

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

Coach Ron Rivera

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Commanders - 23, Texans - 10

Q. What was that like getting the lead, maintaining and being able to finish it off like that?

COACH RIVERA: It was good. A lot of positive things in the first half a lot of things we can build on. And most certainly in the second half a lot of things we can get better at.

Hats off to the Texans. They didn't quit. They kept fighting until the very end. They gave it a good shot. And we've got to understand that teams are going to continue to fight. So we've just got to keep playing.

Q. How critical was it to stop the run early to be able to get that lead in the first half?

COACH RIVERA: It was very important just because they're a good running football team. And we know that. If we can slow the run down we can slow down their play-action game. There's a couple things, like I said, that we have to take a look at and just get better at.

Q. To have, we talked about Jonathan and Daron. To have those two guys do what they do, what do you think that (indiscernible) your defense in the last stretch?

COACH RIVERA: I think it's great. We're the only group with two defensive tackles with five-plus sacks each. That's a heck of a deal now. Those guys are playing sound, solid football. It's a big deal.

Q. The defensive performance in the first half, they minus-5 net yards. Is that about as well as you've seen these guys play?

COACH RIVERA: They're flying around. They're doing a lot of good things. And I think the biggest thing's they're playing with each other. They understand working together, what it means. There's a couple things, as I said -- there's a lot of things we'll have to work on and correct

from that second half, though.

Q. After Monday you talked about guys needing to act like they've been there, I guess, after the celebration. What did you think of how they held the (indiscernible) today? Do you think they responded the way you wanted them to?

COACH RIVERA: They did. And hats off to them because the biggest thing we want to make sure everyone understood is we're not where we want to be. We're headed in that direction.

We've got to continue to play and grow and develop and that was kind of the theme all week was understanding just how much more we've got left to do before we can get to where we really want to be.

Q. Question on the quarterback, do you have a plan now with Taylor --

COACH RIVERA: We're going to go with Taylor. And we'll work Carson back in and see where Carson is in terms of if he's ready to be the backup. And then we'll go from there.

Q. What were those conversations like?

COACH RIVERA: They were very good.

Q. With Carson in particular (indiscernible) backup, how did you tell him he was going to be a backup?

COACH RIVERA: He was very good. He really was.

Q. What was it Taylor had shown you to lead you to this decision?

COACH RIVERA: Winning. I mean, that's the truth of the matter. That's where we're at right now.

Q. You're wearing the Virginia shirt. What did it mean to be able to pay tribute --

COACH RIVERA: It meant a lot to play tribute to the University of Virginia. They're our neighbors. They're part



of our community. We're very sad for them and we just wanted to at least give a shout-out to let them know we're thinking about them and they're in our thoughts and prayers.

Q. So much focus has been on the quarterback. How much is kind of this (indiscernible) you're on, (indiscernible) one stretch, it's part of the defense being a lot better than it was.

COACH RIVERA: I think the defense has really come together. That's a tribute to Jack and the defensive staff, a tribute to the young players that are developing and growing and it's a tribute to the player leadership that they have -- Jonathan, Daron, Montez, Bobby, Kendall -- those guys have stepped up and really been the leaders that we hoped they could be for us. And it's been awesome. It really has.

Also give credit to the offensive line and the running backs. Those are groups of guys that are just very steady doing their jobs. We got the dynamic playmakers that are making plays when we need them and doing their thing. There's some really cool stuff that's going on right now. This team is starting to grow.

Q. Back to Wentz, when did you tell him -- on Friday?

COACH RIVERA: I talked to him.

Q. I guess when?

COACH RIVERA: I talked to him, okay?

Q. I guess I was just curious how did he know going in, what do you think his mindset is of knowing he needs to play well --

COACH RIVERA: He doesn't need to play well. He just needs to play. We need to continue doing what we're doing. I'm not looking to pull anybody out. I'm not looking to yank anybody. What I'm looking for is us to continue to play well and do things the way we're supposed to.

This is not a competition as far as a controversy. That's the last thing that's on my mind. What this is, that's why I talk about doing it one game at a time, staying focused, one game at a time, the most important thing. As far as the quarterback is concerned, Taylor will start as we get ready to play Atlanta.

Q. One thing you mentioned with the quarterbacks is consistency. What have you seen out of Taylor in that regard? And has that been like a month of improvement for him?

COACH RIVERA: I think it's a mark of improvement. There are some consistent things that he's doing. There's still, every now and then he'll do something that you hold your breath.

He thought he had Terry cutting across the middle of the zone going vertical, and he goes to throw it out there and Terry and the safety actually collide. You hold your breath. That's Taylor every now and then.

Q. Complementary football is something you've talked about quite a bit. Do you feel that's starting to come together?

COACH RIVERA: I think it is because you look at the time of possession, being able to rush over 100 yards, that's important. And when you're doing that, you're keeping your defense off the field. It is an important formula.

We're fortunate because, again, as I said, the Texans are a heck of a running team. And we're able to be up front, be physical and slow that down and that really helped us. And again it's a tribute to our guys that they understood what we needed to do.

Q. Having been around here for a number of years, are you ever surprised how the team rallies around them?

COACH RIVERA: No, I'm not just because, as I say, there's that underdog mentality that people appreciate. They appreciate the way he does things. And, again, whether he's the backup or he's the starter, he's all in. And that's what makes him so viable. And that's why it's important for us to bring him here.

And there was a time, same thing was true for Kyle Allen. We had Kyle and Kyle's the same kind of guy. Those are the kind of young men you want on your team.

Q. Sometimes it's like you're conservative with your praise when it comes to Taylor. Why is that?

COACH RIVERA: I don't think I am. I think I give credit to him and what he does.

Q. (Indiscernible) point out what you just said, holding your breath.

COACH RIVERA: I mean, I do. I'm just like everybody here. I'm a fan. I see what he does. He systematically leads us down the field and we score points. We do the things that we need to, so I'm telling you what I think.

Q. Understanding that each team (indiscernible) the

**defense, based on what they did in the second half.
What point do you think this team really started to turn around?**

COACH RIVERA: As far as the defense is concerned, I'd say there was some really good things that we did in the Philadelphia, first Philadelphia game. We held them under 100 yards rushing.

We gave up six explosives that hurt us. But those are the kind of things that you grow on based on that. We held a really good rushing team under 100 yards twice. That was big for our guys.

Q. You guys also, during this stretch, five on six, turnover margin really good. Penalties going down. What, why have those things turned?

COACH RIVERA: I think, first of all, if you look at us traditionally over the years, we've always been one of the fewer penalized teams in the league. So that doesn't surprise me that that's trending down.

Turnover ratio, I think, has been a continued emphasis by our defensive staff. And they work on it and talk about it every day, daily. On Thursday they do do the turnover over Thursday attitude, like a lot of other teams do. That's been important. It's been a focus.

So it's the things that you work on, I think, is the things you improve on. And that's something that they've mostly been improving on.

Q. Did you consider putting Sam in at the end there or anything like that?

COACH RIVERA: Very briefly, I did. I really did. But we were managing. We were going to run the ball and we weren't going to -- we didn't want to expose Taylor any more to possibly taking another hit. We kept him in and moved the ball off.

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