

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: Good morning. Welcome to training camp. Appreciate everybody being here. Excited to get started. Couple things before we get to football. Certainly want to acknowledge, you know, those dealing with the ramifications of the hurricane that was a kind of a tough week, so those who had been affected or impacted, probably all were in some way, shape or form. So, you know, best wishes for a speedy recovery. I think everybody's on the right side of this here now, but because the perils of living in Houston. So, you know, a lot of people put a lot of time and try to get everything up and running, including ourselves here at the stadium. So, you know, just want to acknowledge that.

Non football related, but kind of football related, specific to the Texans organization, just acknowledging the loss of Jacoby Jones personally. You know, DeMeco has a little bit more of a relationship. I'm sure he'll have some comments later in the day, but I would just say, kind of have a little anecdote with Jacoby, my personal experience. So when Jacoby came out in 2007 we actually -- I actually went down to Lane College to work him out before the draft. So part of the pre draft process. So I mean, literally, Lane College is kind of in the middle of nowhere. We were in a little like, like, literally office, like, this size. Great attitude, great person, athletic, very gifted. We were probably in a position where we weren't going to draft a receiver that year, because that was the spring of oh seven, where we kind of went haywire. And trade for Moss, traded for Welker, signed Stallworth, Kelly Washington. But Jacoby was an athletic player, and it's a great example of somebody who kind of came out of nowhere. You know, every anybody that gets an opportunity, once you get the opportunity, it's all about what you do with it. And Jacoby was a shining example of that. So, you know, 40 years old. I mean, anytime you lose anybody, it's sad, but to lose somebody, you know that young certainly thoughts and prayers to his family, like I said, DeMeco had a little bit more relationship than I did, but no, the organization put a statement out there yesterday. But certainly remiss in acknowledging his loss or in his family's loss.

You know, just one thing to the McNair family, Cal and Hannah, their support. I think some of you all of you all were in a building there last week. Made changes and modifications, updated the weight room, shifted offices. Flipped the coaching offices into a different area. And it's been tremendous. I mean, I think their support, you know, just financially obviously has a big part of it. But their openness and willingness to listen. And I think the whole idea behind anything we can do, if we can improve the operation and impact the players and help the players in a positive vein, that's what we're going to do. Being in the building here last four or five days, even though it's only been for a short period of time, you can see kind of the difference that this setup is going to make. And hopefully it's to the benefit the players as well. You know, wouldn't be start training camp without the Astros being in first place. So I know everybody was losing their mind. So credit to them. So it's fun to follow. It's fun to follow the Astros. Fun sports. And you know, we're excited to get started here at training camp. And hopefully we can get off on the right foot put a good foundation in place and get ready for the season, the challenges ahead. So with that we'll take some questions.

Q. There's a lot of expectations coming in for you this season. How have you been able to deal with that and how is the team receptive to that?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think anything that's really discussed outside of the building doesn't really have any relevance to us. So, I mean, I think that's honestly all for y'all to have fun with, and for the guys 610 to talk about buying a radio. I mean, you know, we're not gonna spend any time on things that really, quite frankly, don't matter. I mean, our expectations are for the players is to come in, have a good attitude, put a good foundation in place, be a great teammate, be resilient, because we're gonna face some things as a team. We're gonna face some things individually, and put the best version of yourself in the field each day. So, I mean, the results will take care of themselves. So what's said outside of the building? I mean, it has no impact on anything that we do. Talking never won games. Expectations. Never won games. Good football and good execution. Win football games. So ultimately,



that's what it's going to come down to. So the rest of it, honestly, it's a big waste of time for us to spend time on things that don't matter or that we don't control. We're going to focus on the controllables. Focus on the things that we can do on a day to day basis. Focus all of us on being the best versions of our ourselves. What can we do to help the team and as a player? What can you do to be a great teammate and just maximize your performance and put yourself in a position so you have an opportunity to be competitive on the field on Sunday? So that's where our focus is on a day to day basis.

