

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Chair and CEO Cal McNair GM Nick Caserio

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hey, everybody. Thanks for being here. We're going to get started with an opening statement from Cal McNair and then Nick is going to come up. If you guys have any questions or need anything from us afterwards, just come stop me or anybody from my staff.

CAL McNAIR: Well, good evening, everyone. Thanks for coming. As you know, Nick and I spoke with Lovie last night and informed him that we would be moving in a different direction as an organization.

These decisions are extremely difficult, and we appreciate everything Lovie has done for us over the last two years as a coach and a leader. We just felt this was the best decision for us at this time.

We know the last two seasons have not been what we had hoped for, but we're committed to building a program that's successful and long-term. We've dealt with unprecedented circumstances over the last several years, but we're excited about our future and where we're headed.

We're constantly evaluating where we are as an organization, looking for ways to improve, and reaching out to our fan base. Whether that's exploring uniform changes or making head coach changes, we're always looking to up our game in every area and take our organization to the next level.

Now we're committed to getting this one right. I have full confidence in Nick. He has led our football operations through a difficult stretch and continues to prove he is an elite talent evaluator. We talk constantly and have a plan for this process that we'll execute together over the next days and weeks.

For this hire I'll be taking on a more active role in the process. The league has done a great deal of work to establish an equitable and inclusive head coach hiring process, which we fully support. The structured process allows us to begin the head coaching interviews virtually



this week, and we can begin interviewing candidates in person after the Wild Card games.

As we conduct formal interviews in this process, Nick and I will operate very transparently and keep the media and fans updated on our progress. We feel there's a strong list of potential head coach candidates, and we're excited to work with them. We're going to pick the best coach to take this team into our next future with significant draft capital, salary cap space, and talented young roster.

Like I said, I'm excited and optimistic about what's possible moving forward on the field. I know our team has a bright future ahead.

Thank you, again. I'll pass it over to Nick, who will make a statement, answer some questions. I know you guys probably you have a lot of questions. I'll be available throughout this process and answer them and provide clarity as we move along. Thank you.

NICK CASERIO: Good evening. Appreciate you being here. Appreciate you taking a few minutes. Before we move forward, I think it's important for myself -- I know Cal has mentioned it -- to acknowledge the contributions and leadership that Lovie provided this program over the past two seasons in a variety of different roles.

So a lot of respect and appreciation and admiration for Lovie as a person, what he did for our team, what he has done for a lot of people in our building. He had a very positive impact on a lot of different people.

In the end after a careful, thoughtful research and evaluation of our program, we felt, I felt, that this was the best decision for our program moving forward.

We have a long road ahead of us. We have a lot of work to do. I'm sure there will be a lot of questions. I think our commitment is to the people in this building, this program. It's not about one person. It's not about one individual. It's about doing what's right for everybody in the building. It's about doing what's right for the players, and it's about doing what we feel is best for the organization moving forward.



Certainly indebted to Lovie for his contributions and what he has done for our organization. As Cal alluded to, we started the process of moving forward of identifying candidates to be the next head coach of the Houston Texans. We have a lot of work in front of us, but I don't think anybody is discouraged. I think we're all disappointed about where we are here currently. I don't want to speak for anybody other than myself. I'm certainly disappointed in where we are.

I take as much responsibility in where we are, and I'm accountable to everybody in this building. Quite frankly, I'm probably more disappointed in myself more than anybody, but I'm also excited about the opportunity we have in front of us.

I think we've done a decent job of putting the organization in a good position. With our team we didn't get the results on the field that we all would have hoped for and we all would have wanted, that we all would have expected. I think we have an opportunity here to move forward as we turn the page.

We've positioned ourselves fairly well from a draft capital standpoint. We'll have pretty adequate salary cap space. So in the end it's about making the right decisions, it's about making the best decisions, and it's about making the decisions that we feel are best for our team and our organization.

That's my commitment to ownership. I'm appreciative of their support and the resources that they're willing to provide. As Cal mentioned, I would say the only way to get better and improve is to look at all facets of your process and operation, and we're doing that. Not only on a football operations standpoint. We're going to do it on a coaching process standpoint.

