

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

DeMeco Ryans

C.J. Stroud

Will Anderson Jr.

Nick Caserio

Draft Press Conference



DEMECO RYANS: First off, we'd like to thank everyone for coming out today. This is an exciting time for our organization, for our team. We're really excited about adding these two young men, C.J. and Will, two young men who represent the type of qualities of the players that we want.

They're hard workers. They're competitive, and they have this burning desire to win. They come from winning programs. They know what winning looks like. They know what it takes to be winners, and these are the type of guys, the type of men that we want in our locker room.

Man, fired up for you guys. Congratulations again. Happy to have you.

C.J. STROUD: Just first of all, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Man, it's been a crazy process, this whole time, man. I remember this is my first 30 visit, and I remember having a great taste in my mouth after I left.

Man, I want to thank you guys for giving us a chance. To Mr. And Mrs. McNair and the kids, so, yeah. Yeah, man, really excited to get to work. Really excited to get back in the locker room to build a camaraderie and brotherhood with my new teammates and really excited to work with Coach Ryans, with Bobby, and with Jerrod Johnson and everybody who's on the offensive staff and the whole team.

Just really excited about the city of Houston, really happy to be here.

WILL ANDERSON JR.: I just want to say all thanks to God. Very blessed to be in this position. Thank you to the McNairs for this opportunity. Thank you to Coach Ryans, Nick, I don't take this for granted at all. Thank you for welcoming my family today. Anything you guys want me to do, I'm going to do it. Swarm, be intentional with

everything.

I want to thank you for this opportunity. I'm really looking forward to it. This is my first top 30 visit too, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. Everywhere else I went during this whole process, it just felt right. It felt authentic. The energy here was right. I'm just super blessed and super excited to be part of something special.

NICK CASERIO: Since Will brought it up. He was our very first 30-man visit. Came back from the combine, March 8th, March 9th, and he was the only person here. He walked into the room, and there was a whole staff of people, and it's like holy cow. Everything he's saying is certainly legit and it's real.

Everybody is sick of hearing from me, so we'll take some questions.

Q. DeMeco, first of all, can you talk about both players, what your expectations are, what you like about them. But did you have to prompt Nick any more to make him get that trade done with Arizona to get Will?

DEMECO RYANS: Me and Nick have been working together all week, and we've been collabing on everything we've done, and we've been on the same page. It's been exciting to work with Nick, and we're excited to get the deal done because we know we were getting the deal done for the right guys. So that's what it was about.

With these guys, with C.J., one thing I love about C.J. is that he's a fierce competitor. He wants to win. It means a lot to him to win. He has a burning desire to win, and I love that about him. The talent on the field speaks for himself. He's done an excellent job of leading a top program at Ohio State, very accurate making great decisions with the football and being a great leader of those guys around him, his teammates.

Along this process, along the way, every teammate of his that we've spoken to from Ohio State have all spoken highly of C.J. and the type of leader that he is.

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With Will, I've him for a long time now, seen a few of his games, but just seeing again the fierce competitor he is. Every time watching Alabama, when they needed a play on defense, it was 31. That was the guy stepping up making a play. Everyone knows the leadership qualities that Will possesses.

You can't speak enough about both of these guys. It just speaks to their families, who are here today, and how these young men were raised. They were raised the right way. These guys really represent your families well.

I want to thank the families for raising such great young men, also great athletes as well.

Q. Welcome to Houston, you guys. For both of the players, I wonder -- I'm sure there's a lot of people, but as you kind of reflect on this journey that got you here, what are some of the most influential people that got you here today?

WILL ANDERSON JR.: I would say my family. I'm really tight with my family, especially my dad and my mom and all my sisters. They kept me grounded, kept me humble, making sure I was keeping the main thing, the main thing and making sure whatever mission I was trying to do, I was going to complete it.

Also my head coaches, high school and college, my position coaches, they know me like the back of their hand. They know like I'm always ready. Just calm down, be patient. Wherever you go, it's going to be the right fit for you. God don't make no mistakes.

It just helped me so much more to just focus on my body, focus on the things I need to focus on. Spend some time with my family and just trust the process. Those are some of the people that, you know, made me just relax, calm down, and trust God.

