

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Saturday, April 29, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

## Nick Caserio

### Draft Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: I appreciate everybody being here this evening. Hopefully it was a productive weekend for us, kind of culminating with the selections here today.

Had the two picks in the fourth round at the top, and then we going in had a little bit of a gap with the three, six, one or two sevens, whatever it was. So really we made the trade before the draft even started.

Typically what happens there at the top of the fourth round, you usually get calls. Teams are looking to move up. Teams are looking to trade up. Our thought process was we probably were going to pick at one spot and then move back to try to accumulate another pick there in the middle.

So the trade with Vegas kind of afforded us the opportunity to do that and move down to 109, picked up the fifth, and it was really kind of repositioning some of the picks. Then with the Philly situation or the Philly pick, it was a pick for next year. I mean, Philly's a good team, so it's a third, but it's probably going to be middle to the bottom, so let's call it a fourth.

Nonetheless, acquired a future pick, like we thought it made sense. So we had X number of players there kind of at the top. We figured we'd get one of them. So we moved back, picked Dylan Horton, defensive end there from TCU. Good player. He's kind of played a couple different defensive systems. Probably best suited at defensive end. So he'll probably be a defensive end in our front. Good size, good length, productive season, had a pretty good Senior Bowl week.

Again, their front, the way they play their kind of 3-3-5, so he's kind of played a multiplicity of fronts, kind of end, 4i, some inside, really fits more on the edge of the defense. So kind of fits the profile of what we're trying to do here on the defensive end spot. So that was the pick at 109, whatever it was.

Then kind of were positioning there at 174 and then just kind of scooted up a little bit there, similar type of trade with -- I want to say it was the Rams, right? So it was

repositioning. Henry's a player -- I mean, wherever he's played, he's been productive. Whether it was at Tennessee, whether it was at Alabama, captain, leader, ran a defense, signal caller, highly productive, instinctive. So there's a lot of good qualities, should have a role in the kicking game. So depth at linebacker, depth in the kicking game, good makeup, high level makeup. I'd say kind of elite makeup, top of the line makeup.

So I'd say him and Anderson, I don't want to say essentially ran the defense down there, but they pretty much ran the defense down there. So that was that.

Then -- right. So we had the sixth at 191, so it was kind of two-for-one there. Really at that point, we're kind of looking at the same players. So it was like, all right, maybe we can pick up an extra pick or two and just kind of reposition it.

Then as we were going, looking up there, let's say Hutchinson was kind of a player that kind of stood out to us here a little bit. So here's a guy, Iowa State, highly productive. You go back and look at his production, and I would say, I don't know, he had 100 catches last year, the year before, whatever it was. Good size. Good toughness. Really good with the ball in his hands, great practice player.

I would say this is a classic example of a guy whose workout didn't go great, but he's a good football player, so he kind of falls into that bucket. It's a player the offensive staff thought highly of. As we were repositioning at that point, we were trying to see who are players you had maybe decent grades on that you have some affinity for. That's why we went ahead and made the pick with Hutch.

The last pick there, I think it was the first seventh round pick we've made in three years. Made everybody stick around for that one. Safety out of Pitt. Fast, tough, explosive, urgent. Got a good playing style, tough. Things that DeMeco wants to emphasize on defense, he sort of fits the profile. Probably a little better closer to the line of scrimmage. We'll see where he fits in some other spots.

I think we went into the weekend with 12. Ended up



picking 9. Lost a pick for next year or two. Lost two picks, picked up an extra pick. Really, the sixth next year is really seventh this year. It's not -- again, I think everybody loses their minds when you're giving up a lot to move up and get a player. I mean, we're talking about a seventh round pick. I don't think anybody should read into much of that. If anybody wants to go look at the trade chart, be my guest.

So, yeah, work through the undrafted free agent process this evening. We'll probably end up with about 85, 86 players-ish. Leave a few spots open. So could be some undrafted players or tryout types. Could be some free agents out there in the league that we add. We just kind of flip the page. It's not like everybody's going to go on vacation here now.

So we got through the draft process. Hopefully it's a productive weekend. I mean, really can't say enough about the effort of everybody involved from the coaching staff to the scouting staff. The constant communication, the constant dialogue, the constant what if scenarios, and always just trying to be prepared for what the next step is, what the next move is.