We've already talked about implementing some different, I would say, techniques and tactics that we feel can help us and relying on, I would say, more members and people in the organization, making it a more inclusive process and not just make it about one individual or one person.

So we're trying to be proactive. We're trying to make decisions that we feel make the most sense, and we're trying to, I would say, make adjustments and modifications because the only way you can improve your situation is to acknowledge where there may be some deficiencies, but also to recognize where there may be some strengths and where there may be some areas that we can improve our process.

So that's what we're committed to doing. That's where our

commitment is to the people that are here in this building. That's our commitment to the city of Houston.

I would say this day, you know, it's been a hard day. It's been a rough day, but I would say it's been a very thoughtful and productive day. I've had the opportunity to meet with essentially all of our coaches here in the building that are on staff for their feedback, for their perspective on where they see things.

Had an opportunity to meet with the team and with the players and address them and be honest and very candid about where we are. My message to them was about accountability and that I take responsibility where we are and that I'm committed to them and doing everything I can.

This is a players' league. This is about the players. So you are only as good as the players that you have in your building, and it's a people business. You are only as good as the people that you have in your building. Our commitment is to find the best people and to utilize the resources that we have to try to continue to move this program along in a positive direction.

I would say we've made some strides and some progress. We've put ourselves in a decent position. I think that's the best way to summarize it. I think it's important, and nobody wants to hear words. It's about action, and nobody is going to be happy until we have results behind that action, so that's the most important thing.

With that, I'll take some questions.

Q. Nick, you mentioned the change in the process of going about the head coaching hiring right now. What within the process needed to change specifically, and how are you going to go about doing that, and why did it need to change?

NICK CASERIO: It's a good question, Brooks. I think including maybe more voices, more people, utilizing the resources that we have in the building, utilizing our resources throughout the league, using some of the data and information that might be more available.

I would just say, candidly, me allowing other people to be a part of that process because we trust the people that are in the building. I think that's my responsibility to everybody that's here.

So, again, we have an opportunity to get it right, and that's what we're fixated on doing is trying to get it right. And the only way to improve is to find ways to improve, and you have to be committed to making those improvements.

Now, does it automatically mean it's going to end in the results that we all want, that we're going to be 17-0 next season? I don't think that's realistic, but I think what we want to see is progress in as many areas as possible. I would say we've made progress in some areas. There's other areas we have to continue to make progress, but as far as the process in and of itself, I think we're going through that. We're talking about it on a regular basis. We've had multiple conversations about it today.

I don't want to necessarily get into the depth and the detail about it, but I would say utilizing resources that are readily available to us that maybe, quite frankly, we haven't done as productive a job using previously.

Q. Nick, when you look for candidates, ideally what is the ideal candidate for the Texans? And you mentioned expanding (indiscernible)?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, there's a lot of really good coaches in this league, so I think we're going to be diligent about that. You know, as Cal alluded to, there's a process that the league has in place that you have to go through. I would say the league has done a great job of sort of, to kind of Brooks' question, enhancing the process and the thoroughness of it.

So establishment of the job description, which is important, number one. Number two, there's training and other vehicles that each club has to go through to make sure they're in compliance. And, number three, then to get in the process and notification and then you have perimeters in place in terms of when you can talk to candidates, being respectful of their situation, being respectful of their season. And then doing some, I would say, internal review of some of the things that we've done.

I would say to your question about what's important, in the end it's a leadership position. The head coach's responsibility is to consistently, continually message the players, create belief, create a vision for the team, work in concert with as many people that are in the building.

I would say my role is a supplementary role to be as big and as much of a resource as possible. And it has to be a collaborative effort, and it will be a collaborative effort.

The only way you accomplish things is together as a team. When we look at an actual team on the field, it's not about one player, it's not about one position. It's about 11 players functioning at an optimum level. That's how you have sustained success.

It's no different in a football operation. So the head coach/general manager relationship, it's always been

important. It will continue to be important. And the ability to lead the team, message the team, and there are a number of other things that go along with it, but I think in the end coaching is about teaching and it's about leadership. Those are the things that are paramount.

And everybody has different strengths, everybody has qualities, everybody has areas that they're more accomplished than others. In the end we have to figure out what's the best thing for the Houston Texans at this present time, what's the best for our situation, what's the best for our building, what's the best for our coaches, what's the best for our players.

