

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Houston, Texas, USA

## Whitney Mercilus

### Press Conference



WHITNEY MERCILUS: You know what, man, I can't say that I have. But I've seen a lot of y'all are in front of the camera and stuff like that and took some pointers.

#### Q. What kind of --

WHITNEY MERCILUS: For sure, shoot, whoever is out there doing the anchor position and all that, just a nice little smile, just be free flowing, all that. Just bring out your personality a little bit.

#### Q. What kind of grief do you get from your teammates about it?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Oh, man, the biggest thing that I've heard, they need some free pizzas. That's it. Free pizzas. Look, I can help them out, man, but I've got to be there. One day I'll probably just -- back in middle school, you know the pizza parties, I'll just create one of those things. That's about it.

#### Q. What have you thought about how the defense has played so far, not creating turnovers? What are some of your takeaways?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: It's been awesome. It's been encouraging, especially from the last game, to see how hard guys are out there fighting. Also just better tackling, as well, too, attacking the ball, and just doing what they're coached to do.

Now we've just got to clean some things up, there's no question about it, but you've got a team that -- a defense that's really hungry out there, and it definitely shows.

#### Q. How would you describe the challenge of trying to catch and tackle Christian McCaffrey?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, man, he's a special player in his own right. He's proven that time and time again. It's difficult to get him down. He's got good balance, good strength, as well, too, playing strength.

So it's going to be a challenge to bring him down. They create some good schemes for him to be able to get like seven-yard runs, 10-yard runs, things like that. We've got to be very disciplined in our gaps. We've got to be able to set edges, build walls, and just do exactly what we're coached to do to stop them.

#### Q. They seem to be one of those teams that find ways to move players into a bunch of different places that they normally aren't. What do you see from that, and does that present an interesting challenge?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, definitely. It's going to create some different match-ups as far as that goes. That could be difficult. But we've got the personnel to handle that, as well, too.

You know, it's just practice through the week, seeing the different looks, maybe expecting some different things and whatnot. But on a short week, how much can you change? Not a whole lot.

There might be something that's out of the ordinary, maybe like a trick play or something like that or whatnot, but you've just got to read your keys and just go out there and play ball.

#### Q. (Indiscernible). What have you seen from him so far this year?

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, O-line definitely blocking for him pretty hard. We've got to be able to get it back there, get him flustered. We've got to try to get him to make some mistakes and all that, but also we've got to be able to contain him in the pocket because he has deceptive speed, too.

That will present a challenge for the D-line, and we'll do our best.

#### Q. Talk about the mismatch that Jacob Martin may be able to have this weekend, especially as quickly as he gets off the ball.

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, Jacob Martin, the guy gets



off the ball like crazy, man. He's got good passer's moves, he's got an arsenal in his repertoire, so he's going to be able to get a couple sacks out there, too. I ain't going to lie to you.

So he's got like good bend, good hands, great get-off on the ball. It's just getting him those one-on-ones. The whole D-line, get us some one-on-ones just to be able to get back there as fast as possible. Hopefully we get a chance to get the quarterback to hold the ball a little bit and give him a chance.

**Q. What has it been like you playing for your playing with your hand in the dirt after 10 years?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, it's been a little different, I'll tell you that, man. Now it's like my keys are just shortened down to just reading tackles and tight ends and pre-snap reads, so I can't see anything that's post-snap or when motions happen, stuff like that, to get a beat on what might happen, things like that.

It's just reading my keys more so and locking in on that and letting instinct take over.

**Q. Is there any additional pressure on defense when you know there's a rookie going to quarterback making his first start?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: For the defense?

**Q. Yeah, any pressure because you know you maybe don't have as much margin for error, that kind of thing?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, we've got to be able to stop the opposing offense and play better than their defense, as well, too.

For us we always take it as a challenge week to week to do our best to get as many turnovers for offense to capitalize on that, to give them as many chances as they can to get us some points.

**Q. With the Browns and the Panthers teams, they use a lot of pre-snap; is it kind of relieving in some ways that you don't have to keep track of that?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, I will say so as far as that goes. Make it a little bit easier. Probably makes it much easier for the back end, as well, too. Not so much for us.

But as far as where I came from, as far as standing up and an outside linebacker, of course that's alleviating to hear that or to see that.

