

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

J.J. Watt

Press Conference



Q. How are you, J.J.?

J.J. WATT: Are you allowed to still ask questions when your name is on the Hall of Fame wall. What happened?

Q. I was in demand. I had to come back, make J.J. Watt time money.

J.J. WATT: I don't make any money any more. I hope you're making more than me (smiling).

Q. I wanted to ask you, a lot of people want to know, what are you doing besides owning a soccer team, and what are your plans? Are you going to be on TV this season? Is NFL ownership next?

J.J. WATT: We got some things in the works. There will be some stuff that comes out in the next few weeks, I'm sure. Still finalizing things, working on things.

The number one thing I want to do is spend time with my family and enjoy being a dad. Anything that I do, especially this fall, is going to be in a limited role. I'm not going to do anything in a full-time capacity really. It's going to be maximizing my time and ability to spend time with my family, going over to England a few times obviously to watch Bernley play.

NFL ownership to me is interesting, but it's also -- when you talk ownership, you talk your ability to do something, to make an impact, to actually have some sort of input and say and ability.

When you're talking a five, six billion dollar endeavor, the reality of the situation is that's financially massively out of my realm. There's not really an actual space to be able to have any input or any say.

If that opportunity were to present itself where there actually was a meaningful way to do stuff, I would absolutely be up for it.

As of right now, I would rather spend my time somewhere

where I can actually help make a difference.

Q. (Question regarding the Steelers game.)

J.J. WATT: It will be great. I'm really excited to get back. I'm excited to get back in front of the Houston fans. I absolutely love Houston, I love the people, I love what we've built. I love the camaraderie, the chemistry, the family that it's really become.

I've said it so many times, but it is the honest truth. Every single time I step foot in the city of Houston, it feels like I'm surrounded by my family. It's special for me.

To have my actual family there on that day, playing against T.J. and the Steelers, will be great. I'm looking forward to it. I can't wait to get back in front of that crowd.

Q. When you left the Texans, they granted your request to be released. How much did you appreciate that? What does it feel like to be coming back and being in the Ring of Honor? Would you be willing to sign a one-day contract and retire as a Texan?

J.J. WATT: We talked about that at the time of the release. They were going through a tough time, a difficult time. We knew this day was going to come, we were all going to reunite and come back together.

As far as the one-day contract, I don't understand or see the reason for it. It's more just a ceremonial piece of paper. I think that the Ring of Honor and all that that comes with it is more than enough. I think they've done it first class the whole way and I appreciate that.

I haven't even filled out or done any retirement papers or anything. So I don't really feel the need to sign a one-day contract or anything. It's just a piece of paper.

Q. In this moment, you mentioned coming back to Houston, being a part of this again, a situation where your former teammate DeMeco Ryans is here as a head coach, what is this time like to return with this team, where they're at? Where do you see things are in from when you first left?

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J.J. WATT: I think Houston is in an incredibly exciting position right now. I think if you look at everything that's transpired this off-season in particular, it really signifies the vision and the plans for where this organization wants to go and where it can go.

I mean, hired DeMeco Ryans, who obviously in my opinion is a home run hire in terms of knowledge, his wisdom, his energy, his experience. Then also being a legend, a Houston legend, who he is, what he brings from a leadership standpoint.

Then you go out in the draft and you really show people you're serious, you're trying to make incredible moves right now to make this thing go for the next however many years with C.J. and Will.

I feel like things are really in a good place right now, I think there's an exciting future. I think there's absolutely going to be some adversity along the way. It's not going to be a smooth, easy transition.

I think you give DeMeco the proper time, the proper leeway to be able to do what he needs to do, build this thing the right way over time, I think in a few years we're going to look back at this off-season and say that was a really, really good one for the Texans.

Q. I'm curious, once you decided to retire, did you actually seek out advice on what to do in retirement? What is some of the best advice you feel you've gotten?