Then lose a player, go to the next player. What are the contingency plans in place? Just can't say enough about the overall group and the overall functionality in the Draft room. Day three gets moving, I would say, a little bit quicker because you have less time. You go from seven minutes to five minutes and then to four minutes in the seventh round.

Appreciative of everybody's effort and appreciative of the time and the commitment and just the communication. So it was really a team effort. It's about the Houston Texans getting better as a team. That's what the emphasis has been from the get go. We'll continue to do that.

Rookie mini camp will be, not next weekend, but the following weekend. First opportunity for the players to get here. Then our current players will continue phase 2 of the off-season program here starting Monday. So we'll just keep moving forward.

I mean, hopefully, there's still a lot of work for us to do, but excited about the weekend, excited about adding some quality players to the team that we think can help us. Kind of go from there. Take some questions.

**Q. You and DeMeco are always talking about character. You drafted a bunch of captains. Is that important?**

NICK CASERIO: I think it speaks to who they are and what their teammates think of them. So it's not the reason

you draft them, but obviously they're put in that position for a reason. And I would say captainship, as we know, it's different wherever you go. So maybe being a captain sometimes turns into a popularity contest. But when you're a captain, it's about leadership, and leadership is about action.

But it speaks to, I would say, what their teammates think of them, what their coaches think of them, and just their overall presence and commitment.

Now, they're not going to be captains when they walk in our building, but they're good teammates. They have the right mindset. They put the team first. So I wouldn't say that that's a sole criteria that we base the pick off of, but it's a part of the evaluation, just like a number of other factors are.

**Q. All these outside pundits grade everyone's draft classes. I wonder, as someone in charge of this team, how would you grade your draft class? Were you able to accomplish all the things you set out to do this week?**

NICK CASERIO: I slash TBD incomplete slash to be determined. That's the reality of it. There will be 50,000 draft grades here tonight, tomorrow, what we did, what we didn't do. I mean, based on what? These players haven't done anything.

We just try to add players that we think can help our football team in some capacity. Now that they're here, they'll determine what their role is. We can't really get too caught up in that. I'm certainly not. Honestly, I don't really care what the grades say. It doesn't really affect anything that we do.

**Q. That's why I wondered what you thought and if you were able to do all the things you wanted to do this year.**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think the goal every year each step of the way is add players that we think have an opportunity to help us. Through that lens, I would say hopefully we've done that. We'll find out more when they actually are here and then when they actually get started in our program.

**Q. How does your draft strategy change going forward when you don't have as many picks like you did this year with eight trades? Does it change at all? Do you kind of go into different ways of trying to acquire more?**

NICK CASERIO: As far as you're saying --



**Q. Just going forward with looking at next year and other stocks going forward, next year you have fewer picks. Just curious if the strategy changes at all than wherever you all were this year.**

NICK CASERIO: Fewer picks right now, but there's a lot that can happen between now and next year. Trade a player, acquire an asset, get draft capital, so we're sitting and saying static like nothing's going to change between now and April next year. Okay. I'd say it's highly unlikely. So it doesn't change anything.

We'll just look at our team, evaluate our team, look at opportunities. If there's an opportunity to add, great, what's the cost? If there's an opportunity to acquire a trade or if a team is interested in a player, what's the cost associated with that?

I'd say there's good chance, whatever picks we have now, whatever the number is on paper, that's probably a different number whenever we draft next April, whenever it is.

**Q. The Jets and the Jaguars, they already had quarterbacks, but the rest of the division in this Draft drafted a quarterback they think can lead their franchise. How much does that affect how you guys approach in terms of building a roster knowing that other teams in the division are also acquiring quarterbacks to go forward?**

NICK CASERIO: We're not really worried about what anybody else is doing. We're focused on our team. We're trying to add players to our team that we think can help us in some capacity. Not to oversimplify it, but that's the answer.

**Q. Do you have any particular position on acquiring players in free agency?**

NICK CASERIO: No. Same thought process. Certain positions, you may have more room than others. Probably take, I don't know, let's call it 15 offensive linemen to training camp. I think we ended up with 10 or 11 after Patterson. Actually, I skipped over him in the discussion. We ended up with a few offensive linemen. Maybe we'll sign a few after the draft, maybe leave a few spots available.

Most positions are kind of one or two players here and there, and then if you add beyond that, it comes at the expense of another player. Yeah, actually, while we're at Patterson, so I would say a lot of experience in Senior Bowl, played center, played guard, position versatility,

good makeup. Pendergast will probably get excited because we drafted somebody from Notre Dame.

