

Houston Texans Media Conference

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DeMeco Ryans

Press Conference



DeMECO RYANS: For a quarterback, I think the most important attribute I look for, it's that how is his leadership style. How are those other 10 guys looking -- can they look at you in a huddle and know, man, we can count on this guy to make a play. We believe in you.

Then you have to look across the ball, and it's those other 11 guys, those defensive guys, can they look to that guy, and can they count on him. Is that quarterback a guy who can galvanize a locker room and rally the troops and get the guys to believe in him. That's the trait. It's easier said than done because only so few guys can do that, and it's special guys, and that's a special position. When you can find a guy that his teammates can rally behind him, teammates believe in him, that's when you know you have a guy.

Q. Is there a quality or such that you've seen in someone who can do that as a rookie?

DeMECO RYANS: Every player is different. Some rookies can do it better than others. Some it takes time to develop. It's a unique position, and it's not just a cookie cutter one size fits all. There's many different ways to get that done, and I've seen many different styles work.

Q. Is there a balancing act with a new team, you want to bring in some new guys who know you and know your system because you don't want to bring too many? How did Jimmie Ward fit into that?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, it is a balancing act. Initially you want to bring guys in who know exactly how I want things done, how our culture will be set. You want to bring those guys in but also knowing it doesn't just work that day. To be able to get a guy like Jimmie Ward is very vital for our defense. Jimmie is a guy, I feel -- he plays safety in our scheme. He's played nickel. And Jimmie is a veteran guy who's played a lot of football.

With the younger guys that we have, we have a very young group, young nucleus of players who are talented. I feel like Jimmie can come in and just help those guys, aside

from the football aspect but also just off the field, just how to be a true pro. That's what Jimmie provides and brings to those guys, and excited to get a guy who can do it and the leadership role he can provide off the field, and on the field Jimmie is still playing football at a high level.

So to add a safety who can make some dynamic plays for us was very vital.

Q. (Indiscernible).

DeMECO RYANS: Of course, everyone knows Jimmie wants to play safety. But in talking to Jimmie last year, I always told him, when you play the nickel position and you can play the safety position, it just opens up a lot more avenues for you, and that's what it's done for Jimmie. Jimmie has been very fun to work with because he's jumped into that nickel role, and he thrived in the role, made probably more plays than he's made playing safety, so Jimmie can play anywhere, but I'm going to play him at safety.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

DeMECO RYANS: For Bryce, I know it's a lot, going on to talk about his size. The guy has done it at the highest level in college football, and size hasn't seemed to be a problem.

I don't see it as an issue because you watch the tape, and you put on the tape, and you see the kid play, and you see how smart he is. You see the anticipation. You see the accuracy. You see how this guy is calm in critical moments. When you see those things, size isn't one of the factors that pop up on tape that's like, oh, man, it's a problem.

Again, you just look at the track record, see what he's done in the SEC, highest level of college football he's been successful, and I think he'll be successful in the NFL, as well.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

DeMECO RYANS: Right, the O-line, D-line, as I talked about earlier, that's the important piece to building a



football team. You have to build it from inside out, and to add interior defensive linemen, to add really good offensive linemen to our team, that's going to be vital to us moving forward and being successful. That's where it all starts. If we can't play well up front, we're not going to be a good football team. We want to continue to add up front as much as we can on the defensive end, offensive side, add as much depth as we can, because you lose those guys at times, so you have to have enough depth, you have to be able to rotate guys on the defensive side, and you have to have solid guys in the offensive line that you can count on and that can run the ball behind those guys and they can also protect.

Q. I don't think you would have seen this, but Lamar just tweeted just now about his stance with the team. It looks like he's requested a trade here. Is that a player that strikes interest? How do you go about looking at that and exploring veteran quarterbacks?

DeMECO RYANS: We look at all options for our team. We look at all options for our team. That falls into that category, as well.

Q. If you were to look last year, you talk about intangibles for quarterbacks, if you look at last year in Brock Purdy, can you tell me from the time he first came in in mini camp, what did you see in him, and how did that develop during the year? I know there were a lot of guys on your team who saw that sort of development as a person, not just as a player.

DeMECO RYANS: Right. From the player, you just see him coming into the spring, you really don't know who he is. He's Mr. Irrelevant, last picked, and you weren't expecting much.

You continue to see this guy just make some throws in practice, you're like, whoa, and it's eye opening, and we continued to go through training camp, we go through the season, and with him being our scout team quarterback, he's fitting some balls in and he's making some very difficult throws, making some nice plays, moving throughout the pocket, scrambling, still creating on the move, and when you see our defenders, Fred Warner, he's like, oh, man, I'm telling you, this Brock Purdy, he's legit. He had that kind of "it" factor that I was talking about earlier when the defenders, they see it, and they notice it, and they want to get behind the guy.

