback. Do you feel strongly still that he will be your quarterback? And what about the quarterbacks behind him right now? What are your plans?

DAVID CULLEY: We are very committed to Deshaun as our quarterback. He is our quarterback. He's the only guy we've got under contract at this time right now. Nick and our personnel department are in the process of looking at other guys out there right now, and we're going through that process daily, and we'll continue to do that.

Q. DeShaun's trade request has obviously kind of created somewhat of a negative perception around this team. I'm just wondering what would be your pitch to a free agent or any player as to why this is a team they should play for given everything that's been circulating around the team recently?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, I'm not really sure about whatever is circling around outside the team. All I know is what's

inside the team, and it's very positive. It's been positive since I've been here, and everybody that walks through this building feels that same positivity, and any free agents that we bring in, that we have brought in, feel the same way about that, and we feel really good about that.

Q. What do you view as some of the biggest needs for your team as you enter free agency?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, you know what, each year the team changes, and at that point, we look at everybody from top to bottom. We look at all positions. You always want to upgrade those positions. Basically, the reason you want to do that is to create competition. Competition makes everybody better, and you're always trying to do that through free agency. You do that through the draft, and that's a yearly thing, and that's something that we're trying to do right now.

Q. David, I know you just said that the Texans are committed to Deshaun, which is obviously understandable, but do you believe that you can still get him to change his mind? He's never, for months now, ever said that he wants to play for the Texans. So fans really still don't understand what's going on. The media doesn't really understand what's going on, other not that the frustration. Does the organization believe that you can get him to change his mind?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, it's not a matter of me trying to change anybody's mind. As I said before, right now we're committed to him. He's a Houston Texan, and we're going to move forward with that.

Q. But if he doesn't want to be a Houston Texan, how does the situation get resolved?

DAVID CULLEY: I don't know about him not wanting to be a Houston Texan but what I hear from the outside. I just know that he's a Houston Texan. He's ours. We're committed to him, and we're going to go with that.

Q. David, if you don't mind me changing the subject, how important was it to you, and what does it mean to you to have Romeo Crennel on the staff and as a resource?

DAVID CULLEY: Obviously, he's been on football teams



that's been multi-Super Bowl winners, two different football teams. He's got a wealth of experience. He's been a head coach. He's a guy that I have the utmost confidence in, and he's kind of been a mentor to me throughout my career in the NFL.

Again, Romeo was a guy that, when I was a senior in high school, recruited me out of high school. So I go way back with Romeo and have followed his career, and as my career has gone up, I've talked to him many, many times, and I'm so elated to be able to have him here with us to be able to bounce things off of him.

Q. Hey, David, a franchise quarterback is the hardest thing maybe in all of sports to get. You guys have an elite franchise quarterback, and he apparently wants out. What does your contingency plan become as head coach if training camp comes around and he's not showing up?

DAVID CULLEY: As of right now, there is no contingency plan from the standpoint of he's a Houston Texan, and basically that's how we're moving forward with it. We're committed to him, as I said before.

Q. I just have a question. Jack Easterby worked very closely with Bill O'Brien when he was head coach and became interim GM. How closely is he working with you now that you're the head coach? And when you and Nick talk personnel, how involved is Jack?

DAVID CULLEY: Nick is the general manager. I'm the head coach. Jack is vice president of football operations, which involves a bunch of things. It involves scheduling. It involves logistics around the building. It involves a bunch of things that go on here that he does a wonderful job of doing, and basically it's a multitude of responsibilities.

Q. But as far as towards personnel?

DAVID CULLEY: General manager is Nick. Nick handles all personnel.

Q. Hey, Coach, are you trading Deshaun Watson?

DAVID CULLEY: Deshaun Watson is a Houston Texan, and we're committed to him.

Q. Coach Culley, how do you guys create an identity around the team and a vision for the team without knowing for sure who the quarterback -- if you don't know for sure who the quarterback is going to be in 2020?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, that's something that we would

deal with it if we ever got in that situation. We're not in that situation right now, and if that situation ever came up, we'd deal with that situation when we got to that point.

