

# Houston Texans Media Conference

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## Whitney Mercilus Press Conference



### Q. What did you think of what you saw of the defensive line?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Some good things out of the lot of the guys, hustle, hungry guys, as well, too. Trying to establish a job, that's exactly what this is, giving an evaluation process for a lot of coaches to see who their guys are going to be. But everybody, they really had a good game technique-wise, all that, getting to the ball, getting turnovers, sacks, things of that nature.

### Q. What have you seen across the line --

WHITNEY MERCILUS: More confidence. More confidence in his abilities. Taking advantage of it. He looks really explosive, really fast. That's all that I see from him. He'll make some great plays.

### Q. How much better do you think this defense is versus last year?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: I think as far as what we've seen in camp, also in the game as well, too, just playing a little bit more aggressive, also and the emphasis on making -- getting turnovers. We've got three turnovers in the preseason game the other night, and guys tripping at the ball, things like that, playing a lot faster, not even thinking. It's really just simple: Just go see ball, go get ball.

### Q. Is it more talent or coaching?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Well, the coaches give us the tools and the talent goes and execute, essentially. So it goes hand-in-hand. The talent has to take the tools to play extremely well technical wise and then use their talents to go make plays.

### Q. What are the tools the coaches give the players?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: To be more instinctive but play within the scheme and go make plays. Showing technique, whether it's ripping, dipping, some of the movements and things of that nature, I don't know exactly what's going on

the back end, don't know; I'm a D-Lineman now. So seems like they are playing a lot faster, a lot freer.

A few things that needs to be corrected as far as some fits and also just making sure we don't get blown over the top, things of that nature. But they are giving us all the tools, especially up front, using hands, technique, things that we have been coached all our lives.

### Q. When you said you don't know what's going on on the back end but seems like everybody notices that Lonnie is making plays almost every day. Do you notice that and how does this staff unlock his potential?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: I mean, he's playing, what, free and he looks really comfortable back there. Just playing a lot more faster, not thinking about it. You know, as far as defining his responsibilities, essentially and telling him exactly what he nodes to do and he just goes out there and he just executes and also watching a lot of film, making some instinctual plays and he seems like he's having fun doing it.

### Q. Do you find yourself against tight ends often in the run game, what do you notice from them in the run block?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, so of course I see tight ends, especially when I'm down in a 6 or a 6-1. The guys, most of the tight ends across the league, even our guys, they are going to block you until the whistle is blown. So you have to be a lot more aggressive and over here, how they are being taught, pretty much being aggressive until the whistle has been blown. So don't give a D-end or D-tackle an easy play.

### Q. Facing the Packers, how much do you want to play against Dallas --

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Oh, man, my boy, Jordan Jenkins (Jordan Jenkins saying "pickle juice" in the background).

No that's because Jordan Jenkins doesn't like to drink pickle juice for his own health because he's cramping up all



the time.

As far as in the preseason, getting a feel for game speed, handling the adrenaline rush that you get, getting a little, essentially dipping your toe in the water before everything is full go. That's kind of like a trial run, you know, essentially for a lot of the guys. I'm looking forward to it.

Go out there, showcase to the coaches what I have at my age and my year and all that. Looking forward to it.

**Q. Do you feel like it's even more important giving the change you're going to have to be doing thing differently this year?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Definitely. Because it's a new scheme, 4-3. My hand is in the dirt and I've got to see if I can play the run with my hand in the dirt and play the pass, as well, too, and be instinctual at that. I mean, it's almost no different than a 3-4 being on the edge. We switched up to 7-4-3 sometimes and adjusted. The biggest difference is just putting my hand on the ground.

**Q. How much has life changed for you not having to worry about coverage?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: It's wonderful. It's wonderful. Get to play faster. Essentially what I just said earlier, see ball go, get ball. Now the only thing that I can't stand up and dissect the entire offense and see exactly what's going to happen so I have to read my keys a lot more far as tackles, tight ends, and things of that nature, and my pre-snap reads, too.

**Q. With all that is it enough to compartmentalize and play freely?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I played a number of years in the league, so of course I understand a lot of different offenses concepts and things of that nature, offensive schemes. I kind of get the pre-snap reads, kind of get an idea of what's going to be ran, essentially around this league is a copycat league. Everybody has the same playbooks. It just depends what philosophies week-to-week you're going to face. I'm comfortable with that, understanding the knowledge of the game and making sure I'm physically good.

**Q. Looks like he uses his hands better in the preseason, how much of a focus has that been?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: All the time. Your hands are what's going to get you free instead of being chest to chest with somebody, you'll get blocked that way, not being able to use your hands to shut off blocks off the run or being

able to double-swipe or stab. Especially in a pass, you're not going to get sacks that way. It's a huge emphasis. You can't just go in there and run with your chest.

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