J.J. WATT: Yeah, I have. I certainly have because it's not an easy transition. I've been playing football since fifth grade. This is literally going to be my first fall without going to a training camp, without playing football, without going to games.

It's difficult. It's certainly something that you have to consciously make that adjustment and talk yourself through it to make sure that you're trying to do the right things and not letting yourself go...

The one thing a lot of people told me was to take your time, really enjoy and appreciate the time that you now have with your family, with your son. Don't jump all into really anything, which is why this fall I'm definitely going to be taking things slow and kind of testing the waters, doing things piece by piece, just to see what I really enjoy, to see what I really want to do as we move forward.

Then it's just, for me personally, I'm a competitive guy. I'm going to miss the competition, the locker room, the guys,

something to compete in. Right now golf is kicking my ass. I've got a lot of work to do there, got plenty of time to work on it (smiling).

My wife and I have some pickle ball contests as well. Going back and forth on that. Have no shortage of competition in my life.

Q. How do you process the accolades once you stepped away from the game? It's kind of fresh and it's going to be different when the game is there in front of you, you're not playing, but how do you process this, kind of come to terms with what you've accomplished, what you mean to so many people?

J.J. WATT: Yeah, I appreciate that. I think it's twofold. One, it's obviously extremely humbling, it's an honor. Everybody saying such nice things is incredible.

At the very same time, it is slightly sad because it does signify the end of a chapter, and it does signify, you watch the highlights, you see the videos, you see the plays, you know you can't create any more of those. You know those days are gone. It is sad.

But at the same time it's so much fun for me to look back on those moments and to talk to people about those times, relive them a little bit in my head.

But, yeah, I'd be lying if I said it wasn't sad knowing I can't go out there and create any more of those. But the reality of it is it comes to an end for every single player at some point. So that day comes for everybody. I'm just reconciling with it a little earlier than some.

Q. Now that you are a father, how much has fatherhood played into your decision to walk away from the NFL?

J.J. WATT: Yeah, it's certainly a big part of it. It is the best thing in the entire world. It's a lot of work, don't get me wrong. It's tiring. But it is the greatest thing in the entire world.

I really want Koa to be able to attend a game of mine in the NFL. He's been to a few. I really want to be able to spend time with him moving forward, everything that comes along with it.

I think the mental and the physical stresses that I put on myself playing in the NFL, also come with just the fact of being an NFL player, are so demanding and so high that, I mean, I'd get myself in a bad mood if I have a bad workout knowing it could affect me in a game down the road. I didn't want to bring any of that home. I didn't want to have

to deal with that any more.

I must say, it certainly has been a much more stress-free off-season, not trying to grind myself out, getting ready for another season.

Q. Looking back at your career, seeing where you are now, you mentioned it's the first time since fifth grade you won't be doing a training camp, are you at peace at this point with your decision to be able to walk away from the game?

J.J. WATT: 100%, yeah. I mean, absolutely at peace with it. Very much enjoying it. I really believe the mental stress of it all is just as relieving as the physical stress of it.

Like I said, probably wrongly, I know that I'm probably wrong in how much stress I put on myself to try and push yourself to be great, but to have that weight lifted off. If I get a workout in today, awesome. If I don't work out today, I go to the golf course instead, no problem. It's the best, and I'm enjoying it very much.

There's one thing that I didn't get to accomplish in the league, and the reality of the situation is there's tons and tons of people that will never accomplish that. It's unfortunate. I wish I did. But I had a great career with a lot of memories. If you told fifth grade J.J. that he would be where he is today, he would be just fine with it.

Q. I can't remember a player playing his last road game in a stadium where the fans give him a standing ovation and chant his name while he's hugging his little boy and wife. What was that like for you at the 49ers? Matt Burke made you cry. What do you think about Matt Burke?

J.J. WATT: So the first question, it's a twofold answer. Number one, we were getting the brakes beat off of us, 30-0. We were down by 30 points. There's bittersweetness there.