That's what Brock had. He had the "it" factor where he had that play-making ability to where it galvanized the defense. They were behind him, and they knew he had something special to him, and everybody believed in him because you can see the type of plays that he was making.

Q. One of the things that I think sometimes people don't look at that much in football is the number of how much he played in college. I look at a guy like Bryce Young or CJ Stroud, they played a lot in college, so they know there's going to be some failure in everything. Is that important for you to gauge? Do you value experience a lot at the college level?

DeMECO RYANS: I do value experience. I think experience is the best teacher, and that's what you saw from Brock last year. Brock played -- he started for four years there at Iowa State, and he had experience, so when he got in a game, it wasn't too big for him. That's what I tell guys; the game doesn't change as much. Yeah, guys get a little better around you, but the game doesn't change much, and Brock had that confidence about him because he had been through a lot of situations. He's played a lot of ball.

Not only that, but his preparation, what he did when he wasn't playing, after practice he was with our quarterback coach, Coach Kubiak, and he was working with him, going through the entire script. Yeah, he can put the work in, he has the experience, but also what is he doing behind the scenes when everyone else is in the locker room getting ready to go, he's still out there on the field working.

So it's about having a special work ethic at that position, as well, that sets you apart from everyone else.

Q. One question about what you're doing in Houston. When you go to a team that has lost for a while and you have to try to, quote, change the culture, tell me, what are some ways that you're actually trying to do things to turn around the attitude of this team?

DeMECO RYANS: I think you change the culture with -- it's the people. It's bringing in guys who have been part of winning programs. Those guys establishing how do winners practice, how do winners work in the weight room, how do winners handle themselves off the field, and when you add those guys to your team, that's how the culture continues to change.

You come in, you add younger college guys, draft guys or undrafted free agents, and they just fall underneath that leadership of the guys that we've added, so is there something grand, and it's about the culture change, it's about the people. If we bring the right people in who have the right work ethic, the right mindset, that's how the culture starts to shift, and that's how we build a winning program.

Q. Moseley is a guy that worked his way up the depth

chart for you. What is Detroit getting in Manny?

DeMECO RYANS: In Emmanuel, Detroit is getting a tough, hard-nosed corner. E-man, he's battle tested. He's played in big games, he's played on the big stage, and he has big-time play-making ability. I'm happy for E-man. To see him go from an undrafted free agent and the battle that he's went through up and down his career with injuries, I'm happy to see him get a shot there in Detroit, and you're getting an unbelievable off the field and you're also getting a competitor in practice each and every day. E-man is a competitor. Every rep is a game rep to him, and that's what set him apart and allowed him to make it in the NFL.

Q. What was your reaction when the Panthers traded up?

DeMECO RYANS: My reaction was, hey, they're making a move to go get their guy. That's the reaction I had.

Q. How does that change the internal conversation? Following everything you said earlier about quarterbacks, now the team needs a quarterback --

DeMECO RYANS: It was something that we can't control, so when the Panthers moved up, we already had Chicago in front of us. We couldn't control -- we're still at 2, so nothing has changed from that perspective.

At the end of the day, we have to pick where we are, and we'll make the best pick for our organization when that time comes. We don't worry about things that are outside of our control. We can't control what the Panthers are doing. We can't control who they'll pick, and we're not concerning ourselves, we're not losing sleep over what the Panthers will do at No. 1.

Q. Do you expect to have enough conviction that after your visits with these guys you might urge to go for the 1 pick, urge Nick to possibly move up?

DeMECO RYANS: That's some stuff we won't discuss right now.

Q. Did you have any conversations about moving up before the Panthers did?

DeMECO RYANS: Well, again, that's things internally that we discuss that is not a factor right now.

Q. How do you think your backfield has been looking with Devin and Dameon?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, excited to have both those guys. Dameon has shown a lot from his rookie season. He's

shown that he's a really good player, and being able to add Devin there with him to have sort of that one-two punch to have those guys balance each other out, I think it'll be really great addition for us. Excited for what Devin can bring. He's hungry to show that he can do more, so excited to have him in Houston.

Q. From what you saw with Dameon, did you feel like maybe he did a little too much as a rookie and maybe lightened the load a little bit or he has that workhorse mentality?

DeMECO RYANS: I think he did what he had to do. He showed some toughness, he showed some competitive fight in him. I love the way he runs, I love his style, and it's a style that I really want to continue to feed him. I think that style of running is just -- it excites the entire team. He runs with an attitude that I really like and want to see him continue to build his game off of that, but I'm excited to see where Dameon -- his growth from year one to year two.

Q. Have you decided if you'll call defensive plays?

DeMECO RYANS: No. No.

