

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, September 17, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

## DeMeco Ryans

### Postgame Press Conference



Indianapolis - 31, Houston - 20

**Q. (Question regarding C.J. Stroud) could you evaluate his performance?**

DEMECO RYANS: I thought C.J. did a really good job managing the offense. He did a really good job. Guys around him played a little better.

C.J. does it every week. He just built on what he did last week, continued to put the ball where we need it, make good decisions with the football.

So I'm encouraged by C.J.'s play, and he got better this week.

**Q. The connection he had with Nico Collins, those two were really looking good together.**

DEMECO RYANS: It was exciting to see the game that Nico had, one of the best games in his career. Very encouraged with Nico. He's doing the work, and we're seeing it on the field. He and C.J. are building a really good connection, and we're excited to see that continue to grow.

**Q. DeMeco, where did C.J.'s injury stem from? Was it on the head?**

DEMECO RYANS: C.J. is fine.

**Q. Also, why do you feel like the defense kind of struggled there at times in the early part and the middle part?**

DEMECO RYANS: Defensively today, we weren't good enough. If we want to be a good defense, it all starts up front -- stopping the run. We did not stop the run. We did not tackle well. Fundamental football wasn't good enough.

If you want to win games in this league, we've got to play better. Third down situational football, red zone, again, wasn't good enough. We gave them four ops in the red

zone, and they scored on all four ops. For us, we have to eliminate teams scoring in the red zone. We have to own it and make them kick field goals. We didn't do that today.

**Q. From a pass protection standpoint now with 11 sacks and 19 hits in two games, I know you've had a lot of injuries too. How do you factor in the play of the line versus the availability of what you have?**

DEMECO RYANS: Guys are still going out trying to do the best that they can do, doing the job that we asked them to do. Of course we like it better, don't want to see the quarterback get hit, but I thought the guys' offense took a move in the right direction today. They got better overall.

**Q. How do you describe offensively what to fix when there's some general sloppiness with the penalties, the holes, and some of those things. How do you manage that through a game, and how do you correct that?**

DEMECO RYANS: We continue to try to get better throughout the game as we go, get better throughout the week of practice. It's too many self-inflicted wounds that hurt us today, whether it's defense, offense. We're scoring touchdowns, and we get them called back.

So too many self-inflicted wounds. Things that we can control, we've got to control those better and not help the other team.

**Q. Obviously you guys prepared for Anthony Richardson, but he went out pretty early. How much did that quarterback switch affect your overall defensive game plan?**

DEMECO RYANS: It didn't affect our game plan much. We know how they like to call the game. Short passes, that's what they continued to do. For us, we just have to be tighter in coverage, and we have to make tackles when that's called for us. When the play is called for us to make, we have to make them.

**Q. DeMeco, going into the fourth quarter, the run rush attack seemed to be kind of a weak point. Was there any adjustments to maybe move away from it and start**



## **moving more towards the passing game?**

DEMECO RYANS: With the rushing, we would like to run it more. We would like to do a better job of running the ball, and that all starts up front. Offensive line, running the ball. Defensive line, stopping the run. So we have to be better on both sides of the ball.

## **Q. What were some of the offensive adjustments that you made at halftime to come out and be as productive as you were in the second half?**

DEMECO RYANS: I thought offense just moved the ball better. The tempo was much better. I thought we moved it really well. We just stalled. There in the red zone, we just have to find a way to score.

We had our opportunities, and we hurt ourselves. Penalties, sacks, it's self-inflicted. If we clean up our mistakes, then let's go have a fair fight. Right now it's not fair because we keep helping the other team.

## **Q. In the third quarter into the fourth quarter, you guys had a seven-minute drive while you were trailing. What did you think of the tempo in the second half? It looked like maybe Bobby was trying to soften the start with some of those schemes. Sometimes you were in the huddle, sometimes you weren't. I know there were some challenges to it. What did you make of the tempo in the second half?**

DEMECO RYANS: I thought it was good tempo for our offense the whole game. They were in and out of the huddle with quick tempo. They were at the line of scrimmage. I feel like we caught them off guard a lot, and we were able to make some big plays. They did a really good job of improving this week, and we're looking to continue to improve on what they started this week.

## **Q. How do you feel this team has been able to adjust to all the injuries that you guys have? You guys say 0-2, but a majority of the struggles is due to losing some really good players.**

DEMECO RYANS: We don't make excuses or mistakes about injuries. If you're out there, you got to do your job. That's what we all get paid to do. We're professionals. You're out there, do your job.

We would love to have all of our guys back, but it's something you deal with. It's next man up mentality, and that's an opportunity for whoever that is. That opportunity to go in the game is the opportunity to showcase what can you do to help our team win a game? So injuries are opportunities.

## **Q. You mentioned coming into this week a re-emphasis in the run game, establishing identity. Your comfort level, granted, with the injuries in the run game, do you feel like that identity was created? Still some work to do there? How would you categorize it?**

DEMECO RYANS: With the runs that we had, I felt like we ran it better. I feel like the backs ran it better. We were more physical up front, but we got too far behind too early, and that leaves us having to throw the ball a little bit more.

Credit to C.J. and the receivers for the job that they did in the passing game. We had to throw it. They knew we were throwing it, and our guys still converted and made plays.

## **Q. In light of the issues that on the offensive front, do you feel you were handicapped with the play selection that you want to call and can't call because of accountability with not having the offensive line?**

DEMECO RYANS: Again, injuries, it doesn't matter who's out there. We're going to call our offense. We're going to call our defense. We just expect everyone to be held accountable for doing their job.

## **Q. Coach, you allowed six third down conversions in the first half, zero in the second half. What changed there, and what allowed them to have that success in the first half?**

DEMECO RYANS: For us, in the first half guys weren't on it defensively. They just weren't on it. We weren't playing up to our standard. We allowed easy passes to be completed, allowed easy first downs to happen just because of technique, communication, guys not being dialed in together.

Second half I felt like it was a different energy. Guys came out different. But we don't have time to get it started in the second half. We have to come out, we have to play better from start to finish.

## **Q. C.J. had over 400 yards passing and two touchdowns, no interceptions. With all the odds stacked against him with the offensive line issues and being out a lot, what does that show about his ability to still produce in the midst of all the obstacles put against him?**

DEMECO RYANS: C.J. is a competitor, and he shows that. He continues to fight no matter what odds are stacked up against him, no matter who's in front of him. It doesn't matter. He has a winning mindset.



Now we need everybody around him to continue to have that winning mindset and go play winning football, and that's when things will get better for us.

**Q. How do you address the team like this as far as how they handle a game when they're down multiple scores? I think Will Anderson on the sideline talking to the defense. After these losses, how do you talk to them? How do you see them handling what's going on so far this season?**

DEMECO RYANS: Will, another guy who's a young guy who's a leader, just like C.J. They bring good energy, great energy to our team. They have contagious energy, and everybody else needs to pick it up around those guys.

What I say to our guys after this is we can't wait till the second half. Like I did see improvement from Game 1 to Game 2 from our offense, but defense took a step back.

And we can't have the back and forth. We have to be consistent, and that's the one thing. Be consistent and don't have self-inflicted wounds that you're too far behind and have to catch up. We can't play catch-up ball. We have to be in it the entire game.

So that's what I say to those guys. I definitely appreciate what they did in the second half, to have that grit to fight back to give us an opportunity there, and we came up a little short. So always encouraged and pleased by that, but we've got to start faster.

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