

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, December 31, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

## DeMeco Ryans

Postgame Press Conference



Houston - 26, Tennessee - 3

**Q. What's it mean to you knowing, when you took over this team where it was, to be guaranteed of a winning record now? Also, you talked about the playoffs, one game left, it's for the playoffs, what would that mean to you guys?**

DEMECO RYANS: First and foremost, just thankful for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who put us in this position. All the support that I've had is not me, it's what's in me, and I'm just thankful for just being blessed to be in this position as a coach and happy to change the trajectory of the Texans organization, to be good news about the organization and we're headed in a good place, playing meaningful football.

It means a lot to us, and we're pleased with where we are. We understand that we didn't -- as our guys said, we didn't come this far just to get this far. We have a lot to still play for that's ahead of us. But credit to the guys in the room for putting us in this position.

Our players stepped up big time today. It's a true team win. Offense were able to move the ball efficiently. Defense stepped up and played a tremendous game. It's great having C.J. back, having Will back, and you just see the impact that those players have on our team.

They truly stepped up, made big time plays for us down after down, and they put us in position to be in a really good spot moving forward.

**Q. What did you think of the performance of Will Anderson Jr.? And along those same lines, how great was it to see him set the single season record for most sacks for a rookie?**

DEMECO RYANS: Really proud of Will for him pushing through. He's in a lot of pain. He's hurt. But he still sucked it up and pushed through, and he made a lot of impact plays even though he's on a limited snap count. He was still able to affect the quarterback.

For him to get two sacks, huge plays for us in the game. For him to break the rookie record, I know it means a lot to him. That's the type of player Will is. He's an impact player, and you see it instantly.

You see we've missed him. When he hasn't been there, we've missed him. But you see the production, you see the type of plays he can make for us. Really proud of him, proud of the season he's having.

**Q. Another dominant performance from the defense today. I'd like to know your thoughts on how significant the in-season signings of Barnett, King, and Tart have been for the defense.**

DEMECO RYANS: We've had to move a lot of things around due to injuries and things with our roster. Just thankful to Nick and his staff for bringing in the right guys. It starts there.

It all starts with the right guys, and then the players that these guys are stepping in and being able to catch up quickly. We throw a lot at our guys, and they're able to catch up quickly and fit right in with what we asked them to do -- play hard, play relentless, play smart football. We're happy to have them.

When it comes to Barnett, Desmond has stepped in and made plays for us. Adding Kareem, adding Amos, adding DAC when we didn't have him at the start. There's a lot of different guys who weren't here at the beginning of the year, but it just shows the resolve of our team that no matter who's in, guys are doing their absolute best and helping us to win games.

**Q. Before C.J.'s injury, we got so used to seeing C.J. making plays, looking so smooth. How concerned were you that he could pick up where he left off? And then how surprised were you that, oh, there he goes. He's doing his thing again.**

DEMECO RYANS: C.J. had a really good week of practice. I was encouraged seeing him at practice and seeing the way he operated, seeing how he was efficient in



practice, how he made the correct throws and correct reads in practice, and he looked back to himself, back to normal.

He stepped out here today in this game and did the same thing. He was efficient. He moved the offense along. For us to move the ball like we did, it started with the run game. With Motor, the way he ran the ball. With Dameon, a couple runs the he had. I think we ran the ball really well. The O-line blocked really well up front. We didn't give up any sacks, didn't turn the ball over. All of that starts with the offensive line and dominating the line of scrimmage.

**Q. You talked about playing clean. You guys looked like you did that for the most part. Losing a guy like (indiscernible) and having guys like Rankins and Tart and those guys stepping up. Can you talk about that.**

DEMECO RYANS: First off, thankful for our guys. That's what we talk about playing clean ball. We had one penalty maybe in the game. But that's how you play clean -- you protect the ball, no penalties, take the ball away on defense, that's really clean football. Giving yourself a chance to play.

We've been in many games where it was like the Texans holding the Texans back, but today we truly got out of our own way, and we were able to compete and play clean football. The second part there?

**Q. About the defensive line having the guys step in.**

DEMECO RYANS: For our defensive line, we were down Maliek, down Jonathan, down a lot of guys there. For Tart to step in and play big for us versus his old team and Rankins, another big day. Jerry has continued to play better each and every week. For him to get the sack there and Rankins to scoop and score, one of the best plays in football. Happy to finally get a defensive touchdown.

