

Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, November 28, 2021

Houston, Texas, USA

Coach Robert Saleh

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Texans 14, Jets 21

COACH SALEH: Injury-wise, Quincy is dealing with a deep bruise in his calf, and obviously Wesco is dealing with a knee. We'll have more updates tomorrow.

Q. Coach, overall can you talk about the performance of your defense, shutting down Houston to less than 40 yards the entire second half?

COACH SALEH: Yeah, you know what, even in the first half thought we were playing very well. There was two third downs I know we all want back, especially third and longs. The zero that resulted in the touchdown and the goal ball.

But aside from those two plays, I thought the guys showed a lot of resilience. I thought there was a sudden change out there in the second half where we knocked them out of field goal range.

I thought they were fantastic. I thought Ulbrich and his staff did great. I thought the players, again, they're getting better, and I thought this was a good one.

Q. What has changed defensively for you guys? Wasn't too long ago we were talking about some of those struggles.

COACH SALEH: Yeah, you know what, when you look from a back end standpoint, especially at the safety position when we had the injuries that we had, just the continuity and trying to get these guys to just play -- put them on repeat, if you will, in terms of doing the same things over and over and give them a chance to go execute.

Again, I thought I feel like Brich and his staff have been steadfast in making sure we remain constant and keeping things simple for our guys as they grow. You look Ashtyn, he came in and I think this is his fourth game in a row where he's been able to stay on the field, and he's been playing with Elijah Riley who I think this was his second

start.

But either way, just a lot more continuity in the back end, and obviously the D-line got after it today.

Q. What did you think about how Zach looked, and was his knee bothering him at the end?

COACH SALEH: No, he was fine. A little bit of rust after a month, but I thought he managed the game well. Thought again, offense was running the heck out of the football and he was doing a good on third down.

So it was just a good day of managing the game.

Q. When he was escaping the pursuit where it looked like he tweaked his knee and the doctors were looking at it on the sideline.

COACH SALEH: Yeah, he checked out fine.

Q. This one seemed to be another game like earlier where he maybe looked a little amped up early. Maybe too much mustard or whatnot, but the early drive in the second half he looked like a completely different player. What did you see from first half it second half?

COACH SALEH: You hit the nail on the head. He throws those little rockets, so he'll figure all that stuff out.

I thought for the most part we get that turnover to start the game, offense get down there, we're able to get a field goal out of it, and then kind of hit a lull where there was a lot three-and-outs and defense battling; gave up a couple touchdowns.

But that drive before the half was huge. I thought they did great job. They worked all the way down the field, scored that touchdown, we get a chance to lap them, which we did, which was big.

But in that second half, just the -- again, he made the plays he needed to make and the offensive line did a great job opening up seams for our running backs. I think we were averaging over four and a half a clip, so it was a really

good day offensively.

Q. The first drive of the second half he hit a couple passes to Elijah. Looked like almost liberated. They were zipped in, accurate. Did it just seem different to you there?

COACH SALEH: No, you know, on the first one to Elijah the 22 yarder on the read counts, that really good off the play-action pass. Then I believe the second one came on -- they had a zero pressure and he was able to get it into him. Had a good one to Berrios also on the zero pressure, so he was seeing the field well in the second half and it's definitely something to build off.

Q. Follow up to what he said about just he looks like a different quarterback. Seemed like two tales where when Zach is in rhythm he's able to be efficient, but there are times where he gets a little bit indecisive and struggles a little bit. What do you think is the reason behind that?

COACH SALEH: It's being a rookie. Like we said, the objective in this game was trying to get him as comfortable as possible early. He's shown when he comes out of the locker room in the second half he's comfortable, he's seen the field, what the defense is giving him.

So the objective was to try to get him comfortable earlier. Felt like we were finally able to do that midway through the second quarter on that first touchdown drive we had.

But that's just going to be as growing pains in terms of being able to recognize things, trust your week's preparation, but as he sees the game and he is starting to see coverages and player demeanor and all that stuff, he gets more comfortable and obviously becomes more decisive.

