

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Head Coach Lovie Smith

Postgame Press Conference



HOUSTON TEXANS 17, NEW ORLEANS SAINTS 13

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Anytime they keep score, you want to win. Simple as that. But there's a lot more we would like to get accomplished in these preseason games. We don't scrimmage against people or anything like that, so we haven't actually done an awful lot of live work, finishing, you know, defensive players being able to tackle, hitting the quarterback, ball carriers getting tackled and thrown to the ground. So all of that is good. And that's what you kind of use this first game for a little bit.

As you can see, we kept out quite a few of our players by design. We wanted to see some of the other players in some of the other situations that we got. I like what Jeff Driskel did. Jeff is our third team quarterback. Whenever you're third team quarterback and come in and keep running the offense -- I know early on we weren't running an awful lot. But he just plugging away. I like some of the things that he was able to do.

Dameon Pierce definitely caught my eye and everybody's eye that was watching him. And that's what we've seen in training camp also. He's a good football player. You know, we talk a lot about the turnover ratio. You know, offensively I think what did we have? Two turnovers. That's not good. Defensively taken away three times. Every one of those takeaways helped us. You know, I think we scored off of all of them. So that's what you need as a football team.

But we got a lot of good video on a lot of players. As I said before the game, you know, the depth chart doesn't mean anything until you actually have at least one live contest. So we know a lot more about our team now. No major injuries. That's another positive from this game.

I'll take your questions.

Q. What do you think about Davis Mills and his limited work tonight?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: We wanted to get Davis some

work limited work, just getting him out there on the football field was what we were looking for. Three of his offense linemen weren't playing. So it's a start. You know, we didn't have a lot of production with our one offense when we were out there. But, again, what we wanted to get accomplished with him, he's healthy going into game two.

Q. Dameon on the run he had, 20 yarder, what did see from your vantage point in terms of the cutback, run through a tackle?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, you're kind of explaining it all there a little bit. He can run with power. He can make you miss. He can cut on a dime. Catch the ball. There are some things that he can do well that you'd expect, you know, a good running back in the NFL to do. So as far as what we want to do as his first game, we wanted to get him some work. For a lot of the young players, you just want them to get their first NFL game in for them. So that was big for him.

Q. With the first team offense, seemed like you guys were a little conservative in terms of run-pass ratio. Was that due to some of the penalties or just a part of the game plan?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, no, I wouldn't say part of -- as far as being conservative, yeah. It's our first preseason game. And we're going to play a lot of players. I don't think the first preseason game is about tricking them an awful lot. We want to play kind of man-on-man football so we can get a good evaluation on a lot of players. You know, I think we were able to do that. But we wanted to be more productive early on. Of course, that wasn't a part of the plan. But as we grow, we'll get better.

Q. Lovie, when two young receivers for them, we don't know if they're going to be on the final roster, how important was for them to have as many reps as they did tonight?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: We're talking an awful lot about showing up first. I like the crowd that came out to see their team. Once you show up, you've got to show out. You've got to make some plays. For young players that know that



they're going to get a limited amount of opportunities, when you get it, you need to make yourself known. So that's what was good. That's what's always good about the preseason. You give guys an opportunity and they show you something that you haven't seen. As I said, you've been at our practices. We don't do a lot of live work. So I was anxious to see some of the young players when it's live throughout for 60 minutes.

Q. Lovie, you mentioned the fullbacks in training camp.

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Yes.

Q. That first touchdown drive, what do you take away from this team?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, our team, our players know that we're -- if you're a running football team, you need to be able to run the football and having a fullback help. We like all three of our guys, matter of fact. But that was part of the plan to get that started. They're all young players. Well, I wouldn't say that about Jano. But they're all talented, all bring something unique. Even Troy who hasn't been at that position a long period of time, we'll continue to use him.

Q. Coach, I know it's just been one preseason game, but how much did Jeff Driskel's performance actually change the plan that you guys have for him?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I mean, the plan is always -- I mean, you have a rotation. You know, Davis is our starter. Kyle is backing him up. And Jeff is our third quarterback. One goes down, we move everybody up. That's what happened tonight. And what's really good for me to see, for us to see, is that -- we tell guys always you've got to be ready. You never know when, you know, your number will be called to play almost the entire game. But Jeff prepares like that. It's not like that's a shock to us. He's a heck of an athlete. There are some things we can do with him, you know, read option plays and stuff like that. But I like the way he handled himself throughout.

Q. Lovie, you said that the depth chart comes more clear once you have games. I'm just curious what more do you need to see from Dameon Pierce for him to be the number one back?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I think it's a little early. It will work itself out. You know, just every time you go out and you practice a play, they tell you something. We're in no big hurry. It's a while before Indy gets here. Dameon has been impressive in practice. And we expected him to come tonight and do some of the things that he did. We'll

just keep fighting through. Next week, another guy may have a good game. But it's safe to say that we like Dameon for sure.