C.J. STROUD: Really the same for me -- my mom, my brother, my sister, I have another older brother who's not here today. I have a lot of influential people in my life. I come from a great place in California called the Inland Empire. There's a lot of diverse places, diverse cultures. You have kind of a melting pot of people. Man, it was a village to raise me. I really appreciate all those people.

Kind of like Will said, nothing happens for no reason. All the people that I've actually gotten to know over the years, from when I was 6 years old playing this lovely sport, that's taken me all across the country, I really appreciate it.

There's been plenty of people who inspire me.

If it was just me doing it, I don't know if I'd keep doing it. I love the game of football, and one of the reasons why is because, man, it connects me to my family on a different type of level.

So I'm really appreciative of everybody. I've had great father figures. My dad actually introduced me to the sport, and, man, I just try to run with it. It's really been my immediate family, God, and then my village back home in California.

Q. Can you take us through your emotions when you knew you had C.J. Stroud and then a few minutes later pulling the trigger to get Will. Your gamut of emotions through the process.

DEMECO RYANS: First emotion, to get C.J., I was elated. We got him. I was happy, and now it's time to go to work. Now can we get Will? Once we were able to seal that deal and get Will, I was over the moon. I couldn't have been happier, smiling, just being able to get both of these guys was outstanding.

And credit goes to Nick and the work that he did to make that deal happen. He did an outstanding job. So credit to Nick on that one.

Q. Question for DeMeco and Will. You talk about that top 30 visit. Could you detail what that visit was like, how you all bonded, and what did you talk about? The Pro Day, getting hand on the ground. You talked about how important the front is. How do you see this relationship going defensively? How do you all connect together?

DEMECO RYANS: The thing about Will is he's a great player. So how he works in our defense, he's going to be a defensive end in our style. He's going to be a defensive end attacking, getting up the field. He's going to do a little different scheme. That goes to show with both of these guys.

There's going to be different schemes. What I love about both of these guys is their willingness to adjust and adapt to what's coming next. Will has been a productive player at Alabama for a long time, been consistent.

In our 30 visit, it was just an instant connection, not only with me, but with our entire staff. That's one thing that Will did a great job just connecting with everyone, not only myself. Will is a great person. He's a great teammate, and that's followed him from Alabama on throughout his next journey here. He'll continue to be that great teammate, and people will gravitate towards him.

Q. Every player's growth is different in their process. What did you learn from how the 49ers brought along young quarterbacks and as a coaching staff you'll try to apply to C.J.?

DEMECO RYANS: For all of our players, we're in the role as coaches to develop young players. No one is a finished product. No one is perfect. We all have strengths. We all have weaknesses. It's about everyone just putting their head down and working.

These guys want to work to be the best, and so with their mindset of working to be the best and with our coaches' mindset of being able to help and develop these young men as players on the field, that's how we'll work with that talent, not only the quarterback, but it will be all our positions.

Q. C.J., just in terms of goals, what are some things you want to accomplish in terms of improvement, things you want to be better at?

C.J. STROUD: Honestly, first and foremost, I just want to be -- if it comes natural, to just be a leader on the team. I think that's the biggest thing for playing quarterback is to be not only vocal but lead by example. That's something I think I bring to the table very well coming from a place like Ohio State where the quarterback is -- other than LeBron, you're like right under LeBron. You're the leader of the whole state.

(Laughter).

I feel like I got good practice there. Yeah, that's kind of the main goal is just to be a great leader, great teammate, to of course like Coach Ryans said, just adjust, adapt to the new scheme, to the plays, to new coaching.

I honestly don't have a limit on how good I can play. I don't know what's going to happen. I know nothing is going to be given to me. Everything has to be earned. That's how it's been my whole life. That's how it's going to continue to be. That's what makes me a great player.

I'm excited to get started. Whatever happens happens. I know it's ordained from God, and I'm blessed to be in the shoes I am today.

Q. C.J., I know you and Bryce have known each other since middle school. What did it mean for you to go 1 and 2?

C.J. STROUD: I Bryce is my brother, somebody I've known since middle school, but we really didn't become close until the end of high school going to college. We saw

each other spring break, come back out and train. We had the same trainer with 30QB out in Huntington Beach, California. Every time we're out there, we're joking and laughing. We're cracking jokes on each other and having fun.