I will say that's honestly another part of the reason that I definitely am not coming back. When you walk away from the game, your last moment walking off an NFL field is in an opponent's stadium, division opponent's stadium, they chant your name as you step off the field, with your son, wife and parents in attendance, I'm not getting a much better moment than that from a personal standpoint.

Being able to hug my wife, my son and my parents on an NFL field for the last time, it was special to me.

Then Burke is a good man. You guys got a good one. I hope his press conferences have been as entertaining as

some of his meetings. He has stories for days. I've heard them all, some of them twice, some of them more than twice. I have to remind him, You told me the Kilimanjaro story three times, Burke.

He's a good one. I love him. For him to have only been with me for a handful of months, to go through the time, energy and effort that it took him to put together that video, to get all those people rounded up, speaks to who he is as a person and what he's about.

He told me, he said, People are getting you gifts, doing all this. I knew the one thing you wanted was to hear from the people in your life and the people that you respect the most.

It truly was one of the greatest gifts I've ever received and something I'll cherish for the rest of my life. I'll definitely be down there to visit Burke many times because he's that special of a person. We're friends for life.

I've actually been speaking with Vincent Kompany, our manager at Bernley. He wants to experience what an NFL week is like, see what everything is like about.

I told Burke, Would you mind if we sat in a few of your meetings this fall?

He said, No problem.

We may have Vincent Kompany coming over this fall to check out some Texans time.

Q. You mentioned fatherhood, then your health challenges you had. When you finally made the decision, what part weighed the most, the fatherhood, the health challenge, the combination of 12 years in the league?

J.J. WATT: A little bit of it all. My injuries are no secret obviously. It weighed into it a little bit for sure. It was much scarier in the moment, maybe not now. The injuries overall is certainly something.

I finished my last season healthy with 12 and a half sacks, however many TFLs. I was proud of that. The reality is I've been hurt a few times in the last few years. I did not want my last memory on the NFL field to be going off with an injury.

Can I still do it? Absolutely. I just did it with 12 and a half sacks. But how hard do you have to work, how much preparation goes into being great in the NFL? I don't know if people fully understand or appreciate it, especially as you get older.

So can I still do it? Absolutely. But I have to warm up for way longer, take care of my body way more, invest that much more time and energy into it. Quite frankly, I didn't feel like doing that any more.

Q. A sentimental question. What you were first drafted, I referred to you as possibly the most Texany Texan. What do you think of that then and now?

J.J. WATT: I do remember. I do remember it well. I can tell you what I thought at the time because I still remember it now.

I remember they're actually accepting me as one of their own a little bit. It gave me a lot of confidence and comfort knowing I came to a new city, knowing I came to a new place with people that have never met me, that I had never met before, but they were open and willing to bring me into their family. I literally do remember reading that, thinking to myself, You can do this, you can be a part of this community.

Now when I look back on it, I look back on everything, it's special. Like I've said many times, the bond that's been created between the city and myself is something that I cherish so greatly because I never expected it to happen. You hope it happens. I think every athlete would love to have that type of connection with a city.

Unfortunately we also went through a lot of adversity to get there, which bonded us closer. The reality is, we have something that's so incredible, and I'm forever grateful for.

Q. DeMeco Ryans was asked about you going into the Ring of Honor. He couldn't say enough great things about you. A teammate who respects you so much. What are your thoughts about DeMeco and the rest of your teammates and the world just loving on you right now?

J.J. WATT: I think the feeling is extremely mutual. I could not say enough words about DeMeco Ryans about who he is as a person, as a captain, as a teammate, now who he's going to be as a head coach.

I think there's a reason so many former players are so excited about getting back out, getting out to training camp practices, being around the team, publicly supporting.