Q. Coach, I want to ask you, has your level of enthusiasm changed at all now that you've been in the building for a month or so? And also, every coach I've ever known had a wish list, or his dream list of the staff that he was going to put together if he ever got the opportunity that you have. How many of those people on your list made your coaching staff, and what do you think of your staff in general?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, the first thing about my enthusiasm, it's gone through the roof right now. It's gone up even more. If you saw me before then, you see me now and you hear me now, you'll see it's gone through the roof and it's getting higher and higher every day as I get excited about this football team and where we're headed.

As far as the coaching staff, I've been very excited about the guys that are on our staff right now. I've been very fortunate. I've got teachers. We've got guys that have the same vision that we have here as far as moving forward and teaching and coaching, and I couldn't be more excited about that.

Q. Hi, Coach. What are your expectations for some of the second year rookies? Obviously, last year was such a weird off-season. Guys like Jonathan Greenard and Ross Blacklock, they got playing time as the season went on. Now with a new coaching staff, maybe a new scheme, what are your expectations for them, and how do you manage that transition for those guys?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, we're evaluating the roster right now. We're evaluating everybody. We have the same expectations for all those guys is to be better than they were before, and we expect the same thing out of all of those guys, not just the rookies.

Q. Coach Culley, you've said repeatedly the team is committed to Deshaun Watson. Is he committed to you and the team?

DAVID CULLEY: Yes, he is.

Q. How do you know that?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, he's a Houston Texan, and, again, I know that I feel like, with the commitment we've made to him, I feel like that same commitment will be there with us also moving forward.

Q. Coach, you've been through the process of scouting and drafting when you were with your other teams, but now the responsibility is on you as a head coach. What goes into that, and how excited are you to be a part of that process?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, again, Nick and our personnel department handles all of that, and we all work together during that process. I couldn't be more happy than to be able to be where I'm at right now in that particular situation with experiencing everything that Nick has had and his staff has been doing. We're working on that right now. We're moving forward with it at this point, and it's been very exciting and continuing to look forward and move on with that.

Q. Coach, I know earlier you said that you haven't heard a lot of the noise going on around, but it's been pretty loud. I'm just curious with the quarterback situation, everything set up, do you feel like you have been put in a place, in a position to succeed here as the coach?

DAVID CULLEY: Without a doubt, 100 percent in a situation to be able to succeed. When the McNair family hired me, knowing that Nick was here, and part of that process is -- I mean, I couldn't be in a better place to be able to be successful going through my first time than what I am right here.

Q. Hi, David, I was wondering if you could maybe characterize the offense you envision. I know certainly you have the same offensive coordinator in Tim Kelly. Will it be basically that same offense that Tim ran before? Or what do you envision moving forward?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, we envision it being an offense, first of all, in all offenses in this league, first and foremost, you want to make sure you're a turnover-free type offense. Tim did a nice job with this football team last year offensively. As an offensive staff here, it will be a collaboration of direction that we go in, and that direction will determine on our personnel, and we're going to do what we feel like is best for our personnel, and I felt like last year that Tim did a great job of doing that. Foresee that moving forward.

Q. David, you can't turn around a team in one off-season. What are two or three things that you think are the most important for turning around a team that you might be able to accomplish in one off-season?

DAVID CULLEY: Well, the thing is competition. You know, competition. Getting players in here because the team changes each year, and when the team changes, you

know, you go out and look for people to bring in for competition to be able to make it better. I feel like right now, with what we're doing, what Nick and our personnel staff is doing with free agency and with the draft coming up, that that's the best way and the quickest way to be able to get things moving in the direction that you want to do is creating competition. That's why we're bringing in the people that we're bringing in, and that's why we're evaluating the people that we're evaluating.