He actually says I need to clip my nails, and I've gone and gotten a manicure a couple times now because he be clowning. In all seriousness, that's my brother. I was super excited to see him go to Carolina. I think it's a great fit for him. He's going to have a great career. Excited to see what he does.

We actually play basketball every weekend when we're back home, and even then, our trainer usually comes with us. He makes sure we don't guard each other because we're probably going to foul the heck out of each other.

We just play really hard. That shows you the competitive nature we have. You can see how he processes the game, how he's quick on his feet, how quick he is. B. Young is definitely going to go to Carolina and do some special things.

Q. Will, you mentioned in passing this text chain your family has posting, and there's a little bit of praise and a lot of critique. What kind of things are in there after you've had a good game? Why does it matter so much to you what your family, what your sisters say to you?

WILL ANDERSON JR.: For me, I look at it like most people. You would get in a situation like this where you're coming to something big and it's going to be a blessing for you and your family. So everybody around you wants to kiss your butt and not tell you what you need to work on. For me, that's not the case with my family. Like they don't care about any of that. They just want me to be the best version of myself any time I'm on the field, any time I'm off the field.

Any time I slip up, they're going to let me know. Even though I did have a good game, they'll find at least one play. You could have been running faster. You looked slow on this play. What were you doing on this play? They even take a picture and put it in the group chat like, yeah, we just seen it.

And I love them for that. As long as I have people in my immediate circles that love me the most and care about me like that, I'm going to be fine.

Q. This is for DeMeco and C.J. I know a lot goes into evaluating and you don't go off of just one game, but I wanted to ask you all specifically about the Georgia game that C.J. played in. How much did he show like

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extra in terms of what kind of prospect he could be? That's for DeMeco. For C.J., what did that game for you, was that kind of a rubber stamp for what your college career was? How did you view that game in the context of your college career?

DEMECO RYANS: A lot of people talk about the Georgia game, but C.J. will tell you, he had a lot of other games we consider his best games. For me, it was just -- it was a process of seeing him grow throughout the season. So where he started his first game of the season to where it ended with the Georgia game, just for me to see the improvement, see the growth, that's what impressed me the most about C.J.

C.J. STROUD: I agree. Coach Ryans hit it on the nail. The Georgia game was kind of like the stamp, the icing on the cake, just to let people know what I can really do. I finally got the ability to start running some more. I feel like that was a part of my game.

But playing at Ohio State you have great receivers that are usually always open. So I feel like I'm very, very strategic and very disciplined on my reads, which my receivers love. My running backs love it because they can get out, and I think I do a great job with my IQ picking up protections and things like that.

That Georgia game was kind of just a stamp on it. I feel like I've been consistent throughout my whole career, but I definitely think I opened up some eyes to some different type of things. Honestly, I want to show my athleticism some more at the next level. If that's what the offense causes me to do, I'm definitely willing to do is such.

So, yeah, that Georgia game is definitely icing on the cake.

Q. For Will and C.J. You guys, I know would have been happy for whatever team picked you, but you're coming in an organization that's been down and looking to a bright future. You guys are going to be two of the cornerstone pieces. What is it like to land here knowing you guys can be a big piece of this rebuild?

WILL ANDERSON JR.: It's very exciting. I know from both of us, we just want to keep our head down and work and be intentional with everything we do and swarm to the ball. That's what this place is all about, swarming and being intentional. Keeping your head down and working.

That's what we plan to do when we get here. The guys in the locker room, they're great, they're special. I've been here. I've been around them. After the draft, I got text messages from some of them. That just shows what type

of place this is, and that speaks volumes to the type of people they have in this organization.

C.J. STROUD: Will hit it on the nail, man. What we want to do, we want to start from the ground up. Everything that we're going to get is not going to be just get it. It's going to be earned. We're going to put our head down and work, and make sure that we grind and we show dues and we're willing to listen before we talk.

We want to definitely be of course a big part of this rebuild, which I wouldn't even say that because you look at this team, you see a lot of guys who fight their tails off every game, and I watched all last season, man.

I'm definitely excited to get started with these boys. Man, we just want to, like Will said, to swarm, make sure we're deliberate on everything we do, adjust, adapt to everything we have to to become better teammates, better leaders, better in this community. We definitely want to help the community as well.

