

# Houston Texans Media Conference

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## General Manager Nick Caserio

### Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: Exciting time for the organization, for the city, for a lot of people involved. You know, we think we've had a fairly productive spring to this point. I think everybody is excited about the opportunity next week to add players to our team.

I think before we move forward with anything, just a few thank yous I think are in order. Any time you do something of this magnitude there are a lot of people that are involved in that process from the beginning.

As far back as let's call it last August, last June being last May, I think we've had a really I would say productive and collaborative effort this spring between scouting staff and the coaching staff.

Even with the changes that have taken place on the coaching front, we've had really a lot of constructive discussions with everybody involved. This process isn't about one person. It's not about one player. It's a collective effort, and that's our mindset organizationally.

But specifically just on the scouting side, I think you all had an opportunity hear from a Liip last week or a few weeks ago. Really can't thank him enough for his effort and the way he organizes the group and the work and the time and the commitment that he puts in.

But kind of go through these guys really individually. Just don't want to leave anybody out. Liip, Tom Hayden, John Ritcher, Zique McCurtis, Bailee Brown, Blaise Taggart, George Panos, Najja Johnson, Brad Matthews.

Those guys really put in more time than anybody specific to the college scouting process and they've enabled us to get to this point.

And then we have a number of folks in-house involved in the process as well. Nate and RJ.

And then on the pro side, when we involve the pro scouts, and part of the pro scouting process is understanding the league, some of the needs and some of the direction

where other teams are going to go. We allocate time and resources in that group. Ronnie, DJ, Todd, Frank Edgerly, Rohit, Sam, Andrew Brown, who's involved in I would say the visit process.

Those people deserve as much credit I would say as anybody in the building, so just think it's appropriate to acknowledge them as we work through this here in anticipation of what is going to happen next week.

And then before we take any questions, quite frankly I'm also embarrassed that I have to say anything. I feel like Leonardo DiCaprio in the Wolf of Wall Street. I'm not leaving. There has never been any substantive discussions of the sort.

Grateful and appreciative of the opportunity that my family and I have here in Houston. We understood when we arrived, when we got here, that there was a lot of work to be done, and I think when you look across the NFL landscape there is work to be done in every organization.

I think we've made some progress. We still have a lot of work in front of us. Certainly it's been a joy to work with DeMeco in concert as we build the team and continue to build the staff.

Unfortunately I think this time of year there is a lot of information and a lot of topics that are discussed. Some are more accurate than others, and I think it transcends multiple landscapes.

But I'm honestly almost embarrassed that I have to say anything, but I feel like I have an obligation to make that statement. I don't think there is anything else to say or question about it.

Again, appreciative of the opportunity that we have here. Very grateful. My philosophy and goal is just to try to do the best job that I can for the people in this organization, in this building, for the city, and as long as ownership approves of what we're trying to do, then certainly their sport is welcomed.

So having said that, take some questions here and go from



there.

**Q. How important is it to get your quarterback issues solved?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think there are a lot of different ways to go through the team. We'll look at everything. I think DeMeco made some comments, I want to say he spoke last Monday or something like that and was asked some questions.

We want to have a good football team. I think building a team is the most important thing. How that all comes together, there is always multiple moving parts, so we'll do whatever we think is best for our team and try to make good decisions.

The goal so to try to make good decisions over the course of time. Next opportunity is next Thursday night, so we'll continue the team building process and build on some of the things we've done here in the spring.

**Q. I know you're obviously not going to tell us what position you're looking to draft or who you're going to draft, but are there a couple positions as you enter the draft where you're like, these are our biggest...**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think we've been pretty consistent from the beginning that we just want to try to add good football players. You know, if you look at where we are as a team here today, I think we have 69, 70 players on the team. If we had to go out there and play a game today I think we would be able to field a team and put a team out there.

We're always trying to add players throughout the course of the draft that we think are going to help us in some capacity. I would say some players are going to be more right than others to participate. There is going to be competition, regardless of who we draft, and those players are going to have to earn their role and kind of find their niche on the team.

So going back to what I said a little bit earlier, we've had a lot of very constructive substantive discussions with the coaching staff, with the offensive staff, with the defensive staff, factor in the kicking game, identify different pods and different I would say groups of players, and then you have to look at where is the likelihood of us being able to add these players to the roster, and they're probably going to come at different points in the draft.

One thing I think we've learned, that I've learned in 23 whatever it is years in the league, is good football players can come in a lot of different areas, a lot of different parts

of the draft. As a matter of fact, I was reading an article the other day about the first round. You start to look at even going back to 2020 and some of the fifth year options and some of those I would say players.