Q. Looking on controllable that you can put your hands on at this point moving forward for the season.

NICK CASERIO: Sure, just alluded to them, just our attitude and our effort on a day to day basis, our purposeful work that we put in, how intentional we are about our work. How quickly can we move on? How resilient can we be go out and have a good practice? So if we have a bad practice, how quickly can we take the coaching? How quickly can we move on to the next thing? And just the focus and training camp is really more about the Texans and individual improvement, individual development and team development. Once we get to the regular season, then it's going to be about the opponent of week to week and some of the challenges that we face, and it's going to be different each week. So think the focus right now is really on us and try to get off to a good start, try to get a good found, put a good foundation in place, build on some of the things that we did during the course of this, those are the things that we can control, how we practice, our attitude, our effort, our willingness to put the time in. And anytime you're trying to build something which we're trying to do here, it always comes back to the work. So if you put in good work, you put in a good day's work, and you stack multiple good days of work on top of one another, those are the things that we can control. We can't control what somebody else thinks what some ridiculous ranking. That doesn't matter. Thinks or means. So, we're gonna focus on the Texans, we're gonna focus on ourselves, we're gonna focus on trying to improve ourselves individually and collectively, on a day to day basis.

Q. (Inaudible question)

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, every year it's the same thing. Just try to put together the best team that we feel possible take advantage of our opportunities and however we allocate the resources, we allocate the resources so we think we have a good team. But, I mean, it doesn't really matter. So it's all about action and not about talk. So we're going to go out there and try to work try to put our head down and try to improve and try to get ourselves ready. Really the focus, we have 21 practices for preseason games to get ready for

a huge challenge on the road in the opener against Indianapolis, so that's where we're focused on.

Q. Nick How much does it help you having the extra game and playing in hall of fame game and starting early?

NICK CASERIO: No, honestly, we're looking forward to it. It's a good opportunity for us to kind of get an extra seven to 10 days, a few extra practices. So going back to the earlier question, what do we do with those opportunities? So do we come in with the right mindset? Honestly, it's going to give an opportunity to some players to play that maybe they wouldn't have otherwise received. So we're looking forward to it. We're kind of embracing it. So everybody's excited, everybody's got a good attitude. And I think we get to get on a field and have a chance to play. I mean, it'll be great for the team, and honestly, it'll be good for us too, because even though it's preseason and teams are going to do different things, our second opponent is who we're playing in the opener. So there's going to be some players that they may make the team, they may not make the team, but then you can start to learn. About them individually, kind of get a basic scheme, understanding, it kind of use that information. As part of our preparation for week two against Chicago here for the home opener.

Q. Practice squad rules have changed since you first came in the league. The practice squad rules. How does that affect your thinking in terms of roster building?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I think what the League tried to do is provide roster flexibility. And what do you do with the 16 or 17 spots? The way we approach it is that's an extension of our team. So we have 53 -- 48 that we can allocate each game. But our depth is off the roster on a practice squad. And those are players that we feel comfortable -- and a lot of them, I think the biggest thing is with the number of veteran players. When they open that up, made that available to veteran players, it's another chance for them. And the way you utilize the rules. Everybody is bound by the same rules. But you have some flexibility. And get X number of call ups. Maybe you position the depth off the roster and understand you can bring the player to the game. Some of that is roster composition and how to keep as many good people and good players around. We try to be smart about that and we try to take advantage of that. We're diligent and purposeful about who we put on the practice squad. It's not just a filler.

Q. How much did C.J.'s breakout last year fuel --

NICK CASERIO: Honestly, our responsibility is to try to put together a good year every year. Teams are going to

change. We've talked about this previously. Every year, 25, 30 percent turnover across the league each team. Players are going to leave, you are going to be able to keep players, you are going to sign players, add players, draft players. You start from scratch. You put the previous season behind you. You have X number of players under contract for the upcoming season. What are our opportunities? What are our financial resources available? The draft is the draft. We'll try to add good people and players and bring them into the building however they get there. My job is to try to put together the best team in conjunction with DeMeco -- our job is to try to put together the best team possible.

