

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Nick Caserio

Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: First off, just wanted to say thank you to a lot of different people, organizationally, our scouting staff, our coaching staff, the support staff, the selflessness that they all displayed. This is a team effort. It's a collective effort. There's a lot of people that are involved, and I would say when you look at the people that are in this building, start with Coach Culley, we talked last night about what we're trying to do with our program in terms of finding people that aren't afraid of competition, that are selfless and are tough.

And I would say when you see what David Culley has had to endure here over the past I would say week and however many days, he just found out today that his father passed away, he was 94 years old, which he was a huge part of his life. I know he'd expressed those sentiments a few weeks back when he was hired as a head coach here. He had the opportunity to go back home and see his father and how grateful he was for that opportunity.

But again, even in the face of I would say adversity that he's gone through over the last few days with his father, and then he also lost his high school coach who was a massive influence in his life.

To think about the things that he's had to deal with over the last week, and then to see his joy and to see his attitude speaks to the selflessness of him and the selflessness of this program, which embodies and encompasses the things that we're trying to do. I think thoughts and prayers are appropriate to David and his family at this time. I know he certainly would be appreciative of that, but you really wouldn't know how much he's hurting just based on how he's handled everything, which is with grace, humility and dignity and selflessness, and add to that really quite frankly permeated the building on a day-to-day basis.

In addition to David, I think secondly, just thankful for the scouting staff, the coaching staff, for their effort, for the time that they put into this.

Again, scouting the draft in and of itself, it's a year-long process. It's not about three days, it's not about one

particular weekend. It's a culmination of a lot of different I would say hours and time, and there's a vast number of things that people are responsible for to kind of get to this end point, and again, this is an opportunity for us to build our team, and we're going to continue to work through the team-building process as we go here through the spring and the fall.

But just really a huge thank you and a tip of the cap to the entire organization from a football operations standpoint because none of this would be really possible without their time and selfless efforts.

With that, we'll take some questions and go from there.

Q. You traded up to 174 when I think 161 was still on the clock and then you traded to 170. Can you walk us through what happened there and why you did that?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, sure, absolutely. We talked a little bit about this last night. This draft today was probably going to be more about maneuvering around, and it's relative to the supply and demand of players that you're looking at and how they're graded and what those opportunities are going to look like and when are you going to pick those players, who are you actually going to pick.

Again, it was really more about positioning more than anything else. Again, when you make a move, whether it's four spots or whether you make a trade at however many spots, everybody looks at it and says, wow, they moved up five spots or they moved up to get this player, when more than anything it's just about sort of repositioning relative to what the inventory of players was that we were looking at.

I think going into this, I think as we sat last night and then again this morning, the expectation was we probably wouldn't use all five picks just because of how they were positioned, so I mean, I'd say we were actively just trying to look at maneuvering around and trying to see if we could put ourselves in the position that we felt we could actually pick a player that we liked as opposed to just picking a player for another reason just to pick a player.

Q. Leading into this draft, it seemed like -- I saw kind of two arguments. One was the lack of normal college season maybe led to quality players kind of slipping down, or other teams kind of thinking they should punt

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some of those picks into future years when they have more information next year. What was your philosophy on that given you did make three trades up in this draft but obviously didn't pick some of those later picks?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, again, it goes back to just positioning and just looking at the volume and the quality of the players and the supply and demand. I think that's kind of a convenient probably excuse about next year's draft. It will be a little cleaner than this year's draft. Again, I don't subscribe to that theory. I don't think that's necessarily accurate or true. Again, you have to look at your team, you have to look at the information you have, look at your roster and then just try to make decisions accordingly based on that information, which that's what really we tried to do.

Q. You talked last night about not wanting to go into a pick with a position in mind. When you go into the undrafted free agency process, does your mindset change, and how does that process work for you?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, that's a really good question. Really what you have to do is you have to look at how your team is currently positioned and then look at it from a sheer numbers standpoint relative to how the roster is constructed.

Quite frankly the undrafted process is a little bit more position specific just relative to what your needs are because a lot of those players you're looking to add for depth or whatever the case may be, and if you have X amount of players at one position, okay, if you add a player at that position, are you adding a player that's necessarily better than what you have? Is this performance commensurate with that?

Again, you actually can be a little bit more strategic, and you've actually probably looked at it and tried to target some specific players. I would say in this particular instance this year our volume is going to be probably pretty low, so again, it's really more about looking at your numbers, looking at your roster, and then just trying to fill it accordingly.