Q. As general manager how has it moved things forward, been beneficial for this organization to hire David Culley, fire him after one year, promote Lovie Smith, fire him after one year? Everything that you are mentioning, how does that gel, work with everything you are trying to accomplish? I don't understand how it does.

NICK CASERIO: That's a fair question, Brian. I think we have to improve. We have to get better. I think us, me individually going back and looking at our process, looking at how we arrived at the endpoint, in the end each year is its own entity. And my responsibility and my job is to each year at the end of the year comprehensively do an evaluation of our entire football operation. That's my responsibility. That's what I've been tasked to do.

Can I do a better job? Absolutely. Am I committed to doing a better job? Absolutely. So we're going to try to find ways that we can improve. We're going to try to make sound decisions, and we are going to try to make better decisions, and that's the only we're going to move this organization forward. I think that's the most important thing.

Quite frankly, we're disappointed in the position that we're in. For me to not acknowledge that would be foolhardy. I'm not going to do that.

So, again, I'm not going to hold anybody accountable other than myself, so I take as many accountability and responsibility. And in the end I'm committed to trying to get it fixed, to trying to getting it right with the people that are in this building and trust the people that are around me, trust in the resources that are available, trust in our team. And in the end that's how we're going to arrive hopefully at the end result that we can all be proud of.

Q. To build on this question, after two coaches in two years and then basically taking the blame for what has happened here, getting fired after really not being given much of a chance. At what point does it start to



be a question of what are the other problems and not just the head coaching problem?

NICK CASERIO: That's more than fair. It's a fair question, Christy. I'm not going to hide or walk away from those responsibilities.

The only thing I can do is to take inventory of where we are, try to provide what I believe are the best solutions moving forward, trust the people that are in the building, trust the people that are around me, trust the team that we've assembled, and try to make the right decisions.

I would say just candidly and honestly as we work through this process and as if there's candidates, if they feel that whether or not in my position that I'm worthwhile to be in my position, if ultimately the best thing for the organization is for me not to be in that position, then I have to respect that and acknowledge that. I'm certainly not above and beyond anything else.

What I've tried to do is just be consistent on a year-to-year basis, try to do what I believe is in the best interest of our team on a year-to-year basis, our organization. And eventually at some point if somebody feels that's not the direction we need to go, I'll respect that and acknowledge that. That's my response.

The only thing I can do is do the best job that I can, try to make the decisions that I feel make the most sense, and that's what I'm exited committed to doing.

Q. Where in particular do you think you fell short, (indiscernible)?

NICK CASERIO: It's never one thing. It's not about one thing. It's not about one particular area. Its not about one game. It's not one particular aspect.

You know, we were hopeful. I was hopeful that this was going to work and wanted it to work. In the end I have a responsibility each year to evaluate what we're doing and try to figure out where there may be gaps. Again, it's not about one person. I certainly have plenty of things that I can improve and plenty of things that I can work on.

I think in the end we're disappointed with the end result. We're disappointed on kind of where we ended up here at the end of the season. This is a results business, and we haven't, candidly, gotten the results that we've all wanted and we all hoped for her, and our goal is to it try to get that fixed. And we're committed to doing that. I'm committed to doing that. I don't know other way to do that.

It's going to take a lot of work. It's going to take a lot of

purposeful work. It's going to take a lot of effort, and it's going to take relying on a lot of people around you that you trust that you feel can be a part of the process to make the right decision for the team that we feel the team and the organization needs.

Q. So Lovie Smith and David Culley got fired both after one year. Both minorities. We know the plight of black coaches in the NFL. Why should any black coach that you interview feel that they can trust that you will put your full faith and trust in their plan that they could be here long-term after you fired two black coaches after one year?

NICK CASERIO: I think each individual is going to have to make that choice. I think this is -- in the end it's not about race. I mean, it's about finding quality coaches. There's a lot of quality coaches. David is a quality coach. Lovie is a quality coach.

In the end each coach has their own beliefs. Each coach has their open philosophy. Each coach has their comfort level about what we're doing. That's all I can do is just be honest and forthright, which I've done from the day that I took this job and I'm going to continue to do that and try to find a coach that we feel makes the most sense for this organization.

