

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Sunday, September 29, 2024

Houston, Texas, USA

## C.J. Stroud

### Postgame Press Conference



Texans - 24, Jaguars - 20

#### **Q. Unbelievable hustle play for you guys.**

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, that's a huge play, man. NFL is a game of inches, a game of yards. They come down to small details that we always talk about. DeMeco always talks about, man, just give us a blade of grass to stand upon. I trusted in our defense to come up big, and they did, man.

Shout out to Calen playing really well. As a rookie, I know how hard that is. I'm really proud of him. Being a West Coast kid, I know how hard and tough he is and how he works hard. So, man, I'm just super proud of him. I know he got a lot of success on his way because, man, he's making a lot of plays.

#### **Q. C.J., final scoring drive led to the only touchdown. Was there something different that you saw in that drive, or were you just in the two-minute offense mode?**

C.J. STROUD: We honestly didn't go to two-minute, but we were just clicking. I know you guys are going to ask me, but we've got to stop moving backwards. Every time we do that, we put ourselves in a hard position to be efficient, and I feel like whenever we are on the green side or we're doing well away from penalties, we're moving the ball against anybody.

I definitely think that last drive, we just did a good job of staying in front of the sticks, taking what I seen and running when I needed to and whatnot. We were just locked in. Defense gave us another shot, and that's all we needed man. Just like they got our back, we got theirs.

#### **Q. I know you're going to be asked this lots of times, but in terms of your relationship with Nico, it's not always pretty, but when the pressure is on, you're able to find him. Talk about your relationship.**

C.J. STROUD: It's grown. I go back to when I first met

Nico on the field during OTAs, and I told him, man, you're a superstar, and I'm going to make sure people know that. I feel like ever since then, he's had a swagger and a confidence starting from last year, and it's just rolling now.

He's been big for us. He's always somebody that I lean on, like whenever I'm just looking down or whatever, he comes up to me. He don't do too much. Like, hey, you good? You know you are. He always gives me confidence just like I give it to him because he's just a heck of a player, man. I'm super proud of him.

I was told that he was leading the franchise in four games. That's huge, bro, with all the great receivers we have coming through this Texans organization. So I'm very, very happy to be a part of his journey.

#### **Q. That play that you made, it seemed like a lot of them are leading to Nico. How comfortable is it, when things are going kind of crazy and you're looking knowing he's going to be open?**

C.J. STROUD: Honestly, I look for that for everybody, but Nico is somebody who's quick on his feet. It's kind of crazy because we worked on that from last year just trying to get that down. That's where I feel like I could have elevated my game, he was there traveling down the field, and really it's just offense, you know what I mean?

Nico is at the forefront of that. He's eating off of scrimmage drills and whatnot. I think a lot of the other guys are getting open too, and they'll be able to eat off that as well.

#### **Q. C.J., when you look at the defense second half, less than 200 yards allowed, one scoring drive, big stop at the 1 yard line, can you talk about their performance to give the offense second opportunities to be able to keep this thing close?**

C.J. STROUD: They played their tails off. It's not always perfect. It's not always how we draw it up, but that's the NFL. The Jaguars are a heck of a team. I don't think their record shows who they are. They've had some injuries and things like that. They play really hard, and I feel like,



when it's a division opponent as well, it makes it a little harder just because you know that means a lot for a playoff run and everything like that.

We got to stack a win. Me and Azeez were talking about it, we've just got to play complementary football. When the offense is down, the defense has got to pick us up. When the defense is down, the offense has got to pick it up, and special teams has got to blanket everything.

We've got to play three phases of football at a high level and clean a lot of things up, but the defense played really, really well today, I thought.

**Q. C.J., can you talk about kind of what goes through your mind when you talk about going backwards and how you're able to stay so calm and focused? What are you thinking in those moments when you're like we've got to make a play. Can you take us through your mindset?**

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, it's kind of funny. Last night in chapel, our pastor, Pastor Von Won, I forgot what church he's from, but he's from Southeast Houston, and he was talking about you've got to go through the mud before you get to the miracle. That resonated with me, not just in ball, but in life. Not always perfect, but the mud makes you who you are.