It is, it's kind of you shift your mindset and it becomes a little -- I know it's kind of counterintuitive. You spend all this time about the draft picks, and then you get to the undrafted part and you're actually a little bit more targeted, a little bit more specific, but I'd say that's probably the case for those teams.

Q. Did you go into the draft thinking there was a possibility you could make some deals to trade up

because you had signed 37 players or traded for them, given you the luxury of not needing a bunch of picks?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, again, it goes back to a cost benefit analysis, so however your team is positioned, then you react accordingly. So we went into it with 78, 79 players, we had eight picks, most of them were a little bit later. If we had signed less players, again, in order to move up in the draft, there's a cost associated with that. So you're giving up -- whatever the asset is that you're giving up, it's A, who's that for, and what are you giving up in return.

Again, when you look at today, it was really more about positioning, really didn't give anything else, and going back to yesterday, again, it was really about positioning other than we added the additional fourth-round pick next year.

Again, whenever you trade up for a player to move up, A, it's how big is the move, how far are you going and then at what cost. I mean, that's what you have to weigh.

Q. What did you guys pre-draft think about the quality of the defensive side versus the offensive side of the ball?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, it's a good question. I would say certain positions probably had a little bit more depth than others, and again, it's about supply and demand, right, so I mean, everybody was looking at the same I would say players, how you evaluate those players and grade those players. It's 32 different draft rooms. It's not the same system. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder a little bit to some degree, and what you're doing and does a player fit some of the things that you're doing.

To your question, were there defensive players that we looked at and earmarked? Absolutely. We had the opportunity to get them, it didn't manifest itself, so again, is that defensive player relative to the offensive player, okay, how are those players graded, what's the value, and then again, what's the role relative to the value, and then again, you just want to try to weigh all the factors equally and then ultimately make a decision.

Again, to your question, do you go into a draft and say we're going to draft this side of the ball versus that side of the ball, no, that's not how it works. It might look like that on the surface, but that's really -- I can't see in the crystal ball any better than anybody else, so you just kind of work through it, you look at the information and you process it and then you make a decision and you move on.

Q. When we talked to you earlier in the off-season, I think it was about free agency, you referenced an

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analogy May was trying to hit some singles and doubles and put the team together. Is that sort of the same mentality in the draft or especially with limited picks are you trying to hit a home run?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think you're trying to maximize your opportunities, whatever they are, and you don't know how it's going to turn out. I would say in free agency to a certain extent you had a little bit more known commodity and looking back at where we were in March from a cost standpoint, we didn't have unlimited resources that were available to us, right, so again, cost of a player relative to something else, so for every X player you sign, you're going to, okay, won't be able to add three or four -- so again, you have to look at that position, so there's some financial components to it. You know, and you're looking at I would say more known commodities because at least you've seen them play.

When you get to the draft, none of these players have seen an NFL field before, an NFL snap. So you're projecting them. That's what the draft is; it's projection, and you just have to try to make a decision about what you think the player is going to be. Sometimes it's the player turns out the way you think, and other times he doesn't for a myriad of reasons, and that's the draft.

Q. With the numbers of players you have on your roster, is signing the undrafted free agent crop going to be smaller this year than it normally would, or would you maneuver around to make it larger if need be?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, that's a good question. I would say more than likely it'll probably be smaller, just relative to our numbers. Again, we had to start yesterday, right, 78, so we drafted five, so there's 83, so you have call it seven spots. So however many you sign.

Again, if you sign a few, then you have some open roster spots, which might not be a bad thing because there might be some transactions that take place here league-wide, given what teams have done draft-wise, right, so players that may be drafted at a position, maybe that opens up inventory at that position, so player gets waived or is on a waiver wire or maybe that player is available in trade, so actually having some wiggle room there a little bit with maybe three or four spots might give you the opportunity to add somebody that maybe you weren't even thinking about.

Try to just give ourselves as much flexibility as possible. I think we'll have more information specifically about our players once we actually get to see them a little bit more on the field and then we can assess that information.

Again, you just try to make good decisions with the information that you have and that'll be an ongoing process.

Q. Could you give us some thoughts on each of the guys you got today?

NICK CASERIO: Sure. We'll start with Jordan. Played since his freshman year at Miami. He started a number of games, productive player in the passing game. You know, decent with the ball in his hands, runs hard, has some straight-line speed. Again, had pretty good production as a pass catcher.