Let's say he and Juice are kind of similar, but they're kind of different. Kind of gives us a little depth and maybe some versatility inside.

**Q. Do you see him as more of a guard or center?**

NICK CASERIO: He's done both. I don't know, wherever he's best at relative to wherever the other players are, that's where he'll play.

Like we talked about last night, when you have interior players on your team, some are guard only. Some can play three positions. Some are center only. So I would say in the case of Scruggs, center to guard, he can potentially play all three. Patterson has played all three. He started at center, I want to say in '21 or whatever year it was, then he started at guard. He's done both. Essentially it says he can play all three positions.

How does he fare relative to someone else inside? When you're taking eight offensive linemen into the game, the ability to do multiple is going to enhance that player's overall value.

**Q. When you look at the way Horton has, his evolution from playing other positions where he's further away from the ball, how much do you think it helps him to go to TCU and then gets drafted, his evolution from standing up to now (no microphone).**

NICK CASERIO: Maybe more from a spatial awareness more than anything else. When you're off the ball, there's certain things that you're going to do. Look, I would say like him dropping into coverage isn't necessarily like a strength of his. Now, it's something that he's done. Does that help him relative to what we're going to ask him to do and teach him? Probably not.

I would say with a lot of players, not just Dylan, but what we're going to ask them to do may be a little bit different than what they've done previously in their system. So I'd say we're going to probably more of a four-man front. So with four down linemen, probably play with his hand on the ground more than he would play from up or in a spatial alignment.

Now, he's kind of been a back to front. He was a safety or whatever he was. He kind of gradually moved towards the line of scrimmage. Again, the viewpoint of the game, when you're -- it's more about spatial awareness and spatial understanding, but then when you're playing defensive end, it's really specific. It's a little bit less space, less

multiples, then you're focused on the player that's in front of you.

How we're going to attack, how we're going to teach him to play the tackle, how we're going to teach him to play the tight end. Just because he's kind of played away from the ball, off the ball in space, whether or not that helps him or not, probably not because it's a different game on the line of scrimmage.

**Q. Just to follow up on that question, is there a number of undrafted that you'd like with where your roster is?**

NICK CASERIO: I think with the draft we ended up with, call it, 76, 77. That would leave a dozen-ish or so spots. Probably get 10 or 11, so maybe leave a few spots for whomever. This way if there's an opportunity out there, whether it's now, whether it's next weekend, or whether it's throughout the course of the spring that we feel we could fit, then you leave yourself some flexibility.

I likely won't go all the way to 90 today. Again, after the Draft, actually Dayo, who counted, now actually goes off. We theoretically can add 91 players because he's one extra. Probably leave ourselves a little bit of flexibility here in the event there's an opportunity to add a player we think could help.

**Q. Nick, when you first got here, you talked about the process of getting this team back to where it was before. When you talk about the talent you added this year in the Draft and last year in the Draft, where would you say this team is as far as the vision that you actually have for this franchise?**

NICK CASERIO: It's not about my vision. I think it's really more about where can we be as a football team? Where can we be as an organization? Are we moving forward, and are we making progress? Not to oversimplify it, but that's really where the focus is. It's not about vision. It's not about where I think we are.

Do I think we're improving the football team? Hopefully. Now we have to go out there and actually play good football. That's going to come with time. This is about work. The process hasn't ended. Just because we've had two drafts, like the process hasn't ended. We're going to continue to move forward.

Again, just try to take advantage of our opportunities that we have every step of the way. Try to put a good team together. And then get 65, 70 players in the building on a team by September and then give ourselves an opportunity to go out there and play good football on Sunday.

Anything beyond that, I think is kind of wasting time.

**Q. You added two wide receivers in the Draft plus you get Metchie back, who's essentially a rookie. How do you feel about the wide receivers?**

NICK CASERIO: I would say they all kind of have some different things they bring to the table, including some of the players we signed in free agency, so a pretty diverse group.

There will be an adjustment period probably for some, and then probably do some things offensively, some of the formationing. Some guys will be better at certain things relative to others.

Again, it's really about letting the players determine how they actually all fit together and what their roles are. They all have things that they do well. They all have things they bring to the table, and we'll try to put them in a position where they can accentuate things.

A pretty diverse group. A lot of different body types and skills. Some fast guys, some big guys, some combo guys. However many we end up with on the team, call it five or six-ish, and probably a few extra on the practice squad as we go.