That's the simplest way I can answer it, and that's my commitment. You know, that's what I'm hired to do, and that's what I'm in the position to do. At some point if somebody feels that that's not the right decision for this organization, then I have to respect that, and I have to accept it.

Q. What is the status of the staff, the coaches on staff?

NICK CASERIO: Good question. So essentially met with a staff here today. I would say it's a pretty fluid process. We'll kind of look at each of their situations individually.

Whomever we end up hiring as a head coach, they're obviously going to have a say and input relative to the coaches on our staff. So I think I have an obligation and responsibility to our coaches, to their situations that come up where there may be interest externally or once we have more clarity on our end is to communicate with them. They may have other opportunities to go elsewhere. There may be an opportunity to be a part of the current staff that we put together, so we met.

I met with the staff here today and just tried to let them know we'll keep an open line of communication. There are some coaches that we may want to keep here. There are



some coaches that might want to move on because of their own volition. There may be some coaches that we have to move on from because of whomever the new coach is.

We try to be honest with them and try to be pretty open, but this is a pretty fluid situation. You know, frankly, it's probably going to be hard to get any clarity for the next two to three weeks because of the way the hiring practices are kind of set up because of the teams that are playing, depending on who you are going to have a coaching discussion with. But we'll try to be as open and communicative with them as possible and try to keep them abreast of the situation as best we can.

Q. Aside from the race part that DJ mentioned, just for any coach, how do you address the instability questions or questions about credibility and things like that to potential head coaches if it comes up in the hiring process?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, when we get in these interviews, the only way to handle things is to be honest and open and respect their position and solicit their feedback and get their opinion and get their comfort level with what we're doing.

So this is an opportunity for whoever we speak with. Say there's a good chance, like, we've never worked together, haven't necessarily had a working relationship or a history with them, so there's going to be -- have to be an open dialogue. There's going to have to be open communication. You know, quite frankly, there's going to be some tough conversations that we may need to have.

The only way to do it is to be forthright, is to be honest, to communicate back and forth, to get a comfort level with one another, try to figure out where the gaps may exist, try to figure out what are some of the things we think we need to do better, that I need to do better, and that's the only way we're going to make productive progress.

Q. You talked a lot about accountability. What do you think you can actually do better as a general manager and to put the new coach in a better position?

NICK CASERIO: Every year we look at everything. Are there different ways, different players that we can bring on the team? Do we have an opportunity to add a player that maybe we lost out on? Overwhelming factors. Why did a player work out?

So those are the dialogue and communications that we have with the scouting staff, and we meet on a regular basis. The coaching staff, the input of the coaching staff is going to be important.

I think we've brought in, I would say, some decent young players here over the past few years. It doesn't necessarily mean that we've solved all of our problems, but we've gotten good production out of a fair amount of players.

We can all do a better job. When you win three games, it's not about one thing. It's not about one particular area that you have a shortcoming. There's a number of things. But I think there are examples, whether it's in the building, whether it's on the team, whether it's on the field that we saw some encouraging things.

It doesn't mean that we've gotten ultimately to where we want to be. And whatever we can do to fix it, whatever areas we can look to improve, like, that's the only thing we can do is try to come up with solutions and fix problems. I mean, that's the only thing we can do. There's no other way around it.

Q. David won four games. Lovie won three. When you are going through the next process, what can you tell them in order to give them job security on that even if they come in and only win five games for the next two years? What type of job security will they have? Does the wins and losses factor into that?

NICK CASERIO: That's a fair question. I think everything factors in. So I think ultimately what you want to see is you just want to see progress. How is that progress measured? There's a number of different ways that you measure progress.

It's in the building. It's out of the building. How do we practice? What are different things that we're doing? Are we doing enough to help the players? Are we doing enough to provide the resources to the players? Are we doing things on the field that give us an opportunity to win on a consistent basis?

So I think -- look, in the end we're judged by wins and losses. No one is going to refute that. In addition to wins and losses, there are other things that you have to evaluate. As somebody that oversees the football operation in concert with whomever the head coach is, we have to be honest and candid about our evaluation about where we think we are in essentially all areas.

