

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

Coach Lovie Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Texans 17, 49ers 0

LOVIE SMITH: When we started training camp, there was so many questions. We had a plan of what we thought about our team, but we needed to play these games. We have a long ways to go still, but wherever you keep score, of course, you want to score more points as often as you can.

But we needed to finish tonight, and the plan was to play the guys a little bit more. I think offensively I know Davis went all the way in. I think it's important to come out, play the first half and then come out at least one series of the third quarter, which we were able to do.

We're a running football team, and offensively we have a good offensive line, even though we held a couple of our top-line players out, but running back wise, Dameon Pierce has been that way every time we've given him the ball. He's a good football player.

There's some other good things we did on the offensive side of the football. Protecting the ball of course is important to us.

As I said, defensively, whenever you get a shut-out, that's big. You've got to take the ball away. You've got to win that turnover ratio. So there's a lot of good things we did tonight.

Injury-wise we had a couple bumps and bruises. We'll kind of see where it goes tomorrow.

I'll take your questions.

Q. On the running back rotation, what do you feel like Dameon has done to make a case for the starting job or --

LOVIE SMITH: You know, we'll be announcing starting lineups and all that, but our plan through the preseason was to let all the guys play and then normally you let players play, they show you who should start, who should

play. Dameon has taken advantage of every opportunity he's gotten. I think everybody that's seen him play, the few games he's played, you've been impressed.

I thought Marlon Mack did a good things, too, carrying the ball, Royce Freeman. We have a strong running back room. We started camp that way, and they've confirmed everything we thought before camp.

Q. I noticed Roy Lopez wasn't out there. Was he injured?

LOVIE SMITH: Yeah, a little soft tissue injury. Shouldn't be much. Nothing to keep him out of the first game, anything like that. Going into the third preseason game, if guys aren't 100 percent or close to that, we held them a little bit. He'll be fine. Nothing serious.

Q. What are your thoughts on Kenyon Green? He had his first preseason game, I believe. What did you see?

LOVIE SMITH: I can't wait to see the video, but the plays I did see, there's a reason why we drafted him in the first round. He's a good football player. I thought he did some good things out there, made some good plays. But he's capable of that.

Eventually Kenyon will be in the lineup. Kenyon will be in the lineup, LT will be back out there, Justin Britt will be there, AJ Cann, and of course Tytus Howard. So I like what the offensive line has done, but I can't wait to see our starting group start playing together.

Q. You guys see Davis come back out after halftime. Did you have to say anything to him going into halftime for him to come back out the way he did?

LOVIE SMITH: As far as coming back and playing -- the plan all along was for him to play first half and get one series in the second half. That was just what the plan was along. He knew what it was. We all knew what it was before.

In an ideal world we wanted him to have some success, come out, one drive, do something good and then get out



of there, which we were able to do.

Q. A guy like Kurt Hinish who's an undrafted free agent, for him to have the game he's had and the preseason he's had, how does benefit your --

LOVIE SMITH: It helps. It's about making plays when you get an opportunity. When you say 53, I say 70. We're going to have 16 practice squad players, one international player, so we're going to have a 70-man roster, and we're going to try to do whatever we can to keep as many of the players that we like as possible. Kurt has taken advantage of his opportunities, too. But he's been like that just about every day of training camp, also.

Q. Did you see anything tonight that you were looking for, hoping to see?

LOVIE SMITH: I'll tell you what it is, no problem. We don't have any secrets in here, do we? There's a lot that we liked. I can't say that anything really surprised us.

Going in, all of our players knew we had one more opportunity; is there something you haven't shown the coaching staff, to do it tonight. So I felt like we were going to get -- someone was going to do something that maybe we haven't seen. It's always exciting for some of the guys a little bit farther down the depth chart to get an opportunity to make a couple plays, like a Jake Hansen getting in, getting a big interception there.

So you're always excited about those kind of things that happen.

Q. Can you talk about the play of Jalen Pitre tonight?

LOVIE SMITH: You know, what I really notice, what we notice, is when you're making a whole lot of big flash plays. Jalen has been consistent throughout. He's a smart player. He's been like a sponge as far as learning. But he's going to be around the ball. That's what we've seen since OTAs. So I'm excited about going forward with him and him lining up for us when Indy comes into town.

Q. You had a chance to get a couple of your veterans out there on the defensive line tonight. Talk about the impact Jerry had on the game.

LOVIE SMITH: If we talk about the plan for Davis and some of the other guys, the plan for some of our players that haven't played, Maliek Collins, yes, Jerry, Mario, our defensive ends, we wanted to get them just some time. We didn't want the first game against Indy to be their first action. But we've seen those guys throughout practice. They've been outstanding. They can rush.

I like what they did early on while they were out there.

What we wanted to get accomplished with some of those players, we were able to do that tonight.

Q. You mentioned when you first got in here that there were some things you guys need to improve on, some things y'all need to be better. What did you not like specifically from tonight?

LOVIE SMITH: I thought we did improve on some things. We had 11 penalties one preseason game, and the guys have really concentrated on that. We talk a lot about the turnover ratio. They made a couple good plays to take the ball -- at least one to take the ball away. Besides that I thought we protected the football fairly well. I just thought it was good, hard-nosed football.

Two teams with fullbacks on their rosters that like to run the football, it's not going to be a whole lot of passing in some of these games, so that was the kind of game we wanted to play tonight. I like a lot of what we did.

Q. You guys were able to force some takeaways throughout the preseason. What's the balance in not getting too high because it is the preseason because still allowing that to breed confidence in your defense?

LOVIE SMITH: I mean, we have professional guys in the room. We realize it's preseason. But I look at it just like practice. Every day you go out for practice. We had fans, a lot of fans showed up for our training camp. But they're not going to keep it in the permanent record, but whenever you're competing you want to do well.

As far as -- that would be an immature team that would say, hey, let's not get too high. No, I tell the guys to respond and react to what has happened, and what has happened is we've done some good things, which has allowed us to win all of our preseason games.

We know we've got to start over, but we'd rather be 3-0 instead of 0-3 right now. So there's a lot of answers to some of the questions that we had. That's what we're going to be along. Tomorrow the guys are going to come in, we're going to watch the video, we're going to clean up what we need to and we're going to go from there.

Q. A question about the defensive effort. You've got to like what you saw throughout the game from your front seven. Without seeing the tape, just talk about what you saw about the defensive effort and the pressure you got up front.

LOVIE SMITH: We're a four-man front. Defensive line is the engine of our defense. It starts there. In an ideal world, yeah, we have every manageable blitz. We want to be able to get pressure with four guys. It's an insult to our defensive line if we do blitz. They've been rushing the passer like that throughout camp and in all the preseason games we've liked the pressure we've been able to get. It's just not the starting four; we're talking about everybody that's played and the guys that have finished the game, played hard. Our numbers were down, and we were searching there at the end, but that's how the guys have performed. Our defensive line will -- we're going to dress at least eight each week, and they're going to need to perform well for us to win games.

Q. I'm curious, at the end of the first half, I think it was a 3rd and 3, you guys handed off to Burkhead and then it was a 4th and 1, had an opportunity to see Davis in the two-minute drill and you got a chance to punt. Is that just because you don't want to show too much on tape?

LOVIE SMITH: Well, there's a lot that goes into it. First off, it's the third preseason game. A lot of players aren't playing. We wanted to get a look, but we didn't want to do too much, try to limit the opportunities maybe for an injury or something like that.

During the regular season, we may have a different game plan in that situation, but that's exactly what we wanted to do tonight.

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