Q. You had a nice base of second year players. And also what you did as far as offseason is concerned. What are you looking for for the rookies in terms of playing time?

NICK CASERIO: Great opportunity for them. We don't care where they come from, how they get here, what their level of experience is. DeMeco talked about this. He enjoys coaching the rookies and seeing the rookies grow and develop more than coaching veterans, so we're not opposed to playing anybody. So rookie player doesn't really matter who you are. If you're the best player, if you're the best option, and you've earned the opportunity with your performance, you're gonna play. So there's no guardrails. So we go into it, we kind of start from scratch. We'll evaluate how the players perform with their opportunities, and then we'll put the players on the field that have earned that right so just because they were drafted where they were drafted doesn't really matter. It's all about your performance. But we're not opposed to putting young players on the field as soon as they're ready.

Q. What have you seen from C.J. from year one to two in the off season, how he approaches things to try to get better?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, he's always had a good attitude. He's always got a good work ethic. I think in the off season, you may experiment with some different techniques or some different things that maybe can help you as a player. So from the day he's walked in the building, he's had a good approach. I mean, he's a talented player. He's a good player. And I think we all understand the challenges in front of us. I mean, regardless of what happened last year, how much success, an individual player as a team, we had or didn't have doesn't really matter. You kind of have to start from scratch. You kind of have to reestablish your level of performance, reestablish your foundation. And that's what training camp is about, and it's no different for any other player.

Q. Work on the front office --

NICK CASERIO: Yeah. I mean, I have been going into year 24. Nothing is guaranteed. You have to embrace the opportunity that you have in front of you. And in the end it's about the players. Regardless of how we put the team together or what we think or what we hope to have happen, the players are going to ultimately determine our performance. In the end they are relying on each other on a day-to-day basis, specifically on game day. We feel we have a good team, we feel we have a lot of great dudes in this building that care about football. One of the things that DeMeco has talked about, we are looking for. Do you have competitive enthusiasm and competitive stamina on a day to day basis? Do you put the team first? Are you a great teammate? Are you focused on the team and not worried about yourself. So that's our responsibility to find players that have that mindset and share our collective belief to bring them in the building. If they don't possess that, then, quite frankly, they're not going to be here. So hopefully we've assembled the team with the right attitude, with the right mindset, that are focused on the right things, which is winning and not individual performance, because in the end, it's about how the team does not about how one person does.

Q. [Inaudible question]

NICK CASERIO: It'll be interesting. I mean, obviously everybody's gonna have to deal with the same sort of rules and parameters and regulations that are in place. So I mean roster composition or roster construction, you're still going to need, I would say, a certain number of skill players, certain number of bigger bodies, ball handlers, I would say, are going to take on a little bit more of a premium, because you're going to have two ball handlers back there. And the wave, depending on where the ball hits, or depending on, you know, where it lands, you're going to have to handle the ball, and hopefully you can get yards. So, you know, we'll see how it goes. I mean, whether or not we see that much in the preseason. I mean, teams will be pretty close to the vest, but I think the league is shown a willingness or openness too, if we have to make some adjustments or changes and modifications as we go just to make sure it's still a good play. I think the intent was to try to keep the return, kickoff return as a part of the game. And you know, I'm sure that'll be the case. So I think everybody will be creative, but in the end, it's just about, you're at the cover, kicks, you know, going to have to cover kickoffs, you're going have to cover punts. So, tackling ball handling and things that go along with the return units. I mean, it'll be at a premium.

Q. Third NFL season. Four football seasons in a row where injuries affected his ability to play all the games.

Is there anything you or an organization that he has done, have a different result this year. And cornerback, we have a lot of new faces on the roster.