Excited to work with the group. Probably add a guy or two here after the Draft as well. So probably end up with about a dozen. I'd say that's a position where it's kind of like offensive line, like you have numbers until you don't have numbers.

Inevitably lose a receiver or two, so then you're out there in training camp with eight or nine. It's a high value, high numerical position just in terms of having bodies, and kind of let the competition play itself out.

**Q. How has the last three days been working with DeMeco Ryans?**

NICK CASERIO: It's been phenomenal. Just can't say enough. I think I've said it all spring, just the opportunity to work with him, just his thought process, just the communication is constant. It's ongoing. I think we philosophically believe in a lot of the same things, things that are important.

He's been awesome. I can't say enough good things about him. I think he's everything that we envisioned. It's probably everything that you all saw when he was here as a player. It's probably the same. He's very consistent each day. He has a lot of good thoughts. His input is valuable, invaluable. And just looking forward to the

opportunity to continue to work with him.

So as we kind of transition to sort of football, I'm sure he'll be excited to go out there. He's very hands on. We've been out there -- we were out there the other day in our voluntary mini camp. He spent a lot of time on the defense. That's where his heart is. But has a good understanding of the overall team, has a good understanding of the players.

Let's say all the players that we drafted, he was a part of those discussions. So I can't say enough good things about just the opportunity to work with him.

**Q. You brought this up a second ago. (No microphone). What are some things that you look for in free agents who are potentially available, and does it come down to production, how they work as a unit, or is it salary cap structure and salary?**

NICK CASERIO: All those things factor in, I would say. Fit, role, value, cost relative to what the other options are that we have. Then the salary cap or what you have available is certainly a big part of it. I would say a huge chunk of the rookie allocation will go to Will and C.J. So that's a big part of it.

We're in a decent spot. Just have to be pretty sound and fiscally responsible. We have a certain amount of cap space, but I like to think we're going to go out and spend \$10 million on a player, probably not. I don't even know who those players are that are out there, but if there's a player in a role at a decent cost and it kind of matches up, we can add it to the team, we'll certainly look at it and consider it.

**Q. Can you give us an update on Metchie? What are your hopes for him?**

NICK CASERIO: He's making progress. So he was a full participant last week when we got on the field for sort of phase 2, which is what we did. Still has a lot of -- he hasn't played football in a long time, so going from phase 2 then really phase 3 when we actually start practicing football, some of the football movements that are involved, space, defense -- not that we're going to have contact.

Nobody's worked harder over the last however many months to get himself to this point. I wouldn't say anybody is surprised that he's arrived at this point. I'd say his will to work, his effort, his mental and physical toughness, and the work with the sports performance staff has been incredible.

There's a lot of people that deserve a lot of credit that have helped him get to this point. Start with John. I would say

it's kind of inspiring to see somebody do that. He's making progress. He's in a good spot. Haven't been any setbacks.

Still a long road ahead of us, and he hasn't played a lot of football. We're all certainly cautiously optimistic about where he's headed.

**Q. You mentioned last night your relationship with Monty. Today three trades with the Eagles. Obviously you came to Houston for relationships, but in the three years you've been general manager, what have you learned about relationships with other people and getting on the phone?**

NICK CASERIO: That's a good question. I think you try to have an understanding philosophically about different organizational philosophy, the propensity to move when you make a trade. We made the trade with Philly, and Philly made the trade with Detroit as well for a 2050 fourth round pick, whatever it was.

Some teams are, I would say, more willing to move and to be creative than others. It's okay. It just depends whatever your philosophy, whatever floats your boat. I think it's probably a two-way street. I think anybody that looks at our organization knows that we're literally open for business probably 24/7. So if there's a trade or someone to consider, they're going to pick the phone up and call because we're going to at least think about it.

I would say that's probably the biggest thing, have an understanding of kind of who's willing to move, what's your propensity to move? How often have they done it? Are you less inclined?

We actually look at this and study this before the draft. So we kind of do an overview of the decision makers in each organization. We look at the trade history, their draft history, some of the things they've done, maybe some of the trades that we've executed with them. We even go back to my time in New England dealing with certain teams.

You kind of know who are those teams, and you kind of know some other teams that are like they literally won't move or pick up the phone. It doesn't mean it's right or wrong. It just means that's what they believe in philosophically.

So it kind of gives you an opportunity to be creative in different situations. If it makes sense, you do it. If it doesn't, you keep them moving.

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