I mean, again, not that the draft is a coin flip, but the draft is a coin flip. Our philosophy and goal is to try and make good decisions, get the right players with the right traits and characteristics, bring them into our building, simulate them to our culture, and then the competition bear itself out in terms of who is going to play.

We don't have to play a game until September, so we have a lot of work in front of us. Be plenty of opportunities, plenty of players to prove that they've earned the role that they deserve to have.

**Q. You denied that report, but do you know where that kind of came from or originated from?**

NICK CASERIO: Again, you guys know more than I do. Again, I mean, my first inclination -- people are reaching out to me last week and I'm like literally laughing. So I can't speak for anybody else other than myself. So, I mean, again, like maybe you can do some digging on that.

I mean, my focus is on the draft, the team, the people in this building. It's on the coaching staff. My responsibility is to the people that are here.

**Q. When you look at the draft and flexibility you have, do you feel like with the free agency you have...**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think to your point, I think we've created some optionality in a multitude of ways, so we're fairly well positioned the first, four, five picks in the first 75. Then we have a pick at the top the fourth round, actually a pretty valuable pick.

So between that grouping of picks where we're positioned, there probably will be some movement up or down through the course of the draft. So what we try to do in free agency is just add players we feel are good football players that we think can help our football team in some capacity, that are the right players, right fit for what we want to be and how we want to play.

So we really won't know the answer to the question about how that's all going to go, but I would say right now we feel pretty good about where we are. We just want to try to continue to add good players with the right traits and characteristics to the building and just to build on some of the things we're trying to do.

**Q. Nick, when you looked at positional value in this**

**year's draft, you see a surplus of talent start at one position and maybe less at another position. Do that factor into your draft process and the selection process, whether you move up or down?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, there is a certain strategy that's going to be involved. You could have a certain number of players graded. Maybe they're closely graded, but they might not be closely graded based on the role, the value.

So draft is about supply and demand. Picks are about supply and demand. Trades are about supply and demand. How you position yourself accordingly is based on where the optionality you feel is.

So if you pick the player at a certain level, can you get an equivalent player at a later point. If you can, where is that breaking point? Therefore, how do you position yourself accordingly. I would say it's certainly going to be -- there is gonna be relevance relative to some of those positions.

So we'll go through draft strategies, scenarios. If we pick here, all right, here is our choices. If we move on from this pick, where can we pick up another player. What's the recourse there.

So we're actually having these discussions not daily, but kind of every couple days just sort of recalibrating based on some of the information. Might get some new information. Today we are finishing up our draft here this week. Those have been very productive I would say.

We started them actually a week after the combine, so tried to get ahead of that process here a little bit in March. So I think we brought in maybe eight to ten players kind of in March after the draft so we weren't too hard pressed to try to race to the end. Maybe you lose out on a player that you really want to have in the building.

So I would say that process has been a very productive process in terms of bringing the players in the building. Not to go behind the curtain a little bit, but what we try to do with that is simulate as best we can what a day is going to entail for that player. So from the time they come in the building it's 6:30, 7:00, to the time they leave at 4:00, it's coaching staff, strength and conditioning, player development, it's scouting, it's all the different people that are going to touch them in the football operation. We try to give them a picture of what we're trying to create, and we've gotten a lot of constructive feedback from that process.

In the end we're just trying to put ourselves in the position to make good, sound decisions with the right people and the right players. You know, hopefully gets to an end point

that we can all be proud of and happy about come draft weekend.

**Q. You been around this process for a very long time. Last time we spoke to you, a team that wasn't so much in need of a position like you all are, or maybe as far as quarterback is concerned, when a team like Carolina jumps up and trades and jumps above you, does that change your draft board? Does that make you change some of your draft strategy?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we really can't control what other teams do. Every team is going to do what they think is best, so our job is to understand the players, understand the board, try to make good decisions, and we pick where we pick.

So if we pick at two, we pick at two. If we don't pick at two and we pick somewhere else, then we just have to be prepared to pick accordingly. We can't control what other teams do. We try to do our homework and just try to make the right decisions for our team.

**Q. Nick, when you're looking at the quarterback situation, with DeMeco and Bobby coming in, the various quarterbacks they've had, the success they've in San Francisco, what have you learned from them and are you viewing the position a little bit differently now than maybe you were when they came in the building?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would say there is a lot of carryover in terms of like what's important to the quarterback position. I would say in those conversations I think we're in agreement on a lot of those qualities.

Ultimately, it comes down to how your team plays on Sunday, so in the end it's going to be a collective effort. How we play offensively, situationally on both sides of the ball, how we play in the kicking game. So that doesn't change.