I think the mud we have is self-inflicted mud, but I feel like that kind of motivates us in a sense. It motivates me just like, man, they're trying to see how great you're really going to be in this third and 20 or second and 20, how great you're going to be. So I kind of just challenge myself a little bit.

I don't love it, but I deal with it, and I respect the game. I just know that like those plays, if we can make them, we don't want to live in that situation, and we don't, we're going to nip this in the bud. It's going to happen.

But definitely like it motivates me just to be great.

**Q. C.J., it seems like at times you guys are just able to turn it on. Coming out of halftime, two three and outs, but in the final drive, you guys were moving the ball with ease after the penalties made you guys go backwards. At what point do you start to look at the offense and say, we can be so much better if we play with a faster tempo and playing our brand of football?**

C.J. STROUD: We're playing our brand of football. Just because you get two three and outs doesn't mean you're having a bad day. I respect what you're saying. I understand. Just because you go tempo doesn't mean

things start rolling. We try that, we're just getting shells.

But I do understand where you're coming from. I think we can get more of a tempo and get going a little more. And even just not staying in huddle, getting out of huddle, breaking huddle the right way.

All the elite teams I watched growing up, Patriots, I watched Stafford a lot with the Rams, I can go so on and so forth, you watch it on TV as a kid, you see how quick they break from the huddle and get on the line of scrimmage, and the defense feels that. Now you get an opportunity to read the defense a little more. That's where I think we can take it to the next level and get better at.

I definitely do think -- we came out a little short out of second half, but it's not about looking down on yourself. It's all about the next play, making the next play the better play. My team actually helped me doing that. It's a throw in the second half, the first half that I know I can make, and I just rushed it. But they picked me up and came back in the locker room and just went from there.

That's the one thing about ball. You can't like hang your head down too long because, man, the other team ain't doing that. They try and get you.

Yeah, I definitely do understand where you're coming from, but I feel like, man, we've got a lot of good things going on offense. We've got to just clean things up for sure.

**Q. C.J., you talked about your relationship with Nico. In what ways have you seen him grow as a wide receiver?**

C.J. STROUD: I would just say he's grown a lot, but I just think he needs an opportunity. I think Nico's been great since he's been born. I told you when I met his dad two weeks ago when we played the Bears, he looked just like his Pops, and his Pops looked like he could play. He looks young to this day, you know what I mean?

I definitely know Nico will be great for a long time. He just needs his opportunity. I think, as he continues to grow, he's going to continue to get better and better and grow. But I think Ben, a guy who's done a good job, a great job helping along the way, learning about route running and how serious you got to take the game away from Sunday, from Monday all the way to Saturday, how hard you got to prepare, and I think Ben has helped him do that.

As he continues to grow, man, you just see him get better and better every week.

**Q. C.J., can you go through the entire sequence, like**

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**the 105 walk and the fourth and seven, and then it seemed like you stood around and like 10 seconds rolled off. Can you explain what was happening? What were you all trying to do? Even though you all had the scoring drive, what was going on at that point? What were you trying to get done prior to your scoring drive?**

C.J. STROUD: A lot of times, a lot of games come like the first two weeks in the NFL is like 11 out of the however games came down from one score. If you can get the lead or tie it up and not give them an opportunity to go down and drive, that's the goal and the plan we want to do.

We also do want to stay aggressive, but just be smart, time management. I thought DeMeco and Bobby did a great job. We ended up scoring, which is great. Then you see we get them with 16 seconds, it's hard to operate now 70 yards down the field to get a field goal or a touchdown.

So you're just playing the time game. We knew we had a field goal, and we would tie the game up and go to overtime, or we could score and not give them much time. Either way it went. I thought that was very smart in what we did there.

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