

# Houston Texans Media Conference

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## General Manager Nick Caserio

### Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: I had the chance to pick a couple of real solid players and real solid kids. Kind of maneuvering around a little bit there. Just moving back two spots, picking up three picks, I would say really didn't cost us anything. I wouldn't say that we necessarily lost a player or anything like that.

So, I would say with the first pick, went ahead and made the selection with Derek. I would say there was definitely a consensus. I would say organizationally, coaching staff, scouting staff, I would say we put as much time and effort into Derek probably as any player. I would say our area scouts and our over-the-top scouts did a phenomenal job of continuing to delve into research and to make sure that we were comfortable with everything. Visited Derek. Had a great visit with the coaching staff. Had a great visit with everybody in the building.

He has been a productive player. Was a productive player early on in his career. Had some bumps in the road there in '20 and '21, but in the end we felt comfortable with Derek. We think he is a good player. Kind of fits the profile of what we're trying to do. I would say defensively and kind of how we're building the program, so that was the rational behind the pick there.

Then with the Kenyon pick, so we were slated to pick at 13. We were kind of looking at a couple of different scenarios, both kind of going up and kind of going back maybe a few slots. So we got there at 13. Philly wanted to come up. We ended up picking up three extra picks, the fourth plus the two fifths. Thought for moving two spots that made sense to do. Slid back and picked Kenyon.

Been a really productive, consistent player. Played tackle. Played guard. I would say he is probably a better guard than he is a tackle. I think he is probably more of an inside player, but we'll put him in the mix. Local kid, so I'm sure all of the Texans, fellow Texans, will be happy about that.

Real solid kid. I would say blue collar, humble, soft-spoken, lunch pail. Shows up; doesn't say much. Just kind of works his ass off and wants to play football. That

fits the profile of what we want from the players that walk in this building.

A lot of respect for the A&M program, what they've done down there, what Jimbo has done down there. We were down there for the pro day. Lovie and I were down there. Lip was down there. We spent a lot of time on Kenyon. Visited him and brought him in the building as well.

Hopefully those are two players that come in here and work hard and make the most of their opportunities. They're going to have to blend in with the room, with the players that are around them, but excited to have them here.

I would say just overall on the first round just from a league perspective, kind of interesting. Five defensive players picked and then the tackles and then the receivers, which I would say that went about how we thought it was going to go. I think that was the anticipation. A lot of it was just kind of positioning.

Then, honestly, we had an opportunity at 15 to actually move back even a little bit further to 20, and we just felt if we did that, we were probably going to lose a decent amount of players. So in the end we just felt like it made the most sense just to pick at 15, so it was pretty balanced.

I don't have the exact final numbers, but I want to say 16 offense, 16 defense or maybe 17 defense, 15 offense. Whatever it was. The proliferation of underclassmen was certainly significant, I would say. 20 of 32 or whatever it was, which I would say that typically happens.

Off to a decent start. Still have a long way to go. Hopefully we'll have some good opportunities tomorrow. There's definitely some good football players that are out there these next couple of rounds that we think come in here and have an opportunity to help us, so everybody go home tonight. We'll recalibrate in the morning and have a long day tomorrow and do some exercises and position ourselves a little bit. If we stay at 37, here's a group of six to eight players we feel comfortable. If we move back a few spots, what would happen? There are opportunities to maybe get back in the second round. We accumulated some assets and ammunition to do it.



So I think we'll look at everything. I think you guys have been around me long enough to know that we'll look at everything and be thoughtful and trying to make good decisions. I would say with that, we'll open it up to questions.

**Q. What was the biggest thing that made you want to select Derek Stingley Jr with the third pick?**

NICK CASERIO: Derek has played at a high level ever since he walked through the building at LSU. Runs well. He plays with good technique. Plays the ball well. He plays under control. Plays with good anticipation.

I think one of the benefits of watching him and following that program going back, I mean, they've had a lot of good players come through there. Jamar was there. Terrence Marshall was there. Justin was there. We had the opportunity to see him work against those types of players, which I would say it's indicative of the types of players that we are going to see -- our whole team and the defense is going to see on a regular basis. Combine that, I would say his football acumen is good. Really cares about football. He is a technician. He is really devoted to understanding the techniques of playing the position.

