

Houston Texans Media Conference

Thursday, November 3, 2022

Houston, Texas, USA

Head Coach Lovie Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Philadelphia Eagles-29, Houston Texans 17

LOVIE SMITH: We knew who we were playing. Some people will argue the best team in football right now in the NFL.

I thought our guys played hard from start to finish. We didn't always play smart football, and there are some mistakes we have to eliminate, but I like the way they fought.

Offensively. First, offensive line. I thought offensive line did an excellent job. Of course, Dameon Pierce did what he normally does - run hard, an outstanding job. We got the running game going pretty good.

The turnovers hurt, simple as that. I like what Phillip Dorsett and Chris Moore did. Teagan getting his first action getting a touchdown. There's a lot of good things for us to like from an offense.

Defensively, you know, I think they were 4 for 4 down in the red zone. Didn't take the ball away enough, but I liked the way our guys fought.

Jerry Hughes played the type of game he normally plays. He is going to play hard, and he is a legitimate outside rusher.

Again, we did some good things, but it wasn't enough. We wanted to get it to the second half and then see what we could do, and some of those critical plays really hurt us. But I saw improvement in our ball club. That gives us a lot of hope going forward.

I'll take your questions.

Q. (Off microphone). Brandin expressed his displeasure on social media and now he has missed this game. Where do things stand with him? Do you have any hope that he will play for you again, and where is the status?

LOVIE SMITH: Brandin will be back in the building tomorrow on the team.

Q. On Wednesday and today was Brandin Cooks' absence excused?

LOVIE SMITH: I told you last week he was excused for personal reasons. Part of the personal reason was some of the things that were going on.

I more as a coaching decision didn't think that he was ready to play. When you don't practice through the week, I don't think you're ready to play through the game.

Q. How would you best evaluate your team's defensive performance containing Jalen Hurts?

LOVIE SMITH: I thought the guys fought hard. Statistically, when I talked about them getting touchdowns in the red zone, I mean, that really hurt. We saw improvement, though.

That's an excellent offensive team we just played. And we had a few guys, of course, in the front that steal out, but I thought the guys fought hard. Gave us a chance to win.

Q. When you say Brandin Cooks is going to be in the building tomorrow, do you expect him to play in the next game?

LOVIE SMITH: He is going to be in the building tomorrow, and everybody that's in the building on a football team, he will be back on the team ready to go tomorrow.

Q. Is he still the team captain?

LOVIE SMITH: You know what, guys, I think we've talked enough about Brandin didn't play. All right? I told you he will be back in the building tomorrow.

If you want to talk about the game, we can do that. As far as the captain, we have two offensive captains each game. Today L.T. was our captain. I thought he represented the team well.

Q. Lovie, when you look at a guy like Teagan who has been working back coming off the IR and got a big touchdown the way he did and the affect on the blocking. How pleased are you with his progression from being on the IR to now working in his first offense?

LOVIE SMITH: Very pleased. We played a lot of rookies, and he was the last one injury-wise that we wanted to see. We've seen some signs of that in practice.

But, you know, he can block. That's supposed to be his strong suit. To get his first catch, first touchdown, that was pretty big. But we have four tight ends that we liked, and we were able to use all of them.

Q. Lovie, how good was it to see Dameon bounce back from the performance that he had last week to get 130 yards?

LOVIE SMITH: I can't remember a lot about last week, but what I remember is every time Dameon stepped on the field, same type of effort he gives. He is hard to stop.

You know, I wouldn't want to be a defensive back with him having a full head of steam running downhill. You know, when I say just continuing to go, keeping his legs moving, moving the pile. What we want to be, a running football team. Physical running attack.

Our tail back kind of says it all in what we would like to be. For that to happen, as I said, offensive line I thought -- throughout the game I thought we got good push. Of course, we know what Troy Hairston is going to do too. And I think talked about Phillip Dorsett and Chris Moore earlier, but outstanding job by them.

In football there are injuries and different reasons why guys don't play. It's always about the next guy stepping up. So it was good to see those guys have that kind of game.

Q. What changes did you see offensively from last game to this, and where at this point is your confidence in Pep Hamilton as a play caller for you guys?

LOVIE SMITH: You know, we're growing each week. But, first off, we were able to -- we talked about starting fast. We haven't really started fast.

The first and the fourth quarter we haven't played our best ball. But to get that touchdown right away, I thought that was big for us. Even throughout. You take away those turnovers, and I thought we had a game plan that would allow us to win the football game.

Q. When you looked at the younger players, such as Jalen and Derek and now you add in Teagan and Christian Harris in extended reps, is it important for them to be on the field working with the first team unit because they are potentially the long-term future of this organization?

LOVIE SMITH: Well, that but that's secondary. They're on the football field because we think they give us the best chance to win. We start with that.

Are they our future? Yes. You really get excited talking about all of the young players that we have that are contributing right now getting better weekly.

Q. Can you talk about the pressure that your defensive line was able to get on Jalen Hurts and also the way your defensive backs played?

LOVIE SMITH: First off, Jalen Hurts, I made a statement this past week. I think he has improved maybe more than every player in the NFL. Outstanding player. He can throw the ball. He is mobile. A big guy to bring down.

But led by Jerry, I thought they did a good job of keeping him contained for the most part. That was a great play by him on that third and long, that last draw that he ran, but great players make those type of plays. But like a lot of the things we were doing up front and really the front seven.

Q. You're essentially at the midway point of the season. How do you evaluate the defense at this point, especially in the run? How do you feel like you guys have addressed that today and moving forward?

LOVIE SMITH: Well, I think we know what the stats say right now. I look at our last effort. I thought we did a pretty good job against a pretty good offense today, so I see improvement.

How do I judge? I kind of judge it based on the last game that we played. That's how I look at our football team. The last game that we played against a very good football team, we had a chance, about as good a chance as any, besides the win that we had.

I like the direction that we're going in all phases. That's what I would say about the evaluation of the run defense and everything else. We're trending in the right way now.

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