Are there things that are maybe not more important, but, hey, maybe this is something that we look for or put a little bit more emphasis on this, okay, you take that into consideration.

But ultimately we're going to try to make the best decision for our team that makes the most sense for everybody involved. Part of my job is to take in as much information as possible and to take in input from as many people as possible. And, again, we've had a lot of constructive and collaborative discussions across the organization, offensively and defensively, and then with Frank's input from the kicking game as well.

In the end it all has to fit together. The number one job of I would say a team, it's about scoring one more point than the other team, so how do we get to that point. It's about how you play on Sunday. How you play on Sunday is a product of how you handle situational football. How you handle situational football is a product of who is on your team and do the players on the field understand what's important.

So regardless of the team, regardless of who is coaching, those aren't going to change. Philosophically how you get to that point could be different. Each team will approach it a little bit differently. So I would say from that perspective it's been kind of refreshing to hear just another viewpoint, another perspective.

In the end we have to mesh it all together and ultimately making a decision for the Houston Texans, not one individual person.

**Q. Nick, now that you worked with DeMeco for a while, how do you feel like you guys are aligned when it comes to addressing the quarterback position? I think whatever, 95%, 90% of people believe you'll find your quarterback in this draft. We're not in those groups. We're not in your heads. What's your alignment going into this draft about how you'll find your next franchise quarterback?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I don't want to speak for him. He's probably listening anyway. I think we have a lot in common in terms of how we view players, how we see a football team, the things that we deem important.

I don't want to say we talk daily, but we talk daily just about all those matters. You know, again, I've really enjoyed my time with him in the short period of time. You know, I can't speak highly enough of him as a person, as a football coach, his perspective, his view point, kind of what he brings to the table.

I think he has solidified what we thought going through the hiring process, and we're excited to build this together and just to build a good, solid, sound football team that plays well situationally that I would say the organization and the city can be proud of.

Is that easy? No. Is there one way to do it? Absolutely not. We've both had the good fortune of being in good programs and being part of good teams and understanding what good football looks like, so how do we put our stamp on the Houston Texans 2023.

In the end that's the goal and the most important thing.

**Q. Obviously every year is different, but in the last few years when you look back at the draft process, how have you evolved or changes the process?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, that's a great question. We've kind of looked at I would say everything on a yearly basis. So whether it's the draft process, something maybe we can do a little bit different, which we've done that this year. I just alluded to a little bit earlier kind of the process of the on-boarding of the players from the visits and then what we do post-visit, how we consume that information, how we accumulate that information, how we apply this information.

Or whether it's including a different viewpoint or angle or different tool maybe that we didn't have previously that maybe we've outsourced to try to get maybe a secondhand view.

So whatever we feel we can do to improve what we're doing, that's what we're going to try to do. I think we have a responsibility to each other to do that I would say fairly consistently, whether it's pre-draft process, how we train players, the resources that we provide to the players.

So we're constantly looking at everything to try to improve with the end goal of doing what is best for the organization and also prioritizing what's most important for the players. Are we providing the players the requisite resources available to them so they can be as successful as possible?

So I think we're trying to do that. We've made I would say considerable effort in that regard. I know it's secondhand, but in the spring I would say some of the commentary from the NFL PA, from the players about some of the things going on in the building, I think that's a reflection of the people that are in the building, and just always trying to do things in a positive, professional way that serves the players in the best capacity possible.

So to answer your question, we have definitely looked at some different -- not that we've completely modified the process, but we've incorporated some things to hopefully enhance what we're doing to arrive at a good end point.

**Q. Last year you guys picked at three. Before the draft when you talked to us, you were pretty open about being open for business with the number three pick last year. I ask you this year...**

NICK CASERIO: (Laughter.) We've received some calls actually, on the number two pick. So I think our job and responsibility is to listen and not rule anything out.

I think whatever the end result is come Thursday, you know, we'll be prepared to go either way. So if you want to quote me, are we open for business, I would say we're open to listening, so if you want to change the vocabulary a little bit this year.

We have received a few calls, and again, I think our responsibility is to listen, try to take the information in, and then just make the right decision.

**Q. So I know that you have done this; you've been in the league for 23 years. This is about a team, not just about you. With this being your third year in this particular role, can you talk about just what you have learned over your two years, what may be different about you as you approach this?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah. The league is hard. (Laughter.)

There is never I would say one way to do it.

And I think, look, we're all grateful to be in the position that we're in. Each year there will be challenges that teams face. I think what we want to try to do is just try as best we can to make good, sound, smart decisions.