It's because of who he is and what he's done. Everybody that's reached out since I retired, players, teammates, coaches, media members, everybody, it's been incredible. It's kind of one of those things where you don't really realize the different ways and the different lives that are

touched and impacted until it's kind of all over a little bit.

But it's been a blast to connect with a lot of people, some people I haven't spoken to in a while. It's going to be fun to get back to Houston and connect with everybody again. I've been talking with everybody over there now. So excited to get back in that building and be around the fans.

Q. Obviously your pro football career has ended, but you created a new career as owning an English Premier League team. Houston sports legends are really big. After hurricane Harvey, that kind of locked you in as a Houston sports legend. Do you feel that love from the city came during that time? Reminisce about that time.

J.J. WATT: Yeah, I mean, Hakeem, Earl, absolute legends of this town. They're legends for a reason, done unbelievable things. I'm honored to be even mentioned amongst such names. There's obviously more to come in the future. I'm looking forward to seeing and watching and being a part of it all. My wife and I, we still watch Astros games, Rockets games at night. We are certainly H-Town.

For me obviously what we went through is horrible, tragic with Hurricane Harvey, everything that came with it. Like I've said many times, I think there's an extreme bond that's formed going through adversity, fighting through it, coming out the other side stronger. Houston has certainly done that, shown how resilient it is, how strong it is.

I'm extremely proud to be associated with a city like Houston.

As far as Bernley goes, I'm extremely excited about it. Something I've loved for a long time. (Indiscernible) was texting me today about trying to get Bernley over for a game in NRG Stadium next year. Really exciting. Got some really big things in the works. We're really looking forward to it.

Anybody in Houston who is looking for a Premier team to jump onboard with, we welcome you on the Bernley bandwagon.

Q. Is there a part of it that's a little bit liberating to be able to be known to your children as something different than current superstar athlete?

J.J. WATT: Yeah, I think there's certainly something about that not being entirely our identity, especially for him. I also think on the flipside of that, I do kind of wish that he could see me when he's, like, 10 years old, see me go out and have a three-sack game, beat up an offensive lineman. I would come home, Dude, go to your room. You just saw

what I did, I'll do it to you, no problem.

I'm a little worried about that. The first time he lips off, I'm going to put YouTube videos in front of his face, This is me, you don't want to mess with me (smiling).

But we're not there yet.

Q. You'll be able to split wood for a long time. That's just as impressive to a 10-year-old.

J.J. WATT: My dogs don't listen to me for shit. I don't know how the hell I'm going to get this kid to listen to me. But I'm trying, man. I'm trying.

Q. You're totally retired. Was there any part of you that thought I could lose 20 pounds, be a strictly third down edge rushing specialist?

J.J. WATT: Right now, I'm like 277, 278. I've lost three or four pounds, nothing crazy. I still train four or five days a week. I just don't run a lot. I'll do a little bit of cardio, but it's all weights, trying to literally look good now, not trying to actually be a good athlete.

There's a part of me, my body feels really good because I'm not putting that pounding on it. My knees feel great, everything feels great.

There's definitely that moment every now and then that I can turn the corner right now, real easy. I start to think to myself, Trent Williams is going to stick his hand in your face. I don't feel like doing that. I don't want to do that.

Q. They're not all Trent Williams.

J.J. WATT: I'm very, very at peace with it. I'm very happy about it. The only time I was really, Oh, damn, let's say I did go into free agency this year. I saw a lot of the numbers that were being thrown around in free agency. I have more sacks than that guy, more than that guy. What would I have gotten in free agency. He told me the numbers. I was like, Just relax, man. You get to relax and be with your son. Just be with your son (smiling).

Other than that, I haven't thought about it. I'm good, doing great. Like I said, golf course is my new home.

Q. When you think about your time in Houston, think about the culture, the people, even meeting your wife here, how did that shape and mold the J.J. Watt today?

J.J. WATT: I think hands down, the melting pot that is Houston has made such a significant impact on me. I mean, I grew up in Wisconsin. I grew up in a suburb of

Milwaukee in Wisconsin. I didn't experience a massive amount of different cultures, different experiences.