Q. Coach, you talk a lot about Blake Cashman during the OTAs. Talked a lot about him in training camp. You got a chance to see him in live action tonight. What was your evaluation of him?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I think he was a leading tackler tonight. He fits the profile. He's fast. He's a smart guy. He's kind of new to our system a little bit, but, you know, for the guys that have been out -- and ladies that have been out at training camp, he's flashed quite a bit. So when a guy has been flashing in training camp practices, you want them to take that to the field on game day. And I think, you know -- of course, I try not to get too high or too low before I actually study the video. But we like some of the things he did tonight, just like we've liked what he's done in training camp

Q. Hey, Coach, you said to start off that you learned something about your team tonight. I know you've got to go watch the film, but what's something you learned tonight about your team?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: We tell the guys always that -- most games come down to how you finish. Two-minute situation. Situational football. Most of our practices have ended with that. At the half -- he end of the half and at the end of the game, those situations came into play, which is big. So that's what I like. It's always about the finish. And guys were into it, coaching up the young players we had on the football field. So that was all good.

Q. Well, Lovie, of course, just the start of the preseason game, like you said, you get to see a lot of players, but how big of a boost is it for this team for you guys to finish the way you did and win the game the way you did so close to the end of the game?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Again, as I said, whenever they keep score, you want to win. And so to be able to do that whenever -- preseason, I understand. A lot of players out. But, you know, during the course of the year, we went to play Jacksonville last year. I don't know. We had most of our team out. And we needed young players to step up. So you just never know. But, again, no matter what, you find a way to put it together. And tonight we fought through some adversity. Turned it over a few times. They were able to get a couple drives going. But I'm going to go back again to how the guys finished has to give us a boost heading into -- who do we play next week?

Q. Rams?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Rams. They're the world champions or something like that. So we need to be at our best when we go out there.

Q. Lovie, three total turnovers, five total sacks. Just from a defensive perspective as a defensive coach, how (inaudible).

COACH LOVIE SMITH: You haven't been in the defensive room because we see it as three takeaways. You say three turnovers; right? We see it as three takeaways. We did turn the ball over two times. But you know that's what we preach. And the guys buy into it.

And especially the last one. He punched the ball out. It's not like, you know, an offensive player just fumbled it. So guys need to see that and to see, you know, setting the offense up in a favorable position. All these things, of course, a lot of them on video that we can teach from.

Q. Understanding that Davis is your starter. At the same time, second year player. Where is your philosophy or where do you stand on him playing more series than two?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, I mean, the first preseason game, the plan is not to play him a lot. They play more the second and then the third. We have a plan for a three-game preseason. I'll just say that. That's what we wanted Davis to get tonight. I understand he hasn't played a lot, but he's got more reps in practice than anyone. We feel comfortable with a healthy football team for the most part going in to play the world champion next week. He'll get his reps in.

Q. Lovie, your depth at cornerback also has crossover to special teams. How does Tremon Smith's performance both in the return game today and also the interception factor and how you balance that group and will be a part of it?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, the more things you do, the better your chances. And Tremon, of course, is our returner. He's gotten the ball in the endzone. We've seen him. We know what he can do in that role. But when you say the more things you do. To be able to do that and also play good ball at the cornerback position in a backup role is big for us. And it's always good when a cornerback will get his hands on the ball. But I expect that when he got his hands on the ball, since he's our returner, right, I was hoping he could maneuver and use some of those moves to get it into the end zone. We'll work on that next week.

Q. Lovie, what did you think of Jalen Pitre's initial

performance when he was able to learn and pick up some things? And also Kurt Hinish?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I think young players have to get that first game. I ask them, hey, how much sleep did you get. You know your first game, it doesn't matter. You're really excited to play it.

Jalen Pitre has been outstanding throughout camp. This is just another thing, of course, he has to go through. Right now from not, you know, analyzing the video like what he -- just like all camp, I like what he's done.

And you mentioned Kurt. Whenever you have a nose guard that gets a sack, that's really big. But he's been a steady performer throughout camp also.

Q. As a defensive play caller in preseason, what's the balance from trying not to show too much but still put the defense in an advantageous situation for them to execute?

COACH LOVIE SMITH: It's a good question. Our approach -- I mean, everything we do is about getting ready for Indy. We wanted to just play some base football. I don't think you accomplish an awful lot by blitzing, doing a lot of tricking plays. You don't get a chance to really see how good your football players are. So the balance goes first preseason game, we don't do an awful lot. Dennis had the same approach. I mean, we kind of play vanilla football so we could get a good evaluation of our players. But as the preseason goes along, you start adding more. And one of our games that we have, of course we'll treat it more like, you know, game situation, getting ready for the season.

Thank you.

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