

Houston Texans Media Conference

Saturday, April 26, 2025

Houston, Texas, USA

Nick Caserio

DeMeco Ryans

Draft Press Conference



Q. How did you feel about signing the draft class as a whole?

DEMECO RYANS: Yeah, we feel really good about this draft class and a lot of work by our coaches, our scouts, guys put a lot of work in and did a great job evaluating talented guys, not only about the talent but also the people.

We brought in a ton of great people, also great players, and that's the formula that we like, and it's worked well for us, and we think these guys can come in and contribute and help our team get better.

Q. DeMeco, most of the guys that we talked to after each round, they all talked about how much they loved football and were excited to get here. When you talk about the mindset that you're looking for in addition to talent --

DEMECO RYANS: The mindset is definitely everything. If you have the mindset to work, the mindset that you really enjoy and love playing football, that fits our building. That works for us. That works with the guys that we already have here.

We have a ton of guys in our locker room already who love football, not just believe that -- when you love the game of football, right, we're going to get your best. When you go through those difficult days, when it's going to be hard moments in training camp, hard moments throughout the season, I feel like your love for football will give you that edge to keep pushing through when the difficult moments come.

Q. How much do you enjoy getting these new players in and getting a chance to teach them and see them learn and grow?

DEMECO RYANS: It's really exciting when you get the chance to work with young talented guys. You see where they are. You see them start to put together a

developmental plan for the guys and see how they can grow and who they can become.

It's very exciting for me when you see the young guys and where they end up in three, four years down the road. They can create a lot of value for themselves, and we got a lot of guys who can come in and help us right away, so it's exciting to work with them.

Q. Besides good football players and good guys, was there a theme to what you hoped to accomplish and the makeup of these guys?

DEMECO RYANS: Yeah, we set out to accomplish adding great football players to our team, improve our team and come in and compete, and that's what we did. That's always the focus of the team. That's what we did and feel really good about this class. Fired up to get to work with these guys in a couple weeks.

Q. Do you plan to be active in the undrafted free agent --

NICK CASERIO: Kind of working through that a little bit here. Draft was just over, so a lot of that will come to fruition here over the next few hours or so. Roster spot-wise, I think we're -- with the draft picks, call it 83, 84, so theoretically that leaves about a handful of spots.

So if you go beyond five or six spots, then if you add more players, then you have to make some decisions about the guys currently on your roster.

We'll take a look at what the opportunities are, and if there's a situation that makes sense, we'll pursue it. If not, then there will be other avenues like we've talked about to potentially add players to the team.

Q. Going back to the combine, you talked about resetting the offensive line. How much does Aireontae Ersery, his addition give you someone that can be a cornerstone potentially in the future?

DEMECO RYANS: Yeah, with Tae we add a guy who brings that physicality, that mindset, that I really think helps



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offensive linemen be good at their job. He's done a great job at playing left tackle and still has room to grow and develop, so excited about adding him.

Q. Without asking you about what was on your board, when you look at now getting through, was it pretty true to where you guys ended up or were there some surprises?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would say there weren't too many surprises. As we go through -- and we're very diligent and disciplined when it comes to what's the grade, go back to the report. Similar to what we talked about here a little bit last night, regardless of the round, third round, fourth round, fifth round, sixth round, what did the grades tell us and then make decisions based off that.

Go back to our evaluations, look at our coaches' evaluations, what they thought, who are the players that we liked, how we feel about them, and just make a decision.

Honestly, just kind of follow the dotted line and don't jump outside of what the normal protocol is.

I think we've been very disciplined and consistent since DeMeco has been the head coach, and that's how we approach it, and we feel it's a pretty good formula for us.

Q. How do you feel about the two receivers that you guys were able to draft earlier, both teammates from Ohio State?

DEMECO RYANS: Both guys, Jayden and Jaylin, terrific men, first and foremost, and got two different guys. You talk about play making ability, Jaylin's ability to stretch the field, in the deep end part of the field; and then you have Jayden, just a big target, very similar.

I know a lot of people said very similar to Nico and what he's able to do, but you get a receiver of his stature and with his catch radius, just opens up a lot of things for us offensively that I know all of our guys are excited about. C.J. should be excited about the targets that he has to throw to.

Q. You ended up adding a guard. Does that mean you all feel satisfied with the way the room looks as of now, or is that something that you all will look at further?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we'll look at what the opportunities are. Offensive linemen come in different sizes. You have guards only, you have center only, you have tackle only, you have tackle that can play guard, you have guards that

can play tackle.

Honestly, like the more you can prove -- like we talked about, Titu never played guard before, and we don't know how good he was going to be until he went in there, and honestly, he played at a pretty competitive level.

There's no, like, list that says we need to go find a guard, like we talked about last night. If someone can tell me what a need is or what drafting for need or finding a specific player. I mean, if you play one spot you'd better be really good at it. If you play multiple spots, it creates more opportunities for you. We will put the five best guys out there whenever we need to play in September.

Q. You joked yesterday about having all the Jaylins and then you got another one today. You're going to have to have some nicknames.