When I got to Houston, I got to experience all different things. I got to experience all different types of diversity, people, food, cultures, backgrounds, everything. That's played a huge part in my development as a person and human.

Obviously meeting my wife and changing my life forever in that way was a massive part of my experience down there, as well.

The fans, the teammates, the coaches, my life doesn't look anywhere near the same if I don't experience the experiences I experienced over those 10 years.

I've said it many times before that I live the life that I live because NFL fans support the league and support the teams, and Houston fans supported me. It's no secret that I get to live in a nice house, I get to drive a nice car, I get to provide a nice life for my son because of these great fans. I'm extremely appreciative and grateful for that. It's never, ever lost on me how cool that is.

Q. Do you consider yourself close enough to the game that you get a sense of what the Texans have in Will Anderson? Secondly, with how positively you talked about where the Texans are headed, could you see your former two-time teammate DeAndre Hopkins playing for the Texans next season?

J.J. WATT: I can answer both those questions.

I think Will is a phenomenal player. I'm very excited to watch him grow, to watch him develop, to see what Burke does with him in that defense, DeMeco's defense. The attack mindset, watching. He's a freak athlete. He's already great at getting to the quarterback. So I'm excited to watch him develop and grow. Hopefully get down there and speak with him a bit as well at some point. For me as a pass-rusher, I'm very excited to watch Will.

For the team as a whole, really do think there's very, very exciting things coming up. I mean, we went through some tough times to get to these days. You had to kind of build that arsenal. I think Nick had to obviously do some things that you don't necessarily always want to do as a GM, to put yourself in a situation to have a draft like they just had, kind of push all your chips into the middle of the table and say, Now we're going to do it, now we're on this swing. From year to year now, it's a combination of adding more pieces and developing the ones that you do have.

In terms of Hop, that's completely up to him what he wants

to do. I've said it many times, he still has the best hands in the NFL. If you throw the ball within 10 yards, the man is going to catch it. It's completely up to him what he's looking for, what he wants to do.

He said previously he wants to go somewhere and win, have a chance to win a Super Bowl. I think anybody here right now can realistically say we may be a year or two or so away from the true competition for that. We got to get DeMeco's system in place. Hopefully they surprise the shit out of us, it would be great if it was this year.

I think there's certainly a process here and we have to respect that process as well.

Q. Aside from being stress-free, getting the extra time with your family, what are some more underrated great aspects of retirement? What were your first impressions when you got here of DeMeco Ryans?

J.J. WATT: Some of the more underrated aspects of retirement? Being able to eat more freely, both eating more delicious foods and also not having to eat so many calories every day. I think that's a huge thing. I don't have to wake up in the morning and shove three cups of oatmeal down my throat. I get to just relax and eat what I want. Then also at a restaurant, a slice of pie, a slice of cake, get it, go ahead. That's been very, very nice.

Traveling, being able to travel, not have to plan and coordinate exactly what gym I'm going to work out at. When we go to England, I train at the facility at Bernley. I got some dumbbells and a bike in my garage. I don't have to find a field and do everything.

When I first got here, my first impressions with DeMeco, I said it in a tweet, I literally thought so much of DeMeco, I said, Where do you live? He told me. I said, If it's good enough for DeMeco, it's good enough for me. I bought the house across the street from him. That is the epitome of what I thought of DeMeco Ryans upon meeting him. This guy does everything right on the field, off the field. He is the type of person I want to be like, emulate. If he chose this house, it means it's a smart, good decision, a great place to live. That means that's where I should live. I literally bought the house across the street from him because he's that guy.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, J.J. Very generous with your time.

J.J. WATT: Thank you, guys. Can't wait to see you all come the fall. I'm going to eat so much food in that city, I don't think there's going to be any left. I cannot wait.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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