So, again, it's not going to be about one particular thing, one particular player, one particular result. It's going to be an accumulation of things over time and if we're showing a pattern of behavior that is moving in the right direction. That's what we're going to have to measure it by.

Now, there's data and other metrics you can utilize, and we

have that information. I would say I've looked at that from some of the things that have occurred during the season, and we're going to use that information as we move forward, as we look at the 2023 roster construction, players that are under contract, players that are not under contract, who do we have an opportunity to add to the building, what's his role going to be?

We kind of have an idea of where we are from a draft capital standpoint, and we're going to have, call it, again, 10 to 12 new players, new drafted players. I kind of undercut ourselves by a pick there because there's always a propensity to trade, which I think you all know following the team, we're not afraid to do that.

So it could be ten. It could be 12. It could be 11, what it is now. It could be 14. Who knows?

So it's going to be an accumulation of a number of things over the course of a, call it, 12-month period. At the end of the year our job our responsibility is to look at everything and ultimately do what we feel is in the best interest of the team, whatever that entails.

Q. Nick, about a year ago when you were talking about hiring Lovie Smith you mentioned that was your decision. Over the course of this press conference you've mentioned several times collaboration. I'm guessing that's something that you are looking to make a part of a future endeavor. When it comes to who decides the next head coach, though, is that a decision that comes down to you? I know Cal is sitting right in front of you. You can steal the mic if you can.

NICK CASERIO: Look, in the end it's going to be a my recommendation to ownership, and then ownership, our dialogue with each other, and then ultimately Cal and Hannah own the time. So I'm going to be respectful of their wishes. I think we're going to be respectful of each other's perspective and wishes, and ultimately we're going to do what we feel is in the best interest much the Houston Texans organization.

So in the end I think the owner has the trump card. For me to think otherwise, that's probably rude of me. But that's just the reality of it.

Q. The understanding that you are saying this is going to be a more inclusive process, and that will differentiate it from the last two, why is this process going to yield better results than the kind of results (indiscernible) --

NICK CASERIO: It's a fair question. I don't know if it

guarantees results. I think we're hopeful that some of the measures and some of the things that we're going to do are going to result in better results.

So nothing is guaranteed. I mean, we've seen that really a lot of things aren't guaranteed on a day-to-day basis. We can't take anything for granted. It would be, I would say, ignorant of me to sit up here and say changing our process is going to lead to an end result that leads to X number of wins. I think that's irresponsible. It's not going to guarantee anything. Nothing is guaranteed. It's all we're guaranteed is an opportunity.

I have a responsibility, and I understand, like, let's be real, let's be honest. The clock is ticking. Time is short, but that's okay. Like, we live in a high-pressure -- we work in a high-pressure environment. The expectations are high, and it's about performance.

If I don't do my job well enough, you know, in the end and, quite frankly, some probably think I haven't done my job well enough at this point, and that's more than fair. At some point a decisions will have to be made, and the only thing I can do is make a commitment to our building, to our ownership group, to our team, to our organization that we're going to do everything we can to try to come up with a better result.

Q. Somewhat a follow-up to that, you're searching for your third head coach in three years. Most general managers don't get that opportunity. Why should people have confidence that this time around this organization can do that?

NICK CASERIO: That's the goal. Certainly appreciative of the support from Cal and Hannah and their willingness to provide the resources available.

Again, there's no guarantees on anything, all right, and I'm going to do the best job I can. We're going to try to continue to move this organization forward the best we can. We've made some progress in some areas. We haven't made, quite frankly, progress in enough areas.

I realize that. I recognize that. I'm certainly not going to run from that. Again, like I said from the beginning, I'm going to hold myself accountable. In the end nobody is more disappointed in myself than myself, so the only thing I can do is try to come up with solutions to try to present what I believe is the best thing for our organization, and that's my commitment to this organization. And if it's good enough, it will be good enough. If it's not good enough, then I have to deal with the consequences. I understand that.

Q. So the other candidates were over the age of 60. Are you potentially looking for a more youthful coach to build a long and lasting culture?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I don't think we're going to pigeon hole ourselves. Again, good coaches can kind of come from a lot of different places, a lot of different areas. So we'll be very thoughtful, and we'll try to make a good decision that we feel makes the most sense for our organization.