NICK CASERIO: Stingley?

Q. Yeah.

NICK CASERIO: Derek's in a good spot. He's had a really good off season. He's worked hard. I mean, the reality is, regardless of the player, injuries are part of the game. Like, we don't control when they happen or if they're going to happen. Unfortunately, it's a part of it. I'm sure we're going to have to deal with something somewhere along the line, and really, not much we can do about it. So I think the players, the big thing is, are you in condition? Do you have the right mindset, or you're ready to go and then go out there and try to perform at an optimum level to give yourself the best opportunity to compete on Sunday. So that's where the focus is. Derek's a great kid. He's had a good offseason. We'll see how it goes here in training camp.

Q. Seems like these days there are more veteran players weren't signed for teams and started training camp. How do you balance evaluating the players on the field and those that might be available to you?

NICK CASERIO: We're actually looking at that pretty much every day. So there's different groups and categories of players. You probably have some call it more established veterans, some of the better players. That's kind of one category of players. Quite frankly, a lot of those players are kind of waiting for something to happen, whether it's an injury or they're kind of waiting for the season to get a little bit closer. So I have to go through training camp, which is fine, that's her prerogative. And then you kind of have another cohort of players, maybe some younger players who are more about camp depth and camp competitions, some younger players. I mean, as an example, Malik Fisher, who signed there the other day, who played in the UFL, so had a spring of football, so just kind of managing the roster. So Malik Fisher is a different caliber of player than maybe Ogunbowale, just to pick a name, right? Somebody like that. So we look at that every day. Most teams do you kind of have your sort of short list, emergency list, sort of ready to go, but you're not going to be knee jerk with your response. You want to see how your players kind of develop. And then once you get a little bit closer to the season, there's probably a player here that's not here right now, that as we get closer to the opener, maybe hands up on a team like we did with Amendola, you know, a few years ago, whenever that was so very fluid, there's no cookie cutter approach on that, but you're certainly aware and cognizant of some of the other players

that that are out there, that might be available.

Q. How do you and DeMeco go about that process when talking about evaluating players?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we talk every day. We go through the team, we talk about individual players, we talk about the position group. How do we feel about it? Do we want to make a change? We want to make an adjustment, and you just have to be careful. You don't want to make a knee jerk reaction or response based on one or two days of practice. So this player had a bad practice. Let's run them out of here. I mean, that's not fair to the player, but it's very fluid. We're talking about it. Are we a little light here? Maybe, do we need an extra body here? Or, you know what? This really isn't working out. Maybe we move on from this player. Maybe there's a better option. But you're not going to move on from a player unless you feel like you have a better alternative, a better option. So otherwise, you're just shuffling paper. So, but we talk all the time. We talk about the team. We talk on a regular basis. We talked over the summer about the team. So, I mean, it's something that we're very conscious of and it's very fluid, and it's a very organic process

Q. A guy like DeMeco. Is he more likely to retain a player given the player development acumen?

NICK CASERIO: I mean, we're going to give the player the best opportunity. And I guess once you kind of reach that statute of limitations where you feel like you know what it's best for everybody, everybody involved, to maybe go a different direction, then we'll consider that. But I mean, like, I've said countless times, you know what? I think of DeMeco as a coach, he's one of the best coaches in the league, and I think he embraces the teaching and the developmental component of coaching, which that's what coaching is. Coaching is teaching. That's what it is. It's teaching, it's developing, it's training, it's evolving. And we have no better example than our head coach. So I mean, that's why, to Serge's question, when we talk about the team, we have very candid, honest conversations, and we're very fortunate to have him here, leading this team. There's no question about it.