So when you look at everything in totally, we just felt like they made the most sense for our team, and I would say just organizationally there was a consensus, so I think that's important as well. You want to take a number of opinions. Take those into consideration. Be thoughtful about it. Not that everybody has to agree on it, but if there's sort of a feeling mutually, then I think that says a lot for the player and just for everybody else involved. I would say that was probably a big part of why we did what we did.

**Q. What was the conversation with Head Coach Lovie Smith about selecting Derek Stinlgey Jr.?**

NICK CASERIO: I would say all coaches lobby for their respective positions. The offensive coaches lobby for offensive players position. The defense coaches lobby for defensive players. Position coaches. That's part of the process, but there's give and take there.

I think a lot of it is just having constructive dialogue and conversation. Okay, if we do this, what are the alternatives? If we do something else, how is that going to fit? I would say the one thing about Lovie, he is very open-minded and flexible, so if we did something else, I think he would have been okay with that as well.

Again, it's a collaborative effort and just try to make good decisions for the team and for the organization. Those are

the most important things.

**Q. What does it mean that Derek Stingley Jr. was faced with adversity in college and comes from a football family?**

NICK CASERIO: We're all going to have to deal with something at some point along the way. In playing a corner position, you're going to give up plays. You're going to make plays. You're going to give up plays. You're going to have limited opportunities.

Any time you can see players against top-level competition, I know everybody laughs and jokes about the SEC, but the caliber of football is a high caliber of football. Not that you can say, well, what happens in the SEC is what's going to happen on Sunday, but go through the draft and kind of go through the history. There's a lot of good players in that conference. There's a lot of good players on that team. They see those players on a week-to-week basis, so the level of competition, it's pretty significant. The level of competition and standard is going to go up.

Matter of fact, Tennessee made a trade. SEC, kind of swapped SEC receiver for an SEC receiver and drafted Burkes. We're going to see good players just about every week at every position, so it's not necessarily about one particular position. It's about the defense and in this particular case in totality. Any time you can see them against the best players and top level of competition, that absolutely goes into the evaluation.

**Q. Does Kenyon Green fit the profile of the guys on the offensive line?**

NICK CASERIO: I think we want to be able to offensively move the football and score points. However we do that, we're in the initial stages of kind of implementing the offense. Had a good opportunity to go on the field here the last three days and do things offensively in terms of getting in the huddle and calling plays, formationing, using different personnel groupings.

If we want to play a certain way, you know, want to have players that you maybe feel fit that profile, so we're fortunate. We think we have some pretty good offensive linemen on the team. L.T. Tytus, J.B. Signed A.J. in the offseason. Charlie did a great job last year. Max has played well had his opportunities. J. Mac went in there and gave us some productive plays. Jimmy came in at the end of the year.

We're trying to enhance the overall group and the overall team, and the more we can do that, the better off we're going to be as an overall team. It's all-encompassing.

We'll do the same thing tomorrow. Won't be about one position. It will be about trying to get good football players to add to the team so we have an opportunity to go out and be competitive on a week-to-week basis.

**Q. You mentioned you were flexible to move up or down from 13. Did you not think Stingley would be there at 13?**

NICK CASERIO: You can't anticipate really exactly how things are going to go. You sort of have some calculus about where you might be able to move, how far, what's the cost associated of doing that? Is the player going to be there when you pick next, and if you don't pick there, what's the alternative? You factor everything in. In the end you make the decision, and the best decision for us was to pick at three and to pick Derek.

**Q. Do you think the running back position you will go after tomorrow? How have you evaluated that position?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we'll look at everything. As far as how we evaluate the running back position in general? Yeah, no different than we evaluate any other positions. There are certain skills that are required. We talked about this the other day, just about the overall composition of the room currently. If there's an opportunity to add a player that we feel makes sense that enhances that room, then we'll go ahead and do it.

