

Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, October 15, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

C.J. Stroud

Postgame Press Conference



Texans - 20, Saints - 13

Q. (Indiscernible) where this team is right now?

C.J. STROUD: I want to give everything to my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. It was a hard-fought win. Needed that one.

Our biggest thing was empty the tank and leave the game 3-3 going into the bye week. That's huge for us. Gotta have a good bye week and get better there. Rest up because it's going to be a big-time second half of the season that we need to execute better and be better at. So happy with the win and proud of my guys for being resilient and fighting.

Q. After you threw your first career interception, how were you able to shake it off and lead them on a touchdown drive?

C.J. STROUD: That's life. There's ups and downs. The teammates were, like, you've got this, let's go. I looked back, DeMeco was, like, you've got it. I could see it in his eyes, like he cared about how I was going to respond.

So for me, that meant a lot just for them to have trust and faith in me. And I'm going to have trust and faith in myself too. I know that play he made a good play and they were not going to get me again.

Just learning from that. Excited we went down and scored. I thought that was really big. A lot of other things I can clean up, like some things I probably did worse than the interception that wasn't really highlighted. So for me just getting better.

Q. The improvement in the running game and also the red zone, what do you attribute that to? What's different?

C.J. STROUD: Hard work. We work our tails off at practice on the little details. DeMeco was up here for 45 minutes showing us the details, all the positive plays we've

had. And we were kind of like, man, we shouldn't be 3-3, we should be better than that, but we are because we missed details on little certain plays. That's what it boils down to.

So we just really worked hard at practice. Honing out the details and getting better every day, being better in the red zone, in the run game, getting our IDs right, me being precise and getting guys lined up right.

It was good to have a good week of practice. I think this week was our best week of practice and preparation.

Q. [Question about culture and buy-in]

C.J. STROUD: I think it's everything. I feel like all the games that we've played so far has been dog fights, from Ravens all the way now to the Saints. I don't think it was one game we thought we were out of. We might have went down earlier or went up early, but we fought the whole way.

And one thing I've learned about this league it's not easy to win. Of course we didn't play perfect. I didn't play perfect. Could have made some better plays, but you have to be happy with a win because that's a great Saints defense. They're stacked from left side all the way to the right. It was a blessing to get a win against a tough defense like that.

Q. (Indiscernible). What gave you confidence?

C.J. STROUD: I think just like, one, what I've been through in this game, coming from a place like Ohio State, I have ups and downs. And just knowing the next play is the best play. It's not about what's happened before or the game before or whatever. It's about going 1-0 every play.

And I can go all the way back all the way to high school and just trying to just find -- my head coach is sitting back there, for high school. I may be thinking about him.

But he'll tell you at times I'd get flustered, I'd get pissed because I want to be so great. And I work really hard on the little details on straining 2 yards every play after the



whistle is blown.

Everything little thing I've been taught to do I want to do it for the Lord God and my teammates. I get down on myself sometimes. I'm my biggest critic. I remember in college we were playing the Rose Bowl and I threw a pick coming out of the half, we were down two scores.

And Coach Day gave me a look and was like, you've got this, let's go. Ever since then I just started kind of playing carefree. He trusted me on fourth down a lot. I made plays and a lot of confidence was built back then. It's kind of where it stems from.

Q. What did you think about (indiscernible) on that drive (indiscernible)?

C.J. STROUD: We talk about the ball, our DB coach Dino comes up here every Wednesday and talks about what we need to do with the ball protected and take it. And I gave it away which isn't a great thing.

But it's kind of crazy because he always shows clips of guys getting interceptions, not protecting the ball. You know me, I went in tried to get his leg, so I try to get a little tackle, probably a little soft. But I think I made him cut and Nico came. No, I'm playing; it was all Nico.

Nico made a good play, and I remember, like I told you, I'm looking back at the sideline, Bobby, DeMeco, we're just like keep going. They got you but they won't get you again. That was very positive on the sideline as well helped me a lot.

Q. [Question about how do you think that the interception will sit with you.]

C.J. STROUD: I ain't tripping. It is what it is. I learned from it. I understand that that guy, I think he watched a lot of film on that certain play, because we run a lot of end breakers and things like that and we try to offset it with certain outbreakers. And he kind of played both.

So I tried to move it with my eyes probably, didn't do enough of it. And he made a hell of a play. I knew right when I threw it. I ain't tripping. You gotta keep going. I think I played a solid game after that.

Of course have to clean some things up. But overall we had a good day offensively. Have to be better on third down and being on the same page on the scramble drill, missed some ops there, but other than that it was solid. I'm not tripping. I'll learn from it and keep going.

Q. You talked about some of those plays where you're

kind of improvising. Looked like you and Robert were pretty close on a couple of them. Is that just something that you guys have to experience the game and expect next time?

C.J. STROUD: Most def. He's always clean with his body language. I just have to see it better, throw it better. The third down one was my fault. I should have seen that he was breaking in and made a better play.

I'm not sure what happened on the non-PI on the sideline. That was crazy. But that's another one I could have had -- no, I'm not going there.

The red zone one I couldn't see far back in the end zone, so I tried to stop him with the ball. And he did a good job by just keep rolling because he didn't know it was behind him.

It's just communication, talking about it, getting those reps at practice when things don't go well. But other than that I think me and Rob made a really good play on the third down in the red zone and get a score. So it's just things you've got to work on.

Q. Dennis Allen since 2015 started calling the defensive plays at New Orleans. 11 of 14 rookies took an L. You got the win today. You mentioned last week they threw something at you in Atlanta that you didn't necessarily prepare for (inaudible). What did you see today schematically from what Dennis was throwing at you that allowed you to perform and play as well as you did today?

C.J. STROUD: I know the Atlanta DC came from Dennis Allen's tree, and Dennis Allen is a really good coordinator, really good coach. Got a lot of respect for them over there. They were changing up for me. It wasn't easy. Switching up the coverages, playing Tampa 2, going one robber, going quarters and cover three, different things they were trying to get me on.

I think this game I was, I wouldn't say I was more prepared, but I was ready for it. Bobby told me last week that was the first game against Atlanta that they treated you like a great NFL quarterback.

I think they treated me the same way this game; I just handled it a little better. And I think sometimes this game I should have took completion, and I think I was smart with the ball and interception and things like that. Just growing every week. Thought I took a step. Of course some things that I'm always going to go back on and try to get better at. But Dennis Allen is a great coordinator. They called a great game, and it's a tough defense and a really good win

from us and gotta get back to the drawing board but it's a great win.

Q. What is it about DeMeco that has helped change the culture and tenor of this team?

C.J. STROUD: I wasn't here last year. So I don't know. But when I came in, like, I just knew, man, this dude loves us. He really understands what it is to be a player. He understands practicing, building that callous in August and September so when November and December, when you're playing, going to the playoffs and big things like that, those are where those games are won back in August or September. So that's like the vibe I got and it was just like the one thing about DeMeco, it's all about because he played.

I think some coaches that didn't play don't understand this, you can shoot yourself in the foot and get mad and be, like, I'm going to be pissed about the play the rest of the day, but his thing is, man, next play, next drive, next thing and that means a lot, especially being a young quarterback when I do make mistakes. Always come to the sideline, got a smile on his face. Always tells me how good I'm doing. Always gives me advice and tips.

I appreciate him for just his demeanor and his attitude and his positivity that he brings to this culture and brand of football. And I think as we're winning we're buying in more and more.

Q. Third and 40 toward the end. Looked like you were urging to go on fourth there. What is it like at that moment and also watching the defense close out like they did?

C.J. STROUD: I'm a team guy, so I feel like we weren't playing complimentary football with our defense. They were getting stops. We were moving the ball just weren't scoring. Gotta get touchdowns in the red zone. I'm always aggressive. It was a great call not to go for it on fourth down; but I know if it was the call, I was going to be ready to make a play.

I know that they have trust in me when it's the right time, but it wasn't. So I think DeMeco made a hell of a call punting the ball, and now I know when the opportunity comes I've got to make the play. So I think they had trust in me.

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