

Houston Texans Media Conference

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Houston, Texas, USA

Lovie Smith

Press Conference



LOVIE SMITH: As a football coach, we like practice. Practice is always good. Players like it too.

Practice does have a little bit different feel when you have a special guest come back. We've been praying for John and just watching him deal with a tough illness, but it's good for the team to see him back in the fold.

Once you get to these practices too, this is really your typical Friday practice for us, kind of final work.

This isn't typical because we have an early game, but we're excited about playing the 49ers. They're a good football team, a tough football team. So it will be good for us to see exactly how we watch up against one of the better teams in the league.

Q. What does it say about your group, everybody just seeing John again, and what you guys have done to rally around him? The kind of culture you're building here, all of that kind of combined.

LOVIE SMITH: Normally on most teams I've been with, it is a tight knit group, and there is a brotherhood, and you care. He is family.

Everybody, of course, realizes what John is going through, but a visual means an awful lot. That special smile he has, it was good for everybody to see it today.

Q. What would you like to see from these running backs?

LOVIE SMITH: Running backs and all positions. It's a good football team. We're going to play more. We want to just see exactly where we are. All those practices we put in, exactly where we're at.

This will be the last dress rehearsal before they count, so that's what we're going to see. Running back position, of course, is a big part of that.

Q. Dameon Pierce, just what you're seeing in these

practice sessions?

LOVIE SMITH: We're seeing everything you need to see from a good running back. He can catch the ball. He can run in between the tackles. He'll make you miss in the open field, pads down low. There's a lot of things I like about Dameon.

Q. What do the rest of the running backs in the room need to do to distinguish themselves?

LOVIE SMITH: Play better. It is that simple really. It's about production. When you get opportunities, flash. Show us your best. At the end of training camp, the best of everyone is what we should have seen. If not, one last time to show it.

Q. So much depth in that front seven. I know every year is different, but traditionally do you have a set number you like to keep on D-line and linebacker?

LOVIE SMITH: Yeah, we have a set number, but number is always flexible a little bit. Most of the time, game day -- I talk game day more than just keep. Game day, most of the time we're going to dress at least eight defensive linemen. We're going to dress at least six linebackers. From there, the numbers get a little bit flexible.

Q. First time you recall thinking, oh, Dameon Pierce can do something?

LOVIE SMITH: I think -- early on, we did a lot of work on him coming in, so we'd seen his highlights. The best of him in college, we saw, that's on your mind.

Then when he gets here, he was just eager. Every time the special teams is working, you see him out here working. And then when he started playing.

I'm going to say early on there were signs, but you had to get in pads. Then we like some things he did in pads. Training camp, we're not doing a lot of live work. So you get to the first game and you see what a player is like live action, and we liked him every step along the way.



We're talking a lot about Damon, but I'm going to say the same thing for we like what Marlon has done, Ross, Rex, Dare. We have a good group. We have a good strong linebacker room.

Q. (Question regarding Ross Blacklock)?

LOVIE SMITH: Ross Blacklock? He will not play in this game.

Q. Kenyon Green?

LOVIE SMITH: Kenyon Green will. Kenyon made a lot of progress. He'll play. He won't start, but we'll get him into the mix. He's right on schedule.

Q. The new practice squad rules, being able to promote for three games without having to pick the 53. How much of that goes into building the 53 and the 16?

LOVIE SMITH: A lot goes into it. Most people say, we have to get down to 53. No, we see 53, 16 squad players, and an international player. We're talking about a 70-man roster is what we're doing, looking at, and doing whatever we can to keep those 70 strong for whatever we need going into the season.

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