When will that take place? Who knows? We'll see. I think there are some good football players at that position and good football players at some other positions. Try to make a good decision and add a good player to the team and move forward.

**Q. What stood out to you most about the trends you saw in the first round of the draft?**

NICK CASERIO: That's a great question. The passing game is I would say a big part of it, so players that can cover, players that can rush. And then when you kind of transition there in the middle, players that can do something with the ball and potentially score points. The next tier of players was players that whether they can pass protect or block the guys that just got drafted ahead of them or help create movement in the running game.

Every draft is going to be a little bit different. This year's draft is going to be different than next year's draft in terms of the composition of players, who is picked where, and what groups of players. I think the league kind of works in cycles. League works in cycles. Offense works in cycles. Defense works in cycles. How teams want to play, that

works in -- how teams draft, that's going to work cyclically.

It's just you kind of have to be adaptable. We have to be ready to adjust and stick and move a little bit, be ready to pivot and just take the information and take a big picture global approach and just have as good of an understanding of as many players as possible and understand your team as best you can possible.

Then the reality is regardless of who these players are, they're starting over. We're glad that we have them, so now the hard work starts. Now they come in the building. They're really starting from ground zero. They have a lot of work to do. We're not going to see them really until the middle of May, so there's another two to three weeks where they're going to kind of sort of be on their own while our veteran players are going to be in phase two.

Long way to go. They have a lot of work in front of them. The league is constantly evolving, constantly changing, and we just try to keep up with that pace of change and just try to make sure that we're positioning ourselves appropriately.

**Q. With a team that has so many needs, how hard was it for you to not trade back at number 15 more and stockpile picks?**

NICK CASERIO: That's a good question. The notion of kind of stockpiling is, all right, you're stockpiling and moving picks back, but with all these picks over here, who are you picking? What's the opportunity to pick and vice versa? If you move back from a 15 to 20, you're going to lose, call it, five players or five to six is players. If you lose that group of players, then what's the next group of players? Are you comfortable with that group of players?

Actually, I don't want to say we were sort of anticipatory this morning. We basically said, okay, we're at 13. All right. If we have to pick at 13, let's realistically look and see who we think is going to be available, what are our options going to be, and it was a really useful exercise.

I would say as a result of that we were kind of sitting there at 15 and then we're kind of resorting back to the work we did a little bit earlier and said, you know what, let's not get too cute here. If we move down, we're going to have a gap. You might lose X number of players. Then you're scrambling to get back up. If a team is not willing to move, you might be able to think you can get back up, but if a team isn't willing to move, then you're sort of stuck. Are you worse off or better off?

You factor everything in. There was a lot of good discussion and dialogue specifically about that as we were

working through it. In the end we said, you know what, this makes the most sense. Try to be sensible. Try to be pragmatic about it and try to make a good decision, and that's why we went ahead and picked.

**Q. You've mentioned that it doesn't matter what players are used on the tickets. What are the benefits of having two players that played close to Houston?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah. How they play is going to matter ultimately more than anything else, but I would say specific, a little bit more in Kenyon's case. Grew up in Texas, went to Texas A&M, so understands football in this state, has roots here, has the support of his family and the people around him. Your support system is as important as anything because when these players transition, they're going to deal with a lot, so having a good infrastructure in place, having a good support system in place certainly matters.

Ultimately, they're going to have to trust the people in our building to help enhance their overall experience as a player. So the most important thing is try to find good players and play well, and if you play well, then some of the auxiliary benefits that come along with being a good player -- I think it's interesting, not to get into a long-winded discussion about that, but I think sometimes players get caught up in some of the ancillary things that are associated with being an NFL player.

Those come if you are a good player, so your focus should be on what do I have to do to be the best football player possible, and if I'm a good player, then those ancillary opportunities are probably going to be put in my face a little better more frequently.

If you're not a good player, nobody is really going to give a damn or care about you. So, focus on being a good player. The fact that there is a geographical element involved, I would say it's more coincidence probably more than anything else.

