

Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, September 17, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

C.J. Stroud

Postgame Press Conference



Indianapolis - 31, Houston - 20

Q. The issue with your shoulder, how much did it bother you, if at all? How would you evaluate your performance?

C.J. STROUD: First of all, I want to give all glory and praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Had a hard week, man. Trying to fight my tail off just to be able to play because my shoulder was hurting me. But at the end of the day, I wanted to be out there for my guys, and I wanted to play.

I had a little pain here and there, but at the end of the day, I just wanted to play because I had the opportunity from God, man, just to be in a great city like Houston. I wanted to play in the home opener and try to flip this thing around the right way by playing well.

Yeah, it was ups and downs, but I feel like my guys around me, like they made me more positive as the week went on. They were telling me, man, if it happens, it happens. If not, just do whatever you can do, to not play if you're not feeling well.

So I decided to play, and I feel like I did okay. Of course you always want to do better. Got to not take sacks in the red zone and got to score in the red zone. That definitely was the main reason why we didn't put any points on the board. We were driving the ball pretty well, just got to finish those drives, man.

I felt like overall, I think there's light at the end of the tunnel. I think there's hope. I think we showed that today, that we're going to fight, and we're not just going to turn around and lay down just because the score flips early. We're going to keep fighting till the end.

Q. What do you think about your performance, especially the second half? Did you feel like you were getting into a rhythm? Is that a reason for the encouragement, just kind of overcoming the sacks and

looking at the final scoreboard and still finding (no microphone)?

C.J. STROUD: I think something that I even revisited, talking to like some friends from home, really just thinking to myself, man, no one said it was going to be easy, you know what I mean?

I think the hope that we brought the city from the draft and from the off-season moves and everything, like it got the buzz going. I think that was great, and I think it should continue because this team, we're a couple plays away from winning a lot of games here.

I don't think that it should be easy. We've got to go out there and fight and win, win one play at a time. I think on offense we just have too many negative plays. We had a lot of positive plays, but those one to two little negative plays are drive killers, man.

I've got to be more accurate. I've got to do more to make the pocket right. And one thing I think we've shown is that we're going to fight, even if it's not pretty. I'm excited to just keep working.

That's one thing about the NFL that I'm learning, it's week to week. You've got to lick your wounds and just keep going because no one said it was going to be easy and it's not supposed to.

Q. C.J., you said you were dealing with a little pain here and there with your shoulder. What happened?

C.J. STROUD: I don't want to give any super specifics, but I just had a little shoulder pain that I was dealing with, and really just it was hard for me to throw. I started feeling better, what was that, Friday. Saturday we don't throw at all, so that helped.

Then this morning, came in really, really early and just tried to fix it and anything I can do to play. I wanted to play.

I feel like I did as best as I could with my injury, and I tried to let it fly as much as I could. I still have velocity and accuracy with the ball, but yeah, man, I don't think it really



hindered me much. If I were to say that, that would be an excuse. But for me, yeah, it was painful.

Q. Do you expect that's something that's going to stick around that you have to fight through for much longer? How do you expect that?

C.J. STROUD: I hope not. I definitely think I took strides from when it happened to today. It felt better and better every day. So I think that's a good thing. It should be a hundred percent by this week for sure.

Q. C.J., starting at training camp, you and Nico were trying to develop that chemistry to get on the same page. As training camp went on, you started to get that continuity more and more. What was it about today that you all were almost on the same page?

C.J. STROUD: I think it was really just the work we put in from the time -- we even met right when I got drafted. He was one of the first people to reach out. I already knew what he could do. I watched a couple of games last year, and he was always open, and if he wasn't, he was going to make a tough catch.

With the type of receiver like that, give him a shot, give him a chance, and he'll make the play. It's really fun working with a guy like that. He works really, really hard. He works on his body really, really hard. He's a big guy, and he's getting out of cuts really fast. I know it's hard on his limbs and everything.

He's constantly in the training room. He's constantly asking me questions about the offense, and he's constantly just trying to get better. And I appreciate a guy like that.

These were little glimpses of what is to come, and I think it's just more and more success, from not only me and him, but really this whole offense. I think that we'll just keep growing.

Q. From last week to this past week, did you notice being more up tempo in the offense coming out of the huddle and getting out on the line of scrimmage?

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, man, that was something we wanted to fix and wanted a better game plan with was getting on the ball and putting the pressure on them. I felt like we did that. We took a step. We've got to keep taking steps, not only with that operation, but with other operations.

Me getting the play out clean and getting guys lined up in the right spot, I appreciate those guys working with me, man, because it's a new offense for all of us and we're just trying our best.

Bobby's done a great job of being up front with the communication of what we're thinking we're going to do this week and getting the playing call into me early. It's my job to make sure that I look at the play clock and make sure that we don't get any delay of games or anything like that. I feel like we took a step in that area.

Q. C.J., what areas did you feel like you all really improved most this week in your preparation that allowed you to have more success?

C.J. STROUD: I think this is something Will says all the time, man, but it's just chopping wood. I know it's probably a simple term, but what it means is just showing up every day. Like I think I said it earlier with you guys last week was just my routine and like finding that rhythm again.

That's really like -- I think that's just like ball. Like even good, bad, we sad, man, like throwing it away, learning from it, and then just keep chopping wood, keep working, keep showing up. I think like we have the talent around not only in myself, but on defense as well, to make plays and be successful in this league.

I think, when you just show up every day with the mindset -- DeMeco talks about it all the time, just a winning, deliberate aggression every day. Even if it's like tying your shoe or making your bed or just any little thing, like those little champions, those little successes become big successes, and I think that's something that we got better at was just practicing a little harder. And then this week practice a little harder, and you'll see it keep going and going.

