

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Coach David Culley

Postgame Press Conference



Texans - 41, Chargers - 29

COACH CULLEY: Coach Staley and that crew that's a very good football team. That's a playoff-caliber team, got the utmost respect for them and what they do. And I just wanted to give them their props. That's a good football team.

Q. Could you talk about Mills' performance and the way your receivers stepped up without Cooks, please?

COACH CULLEY: I think it all starts with our offensive line, not just Davis and our receivers. I thought our offensive line and our backs did a great job of protection and making plays when plays were there.

And when you do that and you protect him, you're able to run the ball, good things happen. And our quarterback was able to execute what we asked him to do. And that's what his job is to do -- protect the ball and get us in the end zone. And our offense did a good job of that today.

Again, I just gotta let you know this here before I get started. I thought Tim, Lovie and Frank did a great job on all three phases, the most complete game we've had this year. They put it together. We finally got a score on defense. I knew it was coming eventually.

I kind of wish he would have went down because if he would have went down the game's over but he saw that end zone he went for it. I just wanted to make sure to give those guys those props because they did a great job with preparation with everything we went through this week.

Q. What about the wide receivers stepping up?

COACH CULLEY: I'll tell you what, that group -- John, I'm going to go back to the next-man-up mentality. They've been that way all year -- Chris Moore, all those guys had to fill in today, Phillip Dorsett, all those guys have done a great job. And, again, I go back to Robert and Ben do a great job with those guys. And truly, truly the next-man-up mentality was in today. And those guys didn't bat an eye.

Q. You mentioned the offensive line. Could you build upon that, the job the O line did, and Burkhead's day in particular. A career day for him. What did you see the progress and results he got for you guys today?

COACH CULLEY: The continuity, what was happening with our offensive line. Those guys stepped in there. We knew the situation. We weren't going to change what we were going to do. I thought Tim had a great game plan for being able to mix the run in, and run it when we had an opportunity to run it.

And off of that obviously you saw we end up getting some big plays off of that because of that. But it all started with our offensive line. And I think the continuity, I thought Coach Campen and Robert did a great job having those guys prepared.

And really to distractions, no disruptions and they just went out and played the game. And when you play the game the right way you get results like this. It doesn't matter who you play.

Q. You mentioned the run game and you've talked a lot about this year about making that work in a crucial situation, third and four you're able to get Burkhead in and call that run on a crucial drive. How big is that to be able to rely on that? And how do you feel that in totality this offense was able to run in the way you wanted to all year?

COACH CULLEY: That's very important, because all day long we were able to run the ball and get positive yardage. There was only a couple of plays that we had in the run game that were negative yardage plays. Normally when Rex has the ball in his hand it's going to be a plus-yardage play.

But again there was no hesitation at all with Tim and what we felt like what we needed to do in that particular situation. And we're probably in a situation, too, where if we got down into a third and four, we ran the ball. If we got down to fourth and one or fourth and two, we were probably going to go for it. That's how much confidence I

had in what our offense was doing today. And it was very, very key in us being successful in everything we did today offensively.

Q. Defensively you were out regular starters, get the three turnovers you did. How do you see them and what were your thoughts on the defensive play?

COACH CULLEY: I'm going to go back, eliminate the big plays. And whoever those guys that are in there playing those spots, they understand when they go in what their responsibilities are. Those guys went in and they did their job. They did what the defense asked them to do. And when you do that, you know, the results come. And that's why we kept -- that's a very, very explosive offensive football team.

Our guys kept the ball in front of them for the most part. They broke a couple of runs on us. We got out of our gaps a couple times. But I thought our entire defense played consistently all day. Getting the three turnovers, that's who we are.

Q. On that final scoring drive for you guys in the first half, looked like things weren't going very well. You had the penalty, timeout, then another penalty. What did you think of Davis' ability to respond through those early struggles to hit those two big throws?

COACH CULLEY: You just brought up something that's really disappointing for our football team today is the penalties. We had way too many penalties today. More so than we've had in probably the last four or five games, which we can't have.

We got away with it sometimes but we kept drives alive for them with penalties. And we got ourselves off the field a couple times with those penalties. But the point was I thought Tim called a great game from the standpoint of just staying the course. Our run game was working. We used it to get us back some yardage. And Davis made some throws to get us nice third-down plays. That's a culmination of the entire offense doing their job and allowing him to do his job.

Q. Can you talk about the resolve that your team showed? You touched on it, but missing more than a dozen players and being able to beat a team that is still in playoff contention?

COACH CULLEY: Well, we've got a motto here -- team, team, team. It's been that way from the word go. Those guys that jumped in -- I had guys playing today felt they should have been playing way before they got the time to play because of the COVID. I said to them, be careful

what you wish for.

They got it today and those guys came in showed that they was ready to do what we needed to be done. And you talk about the resolve. This team is so resilient. They've never really worried about what happens on the outside. All we've tried to do is just get better and get better. And I thought today was one of those days where we probably played our most complete football game.

Q. Do you feel like the way your team was able to run the ball this week after you've been focusing on that all season will be something you'll all be able to build on going forward?

COACH CULLEY: I hope so. I hope to carry it on. Obviously when we're able to do that it makes things much better for us offensively and we're able to control the ball. We knew today going into this game we had to control the game against this football team because you give the ball back to this team so much, they are very explosive.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Rex Burkhead and his running style, and this year he's been a determined runner. But to get the payoff for the work he's done, what did you think of Rex's game?

COACH CULLEY: He's been mister consistent for us. He's a guy that's going to get north and south. He knows how to play. He just knows how to play the game. Rex could probably play another position. That's just how instinctive he is as a football player.