Q. (Regarding center position)?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, the center position is another -- again, talking about the offensive line, the center position is another position we want to add some depth, add some competition at that position, as well.

Q. What about Dalton? What do you expect to get from him?

DeMECO RYANS: I think Dalton has shown that he can make some plays in the passing game. In the vertical passing game, so I'm excited to add him. I think tight end is a very quarterback friendly position, easy completions. Dalton has done a really good job of expanding his game, becoming a better blocker, as well. So I think all around we've got a quality starting tight end in Dalton.

Q. Being a head coach for the first time with all the guys in a bidding war and some teams might have this price for him, you might have a different (indiscernible)? What did you learn as a first-time head coach about bidding wars?

DeMECO RYANS: Right, what I learned about free agency is you just have to have discipline in free agency. You don't want to pay a dollar for a B or C player, so you just have to have some discipline, and once the price gets to a certain point, you just have to be disciplined enough not to overreach. You want to add quality players to your



team but you don't want to overpay just because you're getting into a bidding war with the team. We're not going to overpay just to overpay, but the talent is the talent. That doesn't change.

Q. You were talking about the defensive line earlier. With Ridgeway and Rankins, what about them did you like? What does their addition say about (indiscernible)?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, with Ridgeway and Rankins, both guys have played in our attack-style front, so Ridgeway played there in San Francisco with us, Rankins was in New York, so very similar schemes, and what I like about those guys who are big guys who can attack and penetrate, cause disruption, and that's what we want to see out of our defensive line.

Q. Do you remember the first time you said I'd really like to be a head coach? When do you recall that being a kernel that you started to develop?

DeMECO RYANS: It was really during the lockout year, 2010 that was. I went back to my -- before the 2011 season. I went back to any -- we weren't allowed to be at the training facilities, so I went back to Alabama, and I went back to my high school, and I was just helping out there during spring football. They didn't have a defensive coordinator at the time, and the head coach allowed me to coach the defense, and those kids hadn't won in a long time, so they were hungry just to get a win. They had one spring game, and I was able to go through and practice with those guys throughout the entire spring, and just to see their excitement when we won that spring game, that did it for me. To see their faces and see how elated they were to win -- they put the work in throughout those practices. We had fun throughout those practices. We were competitive. But that memory of when we won that spring game, it still hasn't left me.

Q. Were there any fans there?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, there were fans in the stadium, as well, so the fans were pretty excited, kids were excited. It was just one of those feelings that I --

Q. The team had lost for a while?

DeMECO RYANS: The team had lost for a while. To be a part of that, to help them get over the hump, to get that win, that was just something that stuck with me. Like wow, to be a coach and to have an effect on young people's lives, that did it for me.

Q. What did you learn from Kubiak?

DeMECO RYANS: The main thing I learned about Kubiak is how to create. Like how to create that first-class environment from the top down. That's one thing that we've been focusing on a lot for myself is just making sure everything we do throughout the building, throughout the organization is done in a first-class manner.

I thought Kubiak did an excellent job of that, of changing that culture there in Houston. I thought Kubiak did an excellent job of that, and I just want to create the same.

Q. Did you talk to him at all about your transition to being a head coach?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, I've talked to Coach Kubiak, and he's been outstanding when it comes to anything I need, any questions I have. He's there as a shoulder for me to lean on. It's great to have a former head coach who's in a position -- he's done it, won Super Bowls, done it at a high level. So to have him as a guy I can lean on has been very beneficial.

Q. You've been able to call defense against a Shane Steichen offense. What challenges does he present to play calling?

DeMECO RYANS: With Shane and the offense that they ran there in Philly, I think they did -- first and foremost, they did a really good job of running the ball, so any good offensive coordinator -- you could run the ball, then you could set up your RPO game, you could take shots down the field, but it all starts with the run game, and that's what they did well in Philly, starting with the offensive line. They really controlled the line of scrimmage, and when you can control the line of scrimmage, you run the ball in a way that it opens up your playbook. I know that's what Shane will try to establish there in Indy, as well, is establishing the run game.

Q. Is he particularly adept to identifying weakness and just going after it?

DeMECO RYANS: I think that's most offensive coordinators. If you attack weaknesses, you attack, whether it's players or whether it's a weakness in a coverage, as offensive coordinators you're trying to find those weaknesses and expose them as best you can.

Q. (Indiscernible).

DeMECO RYANS: We'll see how that goes. We'll see how it goes.

Q. Do you expect to look at any other positions other



than quarterback?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, we're always looking to add to our team, so whether it's by free agency, whether it's -- I think that's an ongoing process that's never endings, so we're always looking to see where we can get better, add more depth to our team, so that doesn't change.

Q. What are several positions that you hope --

DeMECO RYANS: As many positions as we can. We need -- we're looking at depth throughout our entire team, so not focused just on one position to add, but it's all positions, how can we add depth, how can we get better, how can we strengthen our roster, and that's all positions.