So everything that comes with making this whole organization better, that's what we're a part of.

Q. Will and C.J., congratulations and welcome to Houston. Will, what does it mean to you -- and C.J., I'll ask you a followup -- that the team made the moves to get up to get you at 3. C.J., I know it was kind of crazy, you'd just been drafted, but what was that 10 to 15-minute time frame when you realize, oh, my gosh, the guy behind me is coming to Texas too.

WILL ANDERSON JR.: God makes no mistakes. All I've been praying about is, God, I know you got me. Whatever fit you put me in, I know it's the right fit for me. I know it's the right place to me.

I think it just proved that the Houston Texans were the right place for me. It showed me they think I'm a special player. They think I'm a high character guy, and they believe in me to go in there and do everything I said, keep my head down, work hard, and bring energy every day.

I appreciate it so much. I told them a dozen times probably, like I'm so appreciative of them. I don't take this for granted. That showed me how much they actually wanted me here. That's all I wanted is to go somewhere where I felt wanted, where I felt like it was family. That's what I'm big on. Just getting that feeling from them, it means everything.

C.J. STROUD: It was a special moment just for me right when I got the call. I tried to lock in and make sure I just was clear in my communication. Talking to Coach Ryans,



talking to Nick, talking to Mr. McNair. I kind of wanted to make sure I wasn't getting emotional so fast, but right when I hung up, just everything I've been through, all the hard work, all the preparation and everything that my family has done to get to that point -- of course this is just a stepping stool, this is just the beginning, but it meant a lot to be there because it wasn't easy.

I walk on the stage, and I see some of my friends. I'm just like, man, I just got picked. I do the interview. I'm walking down. I go say what's up to the Texans fans. They said I was the only one willing to do that, to go down, it's so cool. I look up, and it says the pick is in, it's the Texans. I'm like, I just got picked. That can't be true.

They're like, no, they just traded. I'm like, oh, they're going to get Will. I've got the biggest smile on my face. I'm super stoked. Will and I have known each other since high school. We played against each other in the All-American Bowl. He couldn't sack me then. Let's see if he can now.

(Laughter).

We're super excited. We were with each other in Texas a couple of days ago shooting a video. We were like, man, what if we were teammates? And now we are.

Shout out to Nick. You're doing a great job. Nobody is asking Nick questions.

NICK CASERIO: Just play well. That's all.

C.J. STROUD: I got to show Nick some love. He's the one who made it happen.

NICK CASERIO: They've heard enough from me.

C.J. STROUD: We're going to get you flowers for sure.

I was super stoked to be sitting here with these special men. Like Will said earlier, that's what excites me, God doesn't make mistakes. I'm sitting next to four great men -- three. Excuse me.

DEMECO RYANS: You could put yourself in there. That's okay.

C.J. STROUD: All right, cool. No, man, just three men that are really great in their family, in the community, men of God, and that's something I am, and Will is as well. It excites me to see what the future holds.

We don't got no limit. We can do whatever we put our minds to and whatever Coach asks us to do. So I'm really excited.

Q. This question is for Will and Coach. Will, before you got here, you were asked several times about the possibility of playing with Coach DeMeco Ryans. What was it about you that gave you the belief and confidence that you could grow with him? For Coach, what is it about Will that gives you the confidence that he can be the same on defense?

WILL ANDERSON JR.: For me, the past couple years whenever I played, whether it's high school or college, I've always had a head coach that I shared the same mentality with. That's why it was easy for me to relate to the message he was trying to say to the team or just talking to me, and that's what I love. That's what I need.

I want to play for somebody that's got the same way I think. So when I came here and I talked to Coach Ryans, I was like I've got to be here. The same exact mindset, the same mentality, what he's trying to preach, everything. That's what I'm all about, and that's what I want to do.

It's going to be a lot of hard work. Nothing is given to me. That's the way I like it. I want to go out there and earn it. I want to go out and compete. The mindset he has and the mentality and the standard and the expectation, that's everything what I'm about.

That's why it was so easy for me to say, I want to be a Houston Texan. I want to go and play for that man right there. That's just how I was thinking about it.

DEMECO RYANS: That's it (laughter). Who wouldn't want him on our team? Love the energy that he brings. Love the passion, and love the humbleness, but also the competitor in him. It just like sticks out. That's the thing that I love about Will. That's who he is. He doesn't change. He's going to bring energy.