What happened today is we got him on the perimeter. And our receivers and tight ends made some blocks for him. And of course he made some guys miss and he took it in the end zone just like you would expect him to do with the situation he had in front of him.

Q. The other side of the football, Jonathan Owens, first interception of his career, gets a fumble recovery and also Tavierre Thomas' first pick-6. What did you see from those guys?

COACH CULLEY: I was so proud of Jonathan. He stepped in for us last week. He's been getting a bunch of playing time. He's a guy that's getting better and better the more time he's gotten. And I tell you that was a big interception that he got for us at that time. It was a momentum swing change for us. I'm just so proud of him and all those guys that have stepped in and played for us.

Q. What does it mean, what was it like when you walk off the field with the win and nobody outside your locker room, no one on the planet gave this team a

chance to win today except the guys in your locker room? How does that feel when you think about that?

COACH CULLEY: Here's the thing, we're only concerned, this football team is only being concerned with what's happening in the locker room. We know there's a lot of noise outside of this locker room. We've tried all year long to stay away from that noise.

And some of that noise is good. Some of that noise is bad. Good or bad you've got to stay away from that and understand that the most important thing is to understand that your teammates, this organization has been great from the standpoint of being able to give us what we need to do, what we need to do here.

And this entire staff here has done a great job of helping us stay the course, which we've done. And because of that this is what happens. And it doesn't matter who the opponent is. It's just the next game. Just like after this one, we're going to enjoy this one, and then I think the next one is San Francisco, we're going to go play it to try to win three in a row.

Our goal was to finally get two in a row. We had three opportunities this year to be able to do that and didn't do it. Today we got two. This week coming week we want to try to get three.

Q. In so many games this season you guys were close at halftime and the second half the opponent pulled away. How much have you been stressing to your staff and players, look, we've got to reemphasize what we're doing and maybe switch things up at halftime? Today you kept your foot on the gas the whole time. Have you been talking more about that as a team, staying strong in the second half?

COACH CULLEY: I think the big thing was today in the first half we were pretty consistent in the first half. Again, I think, I can't remember, I think we scored on the first drive. And that's something we've been doing for a while. We did not do that in the second half.

But the thing about it was when we came out in the second half, we just carried over what we started in the first half. And the difference is today we were just able to execute better.

When we've had our issues in the past, it's been simply because we haven't executed very well. And our guys did a nice job today of just staying the course, understanding what we were doing. And when you're running the ball like we were running the ball today, those kind of things will allow you to be effective in the second half, which we

haven't been able to do up and to this point.

Q. You're talking about the execution. How do you explain being able to execute today better than you have any game this year but with so many players out?

COACH CULLEY: Well, those same players have been watching the guys in front. We've been running those same plays. Again, people say what's different in than before? What's different than before is we're running the plays better. We're executing better.

Those guys that have stepped in that haven't got a lot reps have been watching the video. They see those guys when the mistakes are being made. And they know when their time comes.

Obviously, those guys get a bunch of mental reps. And those mental reps are so important that when your time comes to be able to go execute. And those guys went in and executed today. And that's what we expect of them.

Q. At what one point you had Tremon Smith in the backfield. What did that say about your run game and using him in that situation?

COACH CULLEY: We knew we were going to run some outside stuff on this team and we knew speed was important. And Tremon runs very well and he's been asking for that anyway. So we use him in that situation and obviously he helped us today.

Q. You called this your most complete game. Over what you all have been trying to build all year, what does this game mean in the full context what you're trying to do here?

COACH CULLEY: It means that when we go back and look at the video, what's going to happen you're going to see it and you're going to say we probably weren't as good as we thought we were. But we're better than we have been.

And we just gotta make sure that we correct those things that wasn't very good today that could have cost us and get better at doing those things and continue to do what we did today.

Q. How is Chris Moore and Phillip Dorsett doing? What went on with Chris? Was he concussed or something else?

COACH CULLEY: Chris just had a little, I think it was a cramp. And then Dorsett, I think, had a little ankle injury. I'm not sure how serious the ankle injury was, but it was

serious enough that he couldn't come in and play.

Q. I saw you shake your fists on the sideline, a little satisfaction, you'll observe the 24-hour rule, like every coach says. But did it mean a little more to you to win in this fashion?

COACH CULLEY: Again, playing the kind of football team we played today. The rest of the year we're going to play playoff-caliber teams. Those are the teams that you're measure by. You measure (indiscernible) this league.

Just like our team, whoever the next team is up, all you want to do is keep getting better. And you go play. And you know that movie, "Any Given Sunday"? It's so true in this league when you play the game the right way.

And this football team played the right way today. Our coaching staff had them ready to play and it was great. I tell you what, I wasn't here for practice on Thursday. I don't know, I might miss practice on Thursday because they did so well without me this week.

But I am just kidding; I'm going to be there. I'm just going to try not to do anything that whatever they did last Thursday I'll make sure they do it again this Thursday. I'll shut my mouth in practice.

Q. Can you just talk about Davis Mills' growth and his ability to keep his composure? For the second week in a row the opposing team made a little run, but he was able to keep his composure and keep the offense moving?

COACH CULLEY: He's very mature. He's a very mature guy. And he's getting much better and much better the more he plays. He understands what his job is. And I think Tim and our offensive staff have done a great job of making sure that we're giving him things that he can make good, quick decisions with, that he's comfortable with.

And he's growing with this time. And today he did a great job of protecting the ball. I thought we had that one throw he threw off Pharaoh that went off his hands. It scared me a bit. But other than that he did a great job handling the ball, a great job handling this offense. And that's, again, that's a credit to this entire offense and allowing him, our quarterback, to do what his job is.

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