Wallow played I would say really for a good defensive coach in Coach Patterson. They've been known for defense for a long time, and the way they're constructed defensively, specifically to Garrett, now he was in the box a little bit, he played detached from the formation, instinctive player, runs well, can close space, is a decent tackler, A+ football makeup and character, which that's important to what we're trying to do, like we talked about last night.

And then Lopez, so a grad transfer, actually finished up at Arizona. He was at New Mexico state I believe before that, so played there, high school wrestler, really strong. He's 6'1" and change, 305. I think he did like 36 bench presses or something like that, so that's good playing strength. Leverage, I would say especially with -- defensive line and offensive line it's really about playing with leverage and playing with technique, bending your knees. Again, I'd say Roy has some concept of that just given his background. Tough as nails. Again, high football character and makeup, which is important to the overall development of the player. So that's I'd say a quick just snapshot on those three.

Q. If you were able to just kind of sum up this whole draft and evaluate everything you were able to do in a few words, how would you evaluate what you were able to do and did you get accomplished what you wanted?

NICK CASERIO: I'm sure depending on who you ask they'll have an evaluation. But no, again, we just tried to add good football players that are good people that aren't afraid of competition that are selfless and they're tough, and they have certain skills or attributes relative to their position that we think they can add to our team and that we can look to improve or develop. I would say that's probably the best way to summarize it.

You know, again, it's just one aspect of the team building process. It's certainly maybe a bigger part of the team building process just because there's more opportunities,

depending -- at one particular point in time. You've got, I don't know, 250, 260 players, whatever it was, that were picked, and there's going to be hundreds of other players that weren't drafted that you're going to look to evaluate.

Again, so I think it's one step hopefully in the right direction, and again, it's just the first step of what we're trying to do this year, and there will be other opportunities hopefully for us to continue to improve our team.

Q. With this being the first draft as a staff together, logistically how do you think it all went inside that room the last two days, and then second part is when do you expect to get these rookies and the guys that are going to sign here together actually on the field, and what's the plan for that rookie camp?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, a couple good questions there. From a staff standpoint, really a lot of credit to our staff. I would say just when you transition into a situation like this, not really having worked with a large volume of people kind of in this capacity, but everybody handled themselves outstanding.

It was I would say process-wise very clean, very smooth. Everybody had an understanding of what their role and expectation was, and the communication -- again, especially on the third day when the picks -- you go from 10 minutes to seven minutes to five minutes to four minutes. You have to think quickly. You have to react quickly, and there's not a lot of time.

Everybody kept their poise. Everybody kept their cool. You know, we solicited, I solicited opinions from our staff, from Lip, from Bas, from John Richter, from Zeke because those guys have put as much time into it as anybody. Really from a staff standpoint, really honestly couldn't really ask for anything more just from their efforts and the job that they have done.

To your second question, the rookies will be in here for rookie mini camp here at some point. Working through the final logistics of when that's going to be, but really whenever that is, it's about the next four to six weeks for them to assimilate into our program, understand our program. They've been on their own for a long time, basically since January up until now they've been on their own, they've been training. They've been doing non-football related things, they've been out of the team infrastructure, the team environment. Now they're on a team, they know they're a Houston Texan. So now we're going to have to teach them and train them about the things that are important to how we run our program, what's important, what the expectation is from them, so that's going to be part of their responsibility is to process

that information and then apply it in a number of different levels, on the field with us, in the weight room, whether it's with the dietician, it's in the football operations, it's logistics, it's travel, whatever it may be, just an understanding of what it means to be a Houston Texan and everything that goes along with it.

Q. What is it about Jordan that made you want to use one of your picks on a position where you're already coming into the day you had four or five players at tight end?

NICK CASERIO: It's a good question. Again, I'd say when you look at the team, it's really about competition and it's about creating opportunities -- the players are going to create their opportunities, and again, it's not -- we have to get them on the team, right, however they get them here, right, you sign them in free agency, you trade for them, whatever the case may be. Then once they're here, ultimately the competition is going to dictate who plays, who doesn't play and what their role is.

Again, you can't just look at it from a sheer numbers standpoint sometimes. I think we all kind of get caught up in that, well, you have X number here. Well again, we've had -- we talked about this pre-draft, there's multiple examples of New England when we drafted players who it might look like on the surface like you had a lot of players at that spot, but in reality it's just trying to add good football players to your team and then let the competition sort itself out, and as we've seen, as we know, there's constant movement with rosters and with players, and depending on their contractual situation, what that looks like.

So again, there's a lot of factors that go into this whole process.

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