Even if you take a step back, showing up again the next day. I think that's what makes a pro a pro is when you can do that religiously and to the best of your ability.

Q. Speaking of what you just said yesterday, DeMeco Ryans at the post-game presser a little while ago said of you that you continue to fight no matter what odds are stacked against you and that you have a winning mindset. Where does that come from?

C.J. STROUD: Those people sitting right back there, my family. I think where I come from. I think just the odds of being -- I don't have no pity for myself. I don't want anyone to feel bad for me, but the odds have been stacked against me since I was a kid.

I think God has put a special plan in my life, and I think that he's not done with me yet, and I have a lot more -- not even just football, but a lot more life to live to give to people. I think that's something that I want to keep doing

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and be better at just giving, like giving my thought -- like that's why I sit here and explain things so detailed to you all because I think it means something.

I think of course, coming from a place like Ohio State or like Coach Day was hard on me, like really hard on me, and I appreciated it. Like I didn't like it at first, but as it kept going and I kept fighting every day -- sometimes fighting against what he was saying. Like I learned the hard way, but at the end of the day, now I'm kind of like seeing what he was implying, like, C.J., do this, do that. I would go the other way, and I would get myself in a turmoil and then start listening to great people that you trust.

I trust my family, I trust my coaches. And I think people are depending on me, and I love that responsibility. He was just talking to me, pressure is a privilege. A lot of people don't get to live the life I do. It's hard. Don't get me wrong, it's hard, but it's a privilege. I'm blessed to wake up every day to walk, to talk, to smell, to enact with people, to play football.

These are all things we take for granted on a day-to-day basis, but I try to do my best to thank God for all that because His grace and His mercy, and He laid His life on the cross for us, man. I really believe that. This is bigger than just ball.

If I have to use football for my purpose to spread the gospel and the life of Jesus Christ, then I'll do that, and I think that's what God wants. But at the same time, I want to win too.

(Laughter).

That's why I keep fighting, man. I'm going to keep fighting my tail off.

Q. C.J., last week you talked about getting into a routine, and you talked about getting the game to slow down. Can you talk about the things you're seeing each week as you take things, as you chop this wood, that you're seeing and kind of starting to grasp and continuing in the areas you're growing in?

C.J. STROUD: Yes, ma'am. I definitely think something that I took from college was like kind of what I implied earlier, like it's going to be hard early, and as you just keep going, you keep banking mental reps, okay, I've seen that coverage. I've seen that blitz. I've seen this. I've seen that. I'm going to put that in the back of my mind for next time.

Sometimes even you don't need a next time. You get it the first time, and you kill them. I definitely think that's

something that I'm trying to do is just every week take a step, take a step, take a step.

I think I've taken a huge step from last week, just from operation in the huddle to understanding clock management to all those little things. Then I think football is football, though. Those guys are really good. The Colts' defensive line was really good. Their linebackers flew around. Their DBs were solid. Kenny Moore is an All Pro nickel and cornerback.

Credit those guys, but I definitely think that we have what it takes to win games, and I definitely think, if we put it together earlier, then we won't be in a tough situation towards the back end.

I definitely think that's what I'm doing in my routine is just getting better.

Q. C.J., you said last week you noticed your offensive line is really fighting for you and you really appreciated that. With that being said, it was kind of the same today. You got hit a lot. How do you keep the game slow? How do you keep your feet controlled throughout the hits, throughout the game?

C.J. STROUD: I think trust. You've got to trust those guys, and I do. I think I've showed it because I'm not just running around all the time. I'm only trying to extend plays when I have to, and I definitely think -- even sometimes I was trying to run around, and the looks were there, and I just missed the read. I would come back and do it the next time and get the read.

It's just an insistent fight every play. I'm up for the challenge, and those guys are too. I appreciate those guys, man. Even Kendrick, he comes in, and he's been here two weeks, and he's fighting his tail off. This is a whole new offense for him. Same thing with George. Like Shaq was our only starter.

Like J.P. didn't play all last year really and was a really good center in college, but this isn't college, and he's playing against a really good defensive line two weeks in a row, and he's fighting his tail off.

Josh was at guard last week. He moved to left tackle. That's a hard thing to do. This is the NFL. It's the best player every week, you know what I mean?

So I definitely appreciate those guys, man, because they're fighting. They're not just giving up because it's easy to put your head down in this league and just turn around and just do whatever, but those guys constantly are looking me in the eye like, man, I got you, and I appreciate that. I love

those boys, and I'm going to keep fighting for them because they're fighting for me.

Q. C.J., you were forced to address the pain that you fought through today. Still you threw for almost 400 yards. How much better can you get when you get 100 percent healthy now?

C.J. STROUD: We'll see. I'm excited, you know what I mean? I'm not happy right now, of course, because we lost, but I definitely think that we've done a lot of good things on the offensive side of the ball and the defensive side of the ball as well.

But once we play together as a team, watch out, man. I definitely think this team is ready to win, and we've just got to put it together -- both offense, defense, special teams coming together as one. So I'm excited, man.

Q. C.J., how bad did you feel for Richardson going out with a concussion considering what good friends you guys are?

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, man, I talked to him before the game. He seemed pretty healthy, and he asked me if I was. We had a great conversation right there. Actually we were planning a jersey swap.

I seen Gardner out there, and I was like, oh, man, I hope he's all right. So I sent a prayer.

I got to talk to some of those guys on the coaching staff, and they said he'll be okay. Just dealing with a concussion or something with his head. I'm hoping that he's all right, though. You can tell he's a helluva player.

That's my brother, man. I've got real love for him, and I hope that he comes back from this even stronger. Wishing the best for him and praying for him.

All right, y'all. God bless.

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