So we want to be able to move the organization forward, so we want to be able to put something in place that we can have success for a sustained period of time. You know, we're certainly not there right now, but that's the hope, and that's the intention, and that's the goal.

What does that lend itself to in terms of the actual coach? In the end I certainly wouldn't want to pigeon hole ourselves in what the end result is going to be.

Q. What would you say to people who say, listen, you hired two coaches that had a shot to be successful, and now you're in a better position because of that capital and cap space, but they're not here. You're still here to get a chance to be involved in that. How do you answer that? And the second part of it is, what are the main characteristics you are you looking for in the next head coach?

NICK CASERIO: To your first question, you know, that's fair. The only thing I can do is show up every day and try to do the job to the best of my ability and try to represent our players, our organization, our ownership group the best I can.

So I'm grateful to be afforded the opportunity here. Again, like I said a little bit earlier, if whomever we hire or whomever we decide upon doesn't feel that my role or the position that I'm in is appropriate for what we want to do moving forward, I understand that, and I can accept that. All I can do is provide counsel and provide the resources and provide the direction and guidance to ownership to what I feel is best.

To your second question, we asked the question, what are the things that are important? Again, it's a leadership position. It's about leadership. It's about being able to prioritize the players, create a vision for the players, create a mission for the building, work in concert and collaboration with the, I would say, ownership group, with the business ops group, with the football group.

So all those things are a part of the equation. So there's no one-size-fits-all. I think it's very difficult to do that.

There's a lot of things -- I mean, we try to write a job description for a head coach. I mean, we could spend two days on a job description about what that entails.

I think there are certain qualities and characteristics that are going to be important. You know, we're going to prioritize those in the interviews. And the more dialogue and more discussion, in the end this is about R&D and research and development, and it's about doing the deep dive and taking the information, and it's about utilizing resources we have in front of us to try to make the right decision. That's the best I can answer it.

Q. You talked about the process. You talked about, I guess, kind of ignoring people and not listening to enough people. Why was that? How involved was Jackie to be in previous coaching processes, and you've also mentioned, like, five times how if I'm not the guy, I'm done. Do you fear for your job? What is to be made of you mentioning that now, like, five times kind of?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, Landry. I think in the end it's about accountability. So, again, I'm not going to sit up here, and nobody is happy with where we are. I think we're all disappointed about the result of the season.

I'm going to work my ass off like I've done since the day I walked in the building, and that's my commitment, and that's what I'm going to on continue to do. That's not going to change.

As far as our process, I wouldn't say it's not about an individual, what we've necessarily done in the past. I think it's I would say utilizing the resources that we have available. Maybe we didn't have available prior and some of the way that we're piecing this together and how we're constructing it. So I think that's more illustrative of probably where we are.

I don't know if I answered your question, but I think that's a little bit more clarity and direction in terms of how we're going about it, utilizing the resources that are available to us and then utilizing it to the best of our ability and trying for use it to our advantage so we can make the right decision.

Q. Nick, you stated a lot of words. What can you say to assuage people that you know what you are all doing? At the end of the day this is a trifecta. Right now I wouldn't go to Las Vegas with you.

NICK CASERIO: I have never gambled in my life. So I've been to Vegas once and played the slot machine once.

The only thing I can say is I'm committed to trying to do the best I can for the organization. We're disappointed with where we are. We're disappointed we've gotten to this point.

My responsibility and my job since I arrived here is to evaluate everything thoroughly from a football operations standpoint. Have we gotten everything right? No, absolutely not. I'm not going to sit here and say we've gotten everything right.

I think there are some things that we have made some progress. I think we've added some decent young players to the team. We try to put ourselves in the position where we have an opportunity here, whether it's draft capital, salary cap, free agency acquisition, player acquisitions. And I think there are players that want to be here.

So I think they believe in some of the things that we're trying to do. They believe in what we're trying to create. Has it come to fruition as of yet? It has not, but I think we're moving in the right direction. We have a lot of work in front of us, and I'm going to be here as long as I can to try to see it all the way through, and that's my commitment to the people in this room. That's my commitment to the people in this building. That's the only thing I really know how to do.

Thank you.

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