Q. David, what are you able to do right now in terms of trying to get your message out to all the players on your roster, who you can't see on a daily basis, who aren't working there? Like you recently signed a free agent Britt, and he talked about what it meant to get a chance to talk to you. What are you doing right now to get your message to the other players on the roster?

DAVID CULLEY: Right now because of the NFL rules about not knowing about what the off-season is going to be like, the players that are currently on our team right now, we have limited conversations from that standpoint and what you can and cannot say. But guys that are free agents out there that we've had in to visit, we have the conversation. We tell them our vision of what we want and where we're headed, and basically those guys have been very receptive to that, and each one that we end up talking to, basically, we give them that vision and give them where we're headed, and we take it from there.

Q. You guys are bringing back David Johnson. I'm wondering, based on what you kind of watched from last season in evaluating that, what you think you can do to put him in a better position to succeed this year?

DAVID CULLEY: He's been a very productive player here, and that's why he's still here. Obviously, he's a very versatile player. He's very good of not only just running the football, but also catching the football in the backfield. We feel like Tim and our offensive staff will put him in position to be successful to keep doing those things.

Q. Hey, David, when you walk into work every day, from the cap to the culture to the roster to Deshaun Watson, what is your number one priority, the thing that you want to get done the most before this season starts?

DAVID CULLEY: To make sure that everybody in this building has got the same vision that I have for this football team, and every day, when I leave this building and when I walk into this building, that's the one thing that we make sure that's happening is that everybody's going in the same direction, and I see that happening from top to bottom.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit more about what that vision is.

DAVID CULLEY: Well, that vision is that everybody in this building knows that we all have to be on the same page, we all have to believe in what we're doing. That right there, that belief will end up carrying us through anything that comes up, whatever adversity comes up, we are going to deal with it in the same way. We're all going to deal with it the same way. And when everybody's going in the same direction, when those things happen, then you're able to move forward a lot quicker.

Q. Coach, you talk about competition and the way you're looking at the roster. Jon Weeks, the most important part of his job was he's been flawless at, could you explain why he's no longer a part of the team.

DAVID CULLEY: Again, we look at our roster from top to bottom, and we have to make decisions. When Nick makes decisions, we always make decisions what's best for the football team, and then we go from there. All those decisions are always based on what's best for the football team.

Q. Quick two-parter here. Whose idea was it to pursue Lovie Smith and to retain Tim Kelly as the coordinators? Also, you mentioned David Johnson earlier. Schematically, are there changes in the running game considering the Texans running game struggled last year, that you guys think you can make to the running game as a whole to be a little bit more successful?

DAVID CULLEY: The first thing is with Lovie, obviously, Lovie is someone who's had a great track record in this league. He's someone that he's been a head coach. He's had a great track record as a defensive coordinator. He's someone that I've known for a long time, and being able to get him here was very, very important simply because I felt like he's the kind of guy that you want to be able to have on your team to be able to have success. That was the reason that he was here, and we're very fortunate to be able to have him here.

The same thing with you mentioned too about David. I mean, David's a good football player, and he'll be a part of what we're doing right here offensively, and we felt like he fits, and that's why he's still here.

Q. Coach, how important was it -- sticking with the assistant coaches, how important was it to get a guy like Pep Hamilton to potentially work with Deshaun Watson and be a part of your offensive scheme?

DAVID CULLEY: He has a world of experience. I've known Pep a long time. You've seen what he's done. His track record coaching quarterbacks, whether it's been in Indianapolis or whether it's been this past year with the Chargers. I mean, he's done a tremendous job. He's got a world of experience. I was very fortunate to get him, and I'm glad to have him, and looking forward to him doing the same thing, having success here that he's had every place else he's been.

Q. Coach, unfortunately, we're seeing this week so many veterans with big contracts getting cut, and I'm sure you guys are going to probably have to make some moves too to help yourself with the cap situation. Should we expect guys like Whitney Mercilus to maybe perhaps be waived to make some room?

DAVID CULLEY: You know, that's something I refer to Nick. Nick would be able to take care of that one for you.

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