NICK CASERIO: Yes, we will because there's seven Jaylen/Jaylin, Jaden/Jayden. We'll figure it out.

Q. Joe Shoen paid you and the Texans' organization I felt like a high compliment earlier today. Talked about having relationships, because with all the trading going in and out, they were able to execute a deal with you all and gave you a high compliment. Obviously y'all not going to jump out and sing kumbaya with each other, but the fact that you have established relationships where folks can come in, make a deal, but yet you kept the integrity of your draft board like you wanted.

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we try to be open and honest in our communication. We are not trying to pull any punches. We have a lot of respect and appreciation for our opponents and other people in this league that are in our spot.

So try to handle our business professionally. I think they know how we operate. We're always willing to listen. We're always willing to have conversations. We're not pulling any punches, because the minute you do that, you start to sacrifice what your intentions are.

We're pretty straightforward. I'd say DeMeco and I are pretty similar. We're pretty cut to the chase, what's the bottom line, not pulling any punches, and we do it in a respectful way. I think we both believe that's the best way to operate, and the fact that other people feel that way, certainly we appreciate that.

It's our job. There's reciprocity involved in this league because you never know when the next situation, the next opportunity is going to come up, and if you're consistent



with your dealings, then they know what to expect when we pick up the phone or when the next opportunity presents itself.

Q. Getting a complementary back like Woody and his skill set, and for Nick, you talked about programs yesterday, but Rutgers and Iowa as you got there toward the end, getting players from those schools.

DEMECO RYANS: Really like Woody and what he is able to provide. Really liked him out of the backfield catching the football. Really great hands. Really has that ability to make guys miss at the line of scrimmage and the ability to play behind his pads, play physical.

Like the addition of him to our running back room.

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I'd say you're probably looking at two of the best college football coaches arguably in the history of the sport. What Coach Ferentz has done at Iowa, I mean, is second to none. Similar in some respects to what Coach Campbell is doing at Iowa State.

They're kind of like mirror images of each other. Coach Schiano, obviously he has experience in the NFL, but what he's with the Rutgers program, I think you understand the profile of the players that they're bringing in, and there's certainly developmental aspect to those programs. They're coached hard and they prepare hard and they compete. That shows up on their play.

There's a lot of programs that we have a lot of respect for throughout the country, and certainly those coaches deserve that.

Q. (Indiscernible) you have guys who kind of fall throughout the draft based on (indiscernible) how important is the interview process when that prospect is going through the draft process generally speaking?

DEMECO RYANS: I think the interview portion is very important for us, just getting to know the person and putting the emphasis -- we watch the tape multiple times. We have a lot of people who watch the tape and dug in on the tape and you know what a player is and what his role could be for your team.

Now for me the interview portion is just getting to know the personality, getting to know the guy and how does he fit into our locker room.

Q. You all drafted a pair of teammate duos and then a group of guys that kind of all knew each other growing up. How does having a draft class (indiscernible) help foster their growth as they go on to the NFL?

NICK CASERIO: It probably gives them a certain level of comfort because they have a familiar face. Because a lot of these players, they're going into new situations, new surroundings, new program, new city, new everything. So to have somebody familiar, it's probably more for the players -- DeMeco could probably speak to that.

Maybe it just helps them ease their transition quite a bit. I don't think we said going into the draft we're going to draft pairs of players or people -- a lot of these guys know each other even if they aren't at the same school. So there's so many different All-Star games, bowl games, different opportunities for them.

Q. For both of you, you talk about football players, you've got a defensive tackle who got drafted who's been a quarterback; you've got a player on the offensive line that's been a quarterback, tight end. Is this the definition of what you guys -- can he play football, can DeMeco go line up and play quarterback when he was younger, whatever.

DEMECO RYANS: It just goes to the versatility that we really like in football players. I think when you find good football players, you find that somewhere in their background they've been very versatile, whether that's playing other sports, not only other positions but you just want athletes that can do multiple things.

There's a lot of examples of guys in our league that have played multiple sports, multiple positions and having that versatility and flexibility just allows you to do a lot more things -- many more things with the roster, in my mind.

Q. Graham Mertz talked about how he had met with you all during the process and he really enjoyed it. What was the thinking behind him and what did you like most about him?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, got a lot of playing experience, had some success at Wisconsin and went through the coaching transition there a little bit and he felt like the best opportunity for him was at Florida and then he played there his first year and got hurt a little bit obviously this year. But good demeanor, good presence, has good leadership, good size. Throws a pretty good ball. The type of player that we felt had some traits and characteristics at that position that we wanted to work with.

We had him here in the building and he was as advertised. We'll see how it goes when he gets here.

Q. Talking about the talent these players have, did anybody in this process that you guys talked to tell

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you funny stories or had a personality that stood out that you said he's going to be a character?

NICK CASERIO: They all get to talk to him --

DEMECO RYANS: I guess jumping off the bat it's Jaylon Smith. He's the one who felt like he was already a Texan on his visit because he knew Kalen or knew a lot of guys on our team. So he's a very fun guy to talk to throughout the process. I was like, man, now we have to get you some gear, but I felt like he was already a Texan from the moment he came on his visit.

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