But at the end of the day I've just got to be able to read my keys just like any other position I've played.

**Q. Some of your teammates have said they think confidence was boosted after the loss just by being competitive. How do you feel about the team after a couple games and where do you guys see yourselves?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, just like they said, confidence got boosted, especially because we know we've got a solid team around us. If we just do our job, take care of the football, take away the football, things like that, play complementary football, as well, too, we've got a good chance as far as winning a lot of games if we just do that.

I'm very confident in this team. I'm very confident in every player that we have. A lot of good guys who have seen a lot of football, played a lot of football in different places and seen a lot of things, experienced a lot of things, as well, too, that can really come together and create a hellified culture here, and to go out there and win games on Sundays.

**Q. What do you think about this as an opportunity and Tytus said he likes an opportunity to showcase what his team is all about to a national television audience. What do you think about this as an opportunity to showcase what this team is all about?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, we'll be the only game being played all across the board, and so for what a lot of people were saying about us before this whole thing got started, it's a chance to showcase that and to back up what we say or what we believe as far as that goes.

We don't go out there to go lose. We want to get Ws. That's it. That's exactly where we're going to go out there, go do, and go prove.

**Q. You've probably been around Tim Kelly more than most people on the team even though you're on defense. How would you describe him?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: TK? Man, he plays the game well, honestly. As far as understanding like how to set up plays, how to set up whether it might be a boot from a run or something like that. He also understands who he has on that offense, as well, too, what skill sets they have.

He's kind of like a bend, not break type of person, and he's great at what he does as far as play calling wise.

**Q. Can you just talk about the challenges that this**

**offense you're facing -- you know about the Panthers, just the speed and other things you guys have to adapt to?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Yeah, for sure. McCaffrey, once he gets -- if he gets going it's just like any other week as far as like the run. If you can't stop the run it's going to be a long day.

With Christian, he's great at dipping into blocks and dipping out and making you miss, especially making people jump out of the blocks and stuff like that. So that's a huge thing that we have to watch out for, especially playing -- I think that was back in '19. I remember I dipped in on a block, I was out of my gap, and he just bounced it outside for like a touchdown. We have to be very, very disciplined in that.

Also the quarterback, as well, poses a threat if we're not disciplined in our rush lanes, disciplined in our games or anything like that. He's got a chance to be able to move around, make some plays downfield, or take off and get a 1st down.

**Q. How good is it to have so many veterans in that locker room, especially coming into a short week?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Man, it's reassuring, honestly. A lot of people have tasted what a Thursday night game looks like throughout the week, being able to take care of their bodies, knowing where they need to be at and where to play at the high level that they need to on a Thursday night game from a short turnaround from a physical Sunday game.

Guys -- like you have a lot of trust knowing that guys are going to be there, be able to play, and play at a high level, as well, too.

**Q. ...play the inside guys, guys you play next to and just how you're all working together, that might help you guys make plays and the linebackers make plays?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Oh, yeah. So the interior you've got like Roy, you've got Maliek Collins in there, D Walk, Derrick Walker, a lot of other guys, Charles Omenihu, every now and then he plays in there, too. Hopefully I'm not forgetting anybody. They'll get me for that.

Man, we've built a good trust in that room as far as understanding who we're playing next to, what type of style of player they might be. Somebody might be just a bruiser, more so like taking on blocks and covering for you. Some guys are a little bit more quicker to where you can make finesse moves and stuff like that and you know he's got the speed in order to catch mistakes and stuff like that.

It really helps as far as having those different type of personalities, different type of characteristics inside that room in order to make some plays happen.

Now, we'll play better each week we have to get better. We don't have a choice. Everything starts up front, especially when it comes down to that run.

I can definitely say that I trust those guys fully where I don't have to jump out of my gap and play and try to cover their gap and mine at the same time.

**Q. Away from the field, Davis just told us that Tytus thinks he could beat him in a 40 --**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Who? Beat who?

**Q. Davis says Tytus thinks he could beat him in a 40-yard dash. Could you set that up for us?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Man, I could get that done for you. Ain't no problem because I'm going to put some money down on this, too.

**Q. On who?**

WHITNEY MERCILUS: Oh, man, I'm going to put it down on Tytus. Actually, no, not Tytus, Davis. My bad, my bad.

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