

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

C.J. Stroud

Postgame Press Conference



Q. C.J., how did you feel today getting game action, and how are you feeling in terms of where you think the offense is?

C.J. STROUD: I felt great. It's always an honor to take the field on an NFL team. So I'm blessed. Thankful to God. He's allowing me to have another season in the NFL.

Yeah, I feel like we had a good two drives. On that first drive missed a throw, but that's what preseason is for, to get that feel. It's different like even being on a game field. It feels like you have more space. It's just good to be out there, get those nervous juices out.

Yeah, I