So it's just going to be one of those deals that as he gets older and gets more reps he'll get a lot better at it.

Q. What can you see from Austin Walter that you went to him so much today?

COACH SALEH: He's a fire plug, spark plug, whatever you want to call it. He's got a lot of great initial quickness and bursts, similar to Michael and his running style. We felt like his couple of weeks that he's been here since he's been able to get back to us, obviously he missed the first few with the injury being on IR and all that, but it's a good back and he's proven that when he's able to run the ball he can create explosive plays.

Just having that burst, that juice, that energy that comes

from him, thought it would be a good addition.

Q. There was a lot of focus last week on JFM, on the penalty at the end of the game. Today the interception beginning of the game, two sacks. What kind of lift did he give you guys?

COACH SALEH: Oh, he's worth his weight in gold, JFM is. But to much given, much expected, so he knows the standard. He has a very high standard for himself and I know he was beating himself up all week for that play.

At the same time, he comes out to practice every day and works his butt off and he's working his tail off on gameday. It was really cool for him to get the production he got.

Q. Take us through the two fourth down decisions at the end of the game, fourth and five and fourth and one?

COACH SALEH: Yeah, so the fourth and five obviously there was -- we were in position right there. In a little gray area. It was 50/50 dealer's choice. Just wanted to go with it.

The second one we were getting ready to kick the field goal and LaFleur was adamant he had a play call to get the good the first time, so burned the time out, put the offense back on, and he proved it right.

Q. Speaking of play calls, the two-point conversion scenario there, why go there? What was the thought? Was this a similar situation where you just thought you had to play with Josh?

COACH SALEH: Same thing. Really liked our two-point play, but at the same time, it was to get it to three points.

Q. On that I think might have been the first drive where you guys had set up for a field goal, seemed like third and goal Elijah -- Zach tried to hit Elijah on a whip route. What went wrong on that play?

COACH SALEH: We got to be better in protection obviously. There should been -- with all the action we had that dude should've been doubled, almost tripled and he should have got to Keelan in the back of the end zone. He was wide open.

Poor protection breakdown right there and that's kind of what happened.

Q. How about from you and the perspective of snapping the three game losing streak. What does it do for the team's psyche after so much negativity over

COACH SALEH: It's the same thing with regards to ignoring the noise, the praise, the criticism, and just focus on keeping the main thing the main thing. That's getting better every week, building the foundation we're building, and understanding that this organization is going to get somewhere and it's going to get somewhere quick.

But the main focus is showing up to work, doing everything we can to get a little bit better, and finish the season strong.

Q. I know you guys are going to enjoy this one, but the last two, not to be a wet blanket, but the last two times you guys won the next game didn't go so well. So is that going to be a point of emphasis this week, to keep the momentum going and not have that setback, or will you change things this week to not have the setback?

COACH SALEH: No, so consistency is the truest measure of performance. You're consistently bad or consistently good or consistently inconsistent.

But there is a standard that we have to be able to achieve day in and day out, especially being a young team. It's not about changing things up. It's understanding how to be a professional, ignore the outside noise, and show up to work and keep the main thing the main thing. Go line by line, play by play, minute by minute, moment by moment, and just try to find ways to get better.

When gameday comes you do everything you can to play your absolute best, and you trust the result will be in your favor. But changing stuff up, the focus is exactly what it's going to be, and that we plan on having as our standard for years to come.

Q. What did you see from the run game today? Lose Michael Carter, but seemed like it was one of your best days running the ball.

COACH SALEH: Yeah. J.B., John Benton put together a really cool plan. Credit to the O-line. One of the challenges we had this week for them is just -- for the offense was urgency and physicality at the line of scrimmage, and felt like we were able to do that in getting a lot of push, creating a lot of creases, and I thought the backs did a good job finding those creases and hitting it strong and getting vertical and getting yards.

So really good day in terms of the LaFleur leaning on them and them responding with the way they blocked up front.