If you do that over the course of time repetitively, I think that enables you to have the most long-term success organizationally. So we have a lot of work in front of us.

Always invigorated by I would say the off-season, because essentially everybody is kind of starting over, regardless of what happened the previous year, regardless of what the end result is, whether you're Kansas City or the Houston Texans.

So not saying we're like the Kansas City Chiefs. Believe me, that's not what I'm saying. I don't want anybody to write that and interpret what I'm saying.

We always have to have an open mind I would say. Be grateful. Be humble. Understand that you don't have all the answers, and it takes I would say a team effort.

Again, that's why I think we emphasized the team approach. DeMeco talked about that. We've talked about that. I've talked about that. DeMeco has talked about the swarm mentality. I think that's a pervasive attitude and mindset that we want to I would say transcend the organization.

People that have a special work ethic and relentless mindset, our responsibility and job is to find those players and people. If we do that and with enough people, then hopefully we put ourselves in a position to have some

modicum of success.

Doesn't guarantee success. We're not guaranteed tomorrow, so I think it's just try to come in, have the right mindset, try to have the right attitude on day-to-day basis, make good, sound decisions, understand you can't control -- there is only so many things you can control, which, again, like sort of firsthand example, having answered a question about something that's out of my control.

So just try to enjoy the process, understand that nothing is guaranteed. When you look at some of the things going on societally kind of puts things in perspective. Read Sunday morning about another mass shooting that's taken place in our country.

When you just put in perspective of football, it kind of pales in comparison. I think you always have to be curious, open to learning, open to maybe doing things a little bit differently. If you think it's going to enhance the overall performance of your program and team, then we have a responsibility to do that.

I've tried to do and we'll continue to do that as long as I'm here.

**Q. Anything different about you though? What have you learned in two years?**

NICK CASERIO: I think you have to rely on the people around you and take information and utilize the right information, the right inputs, and really trust the information that you have, that if it kind of tells you one thing, probably should lead you towards that direction.

You know, you never second guess. You always want to try to learn. You know what? Hey, okay, we made this decision. Here is what went into the decision. Here are the inputs. Okay, we feel good or comfortable. Or you know what, maybe we should have trusted something else or sort of utilized maybe something a little bit different.

So there is no right or wrong formula. There is no perfect formula. You just have to be open to learning and just try to get better each and every day.

**Q. There has been a lot of talk about the test when it comes to quarterback evaluation. What specifically is in that test, and how does it help determine -- help the evaluation process with scouting quarterbacks?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would say each team has different tools they utilize. Candidly, I don't want to speak on something I'm not familiar with. We're aware of it. You know, I think we have some other tools and resources that

we utilize.

So, again, I don't want to really speak on something that I don't really have firsthand knowledge. I respect the question, but I think we have other tools and resources that we try to utilize as a part of our process.

**Q. Last couple years there has been a lot of changes at the college level, things getting thrown at some of these top prospects, build them up, NIL. Have you gotten a gauge or what's it been like as that process has developed and the maturation of some of the guys coming in and understanding maybe a little bit more what they're walking into, that kind of interaction?**

NICK CASERIO: That's a great question. I think you kind of have to separate some of the things that they went through in college because you're not necessarily reduplicating the whole NIL process.

There is maybe a professional element that's involved and they maybe understand that side of. That's an aspect of it. But the focus for the players, especially rookies, is your job is to be the best football player that you can be. So what can you do in those areas? Your focus is on I would say nutrition, conditioning, your recovery, your sleep, your schematic understanding of what you're doing, what the other team is doing.

And regardless of who we draft, regardless of their experience at the NIL level - and some have more experience than others - they're essentially starting over. They're starting from scratch.

One of the things that's been interesting in visiting with some of the players in the building is we've actually taught them some things and talked to them about some things on tape, whether it's a technique or skill or an area they can improve, and the feedback has been positive.

A lot of them said quite frankly, coach, like we've never heard that or I've never heard that. So it's something that could actually help them as a player.

This isn't an indictment about anything that goes on in college because I think the college rules is they have 20 hours. I think the focus is on certain things relative to others.

Our job is to be as granular as possible because our players are in the building 6:00, 6:30, until 4:30, 5:00 during the course of a day during the regular season, so there is ample time for you to work on your skill and to work on things that are going to make a better player.

So the more resources we provide them, the more feedback we provide them in those areas, that's how they're going to become a better player. And marketing and everything else that comes with being the NFL, that's a result of being a good football player.

So if you focus on being a good football player first, then the residual effect will be some of those areas down the road. It's more probably an awareness, but you're not necessarily reduplicating what happened last year, the year before, because they're going into a new situation and a totally new environment.