And the thing about Will, and I told him earlier, like he doesn't have to be the staple of the defense. He just has to come in and be the best Will Anderson. That's it. He doesn't have to do anything more than that, nothing more, nothing less. Just be the best version of himself, and that's going to be good enough for our team.

Q. For both C.J. and Will, I know you put in the work throughout your career in college. Can you just talk about what stood out to you the most, the process from when the season ended to get to know?

C.J. STROUD: For me, being at Ohio State, we're a brotherhood for real. Seeing my guys get drafted yesterday, it was super emotional for me just to see all the work that we put in to come into the dorms together. Of

course that takes time.

So being away from them for so long, that was one of the hardest things because you're so accustomed to working out with them, eating with them, hanging out with each other, being with their family, playing games together, doing everything. So that was really tough was just like the capacity to do it on your own all the time every day.

That's what being a pro is. So I feel like I handled it pretty well, and I have great people around me to help me do such. But that's one thing I'm super excited to be a part of again is the locker room. That's something that you can't really mimic or copy in any other sport or any other type of business because the locker room is very special.

So that's what I'm really looking forward to. It was just really long, like you have things pulling you, like you have to do combine, preparing for that a week after you play your last snap, and then you're going to Pro Day, which that's a long process, and the 30 visits, you're flying from team to team.

So it's just a lot of movement, a lot of teams. So I'm excited to be somewhere I can call my third home because Columbus is one of my homes as well. I'm really excited to be a staple in this community of Houston.

Yeah, that was kind of the process throughout that. It's kind of long but still a blessing because you dream about that your whole life.

WILL ANDERSON JR.: For me, it all goes back to just being how disciplined or how committed you are to something that you love to do. Thinking about like you don't got school no more. You don't got to wake up and go to class no more. What are you going to do with your time now?

That's one of the biggest things is staying disciplined, staying committed to everything that you need to do. After the season is over, you go straight into the combine process. People that don't know, that's one of the toughest processes. You've got a month and a half to get your body in the best shape possible, to go out there and move as fast as possible, run as fast as possible, and stuff like that.

This process has been great for me. I've got time to learn myself, learn my body, perfect my craft, and have fun doing it.

Now I'm here sitting on this stage, like C.J. said, with all these great men, and it's such a blessing just to be here, and it's a big opportunity that I don't take for granted.

Q. C.J., Will, obviously you guys had tremendous college careers. Obviously very talented. To hear DeMeco and Nick talk about your character and who you are as people and that's the type of people they want in this building, what does that mean to you guys?

C.J. STROUD: It means a lot because I know talking to some of the people that I know in the league, some old teammates, some old coaches, it's not like that everywhere. Sometimes they just want you to shut up and play. But here they care about you not only on the field but off as well.

To be honest, it's not us you need to be thanking, it's our parents, it's our families, it's our communities back home. They're the ones that instilled the foundation for us.

Man, take my hat off to my mom, to my dad, to all the people back home who help me become the man I am today, and of course my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the real foundation of who I am and why I am. I would probably say the same for Will. I don't want to speak for him, but just being around him, you can tell.

It's a blessing to be around people who actually care about character and doing the right thing because it's easy to do wrong, it's hard to do right. We're fighting every day to do the right things, not only on the field, but off as well.

WILL ANDERSON JR.: I pride myself on my character, because what's on my back is my last name, and that's the people I represent is my family.

My mom and dad, six kids, not easy, you know what I'm saying? They sacrificed so much stuff for me and my family, people don't even know. They got six people through high school, three that graduated college, everybody doing their own thing.

I think the biggest thing for me and my siblings, when we're in the real world, we're going to represent the Anderson name the right way, and that's what I always pride myself in is having high character.

My grandmother who passed that's one thing she always talked about is having love in your heart. That's what I try to bring with me. I try to be a positive influential around anybody. Just trying to touch their soul, try to connect with them, and just have that positivity around them.

That's what I think helps me a lot, just having that support system behind me that raised me the right way, that loves me the right way, and was tough on me but also loved me the right way. So I'm super appreciative of my family. Like

C.J. said, I know his family did the same thing for him, and that's what makes me special people and a special place.

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