Q. After that first taste of coaching in that spring game, you go back to being a player, how did that stick with you? Did you bring it into how you played? It was a long time before you were coaching.

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, it was always kind of in me to help the guys that were around me, so I was kind of always coaching while I was playing. I was always kind of paired with younger guys in that linebacker room, whether it was Zac Diles or Brian Cushing, Mychal Kendricks, Jordan Hicks, I was always paired with younger guys who I always took it upon myself to help develop those guys, help them grow as best as I could. So there was always kind of that coaching aspect that always stood out, help the guy next to you, help him be his best, you play your best, now collectively we should be a really good team, and now it was also a part of me to make sure I understood what everyone had to do around me, whether it's safeties, corners, defensive line. I wanted to make sure I understood how the entire puzzle fit together and not just, oh, just do your job, DeMeco, and that's it. Now, how does everyone work together.

Q. It feels like it's been a very gradual -- because whenever you're a player it seems like it's very one to one, like you and your teammate, then as a position coach, a group, and it's kind of grown to this point. How do you still maintain being able to use your strengths as a coach while also organizing things to delegate and things like that?

DeMECO RYANS: Right. I think at the end of the day, it's all about leading people, growing the people that are around you and seeing something in the people that are around you, seeing certain traits and trying to help develop them more, trying to give them more of a leadership role, give them more command over running whatever particular part of our program, giving them the autonomy to take it over and see how they thrive in it and micromanage, letting

people grow, letting people develop, knowing that there may be hiccups along the way, but that's how you learn. That's how I learned. No one micromanaged me. They allowed me to make mistakes and allowed me to grow and become better.

Q. I wanted to ask you one more thing about building a team. I thought one of the great things that you had in San Francisco was guys like Azeez Al-Shaair who even though they probably wanted to play more snaps in the regular defense were fantastic in their limited roles. You had all kinds of guys. You talk about Emmanuel Moseley, all lot of these guys. I wonder, how do you build a complete team where guys come in from college football and they've been the big stars and now all of a sudden you're playing special teams or you're only going to play if this guy in front of you -- whatever, he understands what's going on. Explain how you build that as a head coach.

DeMECO RYANS: You build it with having guys come in who are unselfish and guys just understanding that no one is guaranteed anything, whether you build it with a team-first mindset. If everyone comes in and understands that if you were the top guy on your team, you may have to play special teams, or do you have that mindset that you're not an ego driven person to where it's not about you, it's about the team, and man, we can work with guys that way. That's kind of who Azeez was. He wasn't a big ego guy, he just played his role and he contributed and there were significant snaps that helped us win games, and we need as many guys as we can get with the right mindset who are not ego driven guys, and that's part of the process of as you're evaluating and just seeing what type of teammates these guys are. Everybody evaluates the tape and we see the player, but the most important part to me is who are these players as people off the field, how do their teammates view them off of the field. You have to know the person that you're getting as well as the player that you're getting.

That allows you to build a team in a manner of man, Coach, I will play special teams, I will just play base, whatever you need me to do, I'll just get in and block or whatever you need me to do. I'm going to be unselfish enough to do that for the team.

That's how the great teams build it and that's how I've seen it done in San Francisco. It was just a ton of hungry guys who were excited to be a part of something that's bigger than themselves, and that's what I want in Houston. I want guys who are hungry to come and change what's been happening in Houston.

We haven't won in Houston, so I want guys who are just



dedicated, who are coming in, who are hungry to just help out wherever it needs, whether it's blocking, whether it's playing special teams, whether it's 10 snaps a game. I want guys who want to come and change for the city of H-town. I want guys who want to come out and just give it their all to show our fan base, give them something to cheer for, to give them something to be excited about.

It's not about the player. That's what I tell our guys, too. For me as a head coach, it's not -- it's my mindset; it's not about me. I don't want the spotlight. I don't care about the -- it's not about me, it's about making sure we build this team the right way and making sure these guys get all the accolades, everything that comes when we play together.

You may not be the start right now, but you can play a significant role.

Q. (Indiscernible) now you have 12 draft picks (indiscernible) flexibility with having that many picks?

DeMECO RYANS: Yeah, with Brandin, it sucks losing a talented receiver as Brandin, so we never wanted to lose talented players. We're really trying to acquire as many talented players as possible, so it's hard losing him. I wish Brandin the best in Dallas. I know he'll do well. But we have to move forward.

Unfortunately that's part of the process, part of our business. You lose players at times.

Q. (Indiscernible).

DeMECO RYANS: I mean, we have 12 picks in the draft, and we're looking, again, to add as many talented guys who are dedicated to helping us build. That's about it.

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