**Q. Is it possible you guys can come out of this draft without a quarterback?**

NICK CASERIO: I mean, anything is possible. I think what's possible and what the hope is is that we can come out of this draft with good football players we think can help our football team. That's what we're focused on doing.

**Q. If you guys do pass up an opportunity to draft a quarterback, what would be the plan moving forward? Stick with Davis Mills or address or trade or free agency?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think we have been consistent, taking one day at a time, look at our options and what those entail. We won't eliminate anything and just try to make good decisions.

That's really the decision making matrix and process that we're going to go through today, tomorrow, next Thursday, Friday. That we'll go through in the spring, May, June, when we go to September, and then we'll be ready to play whatever day we're going to play, whoever we're going to play the opening game.

**Q. Similar to DJ's question, you mentioned that you all... I'm curious, after the tape and after you watch the tape and film, you see what they're possibly capable of, what type of things in that interview process may turn you on or off about a player?**

NICK CASERIO: I would say there is nothing in particular. Just what you're trying to do is get an overall feel of the player. Is the information that you have accumulated to this point consistent with your overall experience, interaction with that player in the building.

So do they take coaching. Are they receptive to coaching. What's their background. What have they been coached to do, told to do. When we are independently watching the player play, talking specifically about what they're doing on the field, sometimes you really don't know. You think you

might know, but it's not real clear.

So you kind of go through their scheme, get their perspective on it. We teach them our information, how to retain our information. Can they retain our information. Can they apply what we're telling them. Can they take a training technique or something that we're providing them. They understand the importance of it.

So what you're trying to do is just get an overall feel for the person on a day-to-day basis so when they walk in the building -- whenever you draft or sign a player you get everything that comes along with them. So there could be a certain picture painted of a player, but the perception, the reality might be different.

So our job is to say, all right, in the end where is the truth. What's the right answer. And what we try to emphasize is let's just get it right. Let's be right with what we think the player is, have conviction, and then when the player is here, either refutes or confirms it.

Taking an opportunity, going back to Kim's question a little bit earlier, let's learn from it good or bad so that the next time something like this comes up we try to make the right decision.

So I would say our pre-draft process is maybe different than only other teams. Doesn't mean one is better. Just means we feel this is the best thing for us. You know, I would say they've been very, very productive, and I would say in some respects at times we've eliminated players because they kind of confirm maybe some of things we thought initially. Or you know what, there were some question marks going in, but at different checkpoints we have a different view. Or you know what, in the end we respect that, but we're going to go with this information and go with this I would say, you know, final analysis.

So there is an ebb and flow to it, and, again, there is no exact science to this. Like there is no, do this, this is the end result. If it was that easy, I mean, a lot of people would do it.

So it's hard to run an NFL team. Hard to run a draft. There is no perfect formula. Just try to make good, solid, sound decisions over the course of time. That's really the goal.

**Q. (Regarding medical.) There is an edge rusher in this draft; there is a quarterback. They might not be able for a while. What is the talent versus availability factor? Obviously they'll eventually be healthy enough to play.**

NICK CASERIO: I think you hit the nail on the head,

Aaron. Medical is a component, but then you have to look at the actual analysis of the medical. What does the information tell you. What is their availability. Are they going to be ready to go. Is this a chronic condition. Is this something that can be exacerbated or get worse.

And then based on that information, then you weigh the risk/reward of where you have the draft the player, the resource allocation involved. Because in the end you're making a financial decision as well, so you want to try to make good, sound financial decisions where appropriate.

Not that you're letting that drive your decision making mechanism, but you certainly have to factor it in, which is why you have that medical meeting, so we have an understanding of what the picture of the player is in that particular area.

**Q. One last quarterback question: If you guys don't do anything before next season to upgrade the quarterback position, do you believe that team can be successful?**

NICK CASERIO: Doesn't really matter what I think or believe. I think in the end it's about the players. This is a players' league. It's going to be about the players' performance on Sunday, what they do with their opportunities.

I think we're excited about where we are as a team. Certainly have a long way to go. I think the attitude and the effort of the players, you know, it's early in the off-season, but we have -- I don't want to say just about everybody in the building, but we have just about everybody in the building that's here training.

So I think it speaks to the players, their commitment to what we're doing, commitment to winning, to getting better, to the coaching staff. It's a reflection of DeMeco and the coaching staff, a reflection of the people in the building.

So I think that's what we're focused on more than anything else. When we play our first game, whoever that's against with whatever players are here, hopefully we'll be ready to go and go out there and play good football.

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