Q. What was it about the defensive line that you wanted to change or see different?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, some of that was players were free agents. So their player, their contract was expiring. So sometimes you have an opportunity to keep that player. Sometimes that player chooses to go another direction. If you trade a player, you just feel like made for everybody go a different direction. So we were able to retain some players, we signed some new players, we traded for some

players. I mean, that's just part of the team building process. So it's a pretty I would say, hopefully it's a deep group. You know, we probably have a little bit more depth of defensive tackle than maybe who we thought we had initially, but some of that will sort itself out here in training camp. So there's always a lot of moving parts every this time of year. So we're gonna have to deal with some things. More than likely we're gonna have nine or 10 defense linemen on a team, because everything starts with the front in this defense. So how we end up at that point? So we'll see. But to Sarge's earlier question. You know, whoever we have on the roster is probably going to be some depth off the roster, on the practice squad, or maybe they're on the street somewhere.

Q. [Inaudible question]

NICK CASERIO: Yeah. There's no timeline for anything. I think we have honest conversations with representations all the time. We'll do deals whenever. We'll do them in training camp, do them in spring, during the season. Doesn't matter. If you think that's something that you want to pursue, you open up the dialogue and a conversation with the representative, if they are open to it great, if they are not, no problem. Have a great relationship with Drew Rosenhaus. One of the best agents in our business. Drew gets deals done. Start the conversation. If it's something that you want to do and feel good about, great. If it works out, it works out. If it doesn't, it doesn't. Nico earned that. Excited for Nico. That's behind us and now we can focus on football.

Q. First couple years you talked about process or the results. Does that mindset go away? Does it change?

NICK CASERIO: I think you never go away from your process. I think when you look at most successful teams and organizations and individuals, they are very process driven, and process oriented. We understand it's a results business. We're not blind to that. I think you have to be careful about just focussing so much on the results that you forgo your process and some of the things that go into it. It's about developing routines, about being consistent day to day, if you have a good process on a day-to-day process, the hope and the goal is that leads to good results. Sometimes the process may not lead to the result you hoped for. Then you can go back and reexamine your process. I would say we're process oriented and process driven. And I think I know I'm that way. So it's all about your beliefs and your philosophy. But you can't have good results without good process. So you want to be consistent. I think what we tried to do across the organization, have good processes in place. If they are not working the way that you hope, don't be bashful to pivot and try something else and be flexible and adaptable with

your mindset. That's what we tried to do. This year is different than last year. That's just the reality of it. We're excited about the opportunity in front of us and hopefully we can take advantage of our opportunities when they present themselves.

Q. We won't have an opportunity to talk to you before Andre's induction. How important is it to have not only the organization but entire team to be in attendance for this?

NICK CASERIO: Oh, it's tremendous. I mean, it just speaks volumes. And again, it's a reflection on what Andre has done for the organization, what he's meant to the organization, really, what he's meant to the city of Houston, the impact that he's had and he's still around. I mean, you know, there are times where a player is drafted has successful careers, maybe somewhere else, but I mean, Andre's here all the time, his support means a lot to us, and to be able to support him collectively as a group. That goes back to what we talked about -- everything we do about around here is about the team, and it's about a collective group, and to have the players -- and really, if you're a player, to be able to be around greatness and see what that looks like. I don't know how many of you have been to the Hall of Fame or been in Canton, but when you're there, it just it's a different environment, and it's kind of awe inspiring in some respects. And all these players have lofty goals and expectations, and then to see somebody - and in DeMeco's case as a teammate - you know that you played with that's going to the Hall of Fame to show you that it's attainable. I mean, you're talking about the best of the best in the history of the sport. So to be able to be there for Andre and support him is monumental, and then just for the players to be able to see and experience that. And again, it's not mandatory, but it's an opportunity. Everybody to kind of be around and be a part of that. So, we're excited about that opportunity for Andre. He's earned it, and I'm sure he's looking forward to it. And, you know, there's a football component, but there's also -- I would say a personal growth, development component as well. And, you know, hopefully, we all take advantage of it, but Canton is a pretty special, pretty unique place for sure. Hall of fame is a special and unique place. Thanks, y'all.