**Q. On nights like this, do you allow yourself to enjoy the message you are giving to these guys?**

NICK CASERIO: I've never really thought about it that way, but it's an emotional experience for that individual. This is a tremendous opportunity they've worked their entire life for.

I think you have a certain level of empathy and understanding for what they're going through. It's great to see people show emotion. I think it's okay to show emotion. Sometimes even when you are showing emotion, it's joy even though might not look -- it's probably tears of

joy. To be able to present a young kid with an opportunity, it's cool to be able to do that.

I don't look at what I'm doing is any more important than anything else. I'm just trying to do my job for the organization. Understanding that presenting an individual with a pretty unique opportunity, and you have a lot of faith. You're putting a lot of faith and trust in that person, so hopefully they reciprocate and provide something in return.

What these players experience, what these kids experience, I mean, I certainly can't reduplicate it. I'm not in their shoes. You understand it's a momentous occasion in their life. Certainly be sympathetic towards that, but it's fun for everybody. Part of it is it's our job too. Not to kind of put it from a business standpoint, so it's still a human business. It's still a people business, but it's also part of building and we have a job to do to put together a good football team. Ultimately, it's going to be about wins and losses because that's what this league is about.

**Q. You guys play the Colts and Titans twice a year that have a good running game. Were there any thoughts on drafting any of those two-technique guys?**

NICK CASERIO: There's a lot of good players that went in the first round, which is why they were drafted, so I would say we have a lot of discussion and dialogue about a lot of different things, about a lot of different players. Certainly we're cognizant of our division because everything kind of starts with our division. So is it ultimately going to factor in, well, said player is going to help us do this? It may or may not, but ultimately, you just try to pick good players that we feel fit our system. I think that's the most important thing.

**Q. You have 11 picks in this draft now. Do you think there is a max on how big a draft class can be?**

NICK CASERIO: Probably in the 10 to 12 range is probably feasible. Could you have more than that? Could you have less? We had five last year. I guess are we going to use all of our picks? We might. Can we move? I think 10 to 12. Once you get past 12 -- now, a lot of it, too, is contingent upon how many players do you have on your team, what's the composition of your team?

If you have 55 players on your roster, 60 players on your roster, 12 picks is nothing. If you have 65, 70 players on your team -- now, you could always replace players on your team, so I would say 10 to 12 is probably a feasible number. Whether we use all 11 picks here from tomorrow until the end, everybody will have to wait and find out.

**Q. After pick 15, did you have any serious talks about trading back into the first round?**



NICK CASERIO: We did. We had some dialogue. Absolutely we did. Kind of repositioning ourselves going from 37 to wherever, how much would that take? What would we have to give up in return? I think where we kind of ended up was, all right, to go from 37 to kind of the low to mid 20s, you would have to give up X, and then you would have a gap there in the middle. We wouldn't have 37. We would have 68 and 80.

Okay, to go from 68 to 50 would cost X. Then you're going to lose however many players. We definitely had some discussions about it, so in the end we just thought the discretion was to just sit and wait and kind of recalibrate here in the morning and then get ready to go tomorrow.

**Q. How much does players having an extra year of eligibility affect the middle round picks taht are coming up?**

NICK CASERIO: Ultimately, the draft you are just trying to supplement your roster and what you already have in place. So kind of to Adam's question, how many of those players can you fit? Well, if you think they are a good player, you think they're going to have some role on your team, then I think this particular draft probably in the two to three to four range, I would say there's a decent amount of players that are going to be available.

Once you get into five, six, seven, the quality of player is going to drop off a little bit. It doesn't necessarily mean they still can't make a contribution to your team, so we're just going to try to continue to supplement the team as best we can here over the next few days, and that will be the focus.

**Q. You said you see Kenyon Green more as a guard than a tackle. Does that give you any more of an idea of what you are going to do with Tytus Howard next year?**

NICK CASERIO: We'll do what we think is best. It's about getting the five best players on the field on the defensive line. We're fortunate that I think we have some good players at that position, and we feel good about the players we have at that position. Ultimately, we'll make a decision that we think makes the most sense for the organization.

Thank you, all. Take care.

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