But our D-line, no matter who's been in, they produce and play well together. When they play well together, that changes the entire scope of our defense. It all starts up front with our defensive line. When we play well, they play well. So we just continue to lean on our defensive line.

They're the driving force for our defense. When they're playing well, we have a really good chance to win games.

**Q. Two questions for you. First one is Laremy had to come out of the game. Is that more of a precaution or something you need to take a look at?**

DEMECO RYANS: We'll see how Laremy is feeling as the week goes on.

**Q. And the O-line with a lot of young pieces this year, of course C.J. and Will, but a lot of young guys that have kind of carried you. How important has that been to your success for the season, the lineup?**

DEMECO RYANS: We have a lot of young guys who have stepped up, and they've provided energy to our team. That's what I told our young guys. I met with them in the off-season, like I want you guys to be the driving force. You guys bring the energy to our team.

They set the tone, and that's what I asked them to do, and they've been doing it all year. Whether it's Tank, C.J., Will, all our guys have stepped up and made plays for us.

I'm happy to have a really good core of young players who knows what it takes to win. They know how to prepare. And they know what it means to play for each other. That's really important for our team and where we are now.

**Q. What have you seen from C.J., and how much did he kind of -- not necessarily carry the offense, but how much did he give a jolt, a boost to the offense when he was out there?**

DEMECO RYANS: He was efficient all day. That's what I'll say. He was efficient. Went to the right spot with the football. He made great decisions all day. That's what I'll say about C.J. He was calm. He was confident in the moment.

Just the confidence factor, what he does to our entire team, he raises everyone's level of confidence because everyone knows the type of player he is. He's a big time playmaker, and he continues to show it week after week. We're all excited to have C.J. back because he's a really great player and we're happy to have him.

**Q. You talk about the younger players taking a major step forward, but to get two veterans like Jerry and Sheldon to get the touchdown, what does it mean? What have they brought to the locker room?**

DEMECO RYANS: Jerry and Rankins have done an unbelievable job. Rankins is holding it down on the interior D-line. Those guys don't get a lot of publicity, but Rankins, Maliek, the interior defensive linemen, they're the driving force, and they've done a great job all year.

Jerry has really picked it up these past couple weeks. To see him rushing with the speed off of the edge, really affecting the quarterback, disrupting the quarterback, that's what we want to see from Jerry in those passing situations, and he's starting to show up big time for us.

that play for us.

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**Q. Is there a message that you have established with the players coming in and out and the teammates are picking it up and picking it up with enthusiasm. It's like seamless. Everybody is picking it up and coming in with a seamless motion.**

DEMECO RYANS: Right. Our message to our guys is no matter who's in, we want to play a relentless brand of football. We want to play with high energy. We want guys to be enthusiastic about playing football because that's how I view the game and that's how I've always viewed the game. I've always had fun playing the game of football.

You have fun when you execute, right? That's what I harp on all the time. Let's have -- if our execution is right, we play with clean football. We play precision. We operate with precision. Everybody's going to be excited. Everybody's going to be enthusiastic because, if we execute, that means we're making plays.

So we just have to remind our guys of that this week. Let's get back to having fun playing football, and you have fun when you execute.

**Q. I asked you last summer, you expected C.J. to be an elite player even as a rookie, but with the amount of adversity you've had at the offensive line, if someone had told you you were going to be facing that back in July, how much sleep would you have gotten?**

DEMECO RYANS: Still get a good amount of sleep, right? You never know in the league with seasons. There's a lot of ebbs and flows, ups and downs, guys in and out. You just have to remain steady throughout the season.

It's very unpredictable. Let's take it one day at a time. Win the day and keep pressing forward.

**Q. Go back to the Rankins return, how big it was, what you saw from the sideline? You were going crazy after he crossed the goal line.**

DEMECO RYANS: On the snap, I saw Jerry, I saw his get-off. He got a step on the tackle there. It was a clean sack. We've been harping on it a lot about not just getting the sack or tackling the quarterback. We want the ball. We want the ball.

When I seen him go for the ball and it was out and still on the ground, I knew this was our opportunity to properly scoop and score one. To see Rankins come up with it, I'm overly excited at that point because it's just what we harp on. And to see it come to life during the game, I'm so excited for Jerry, so excited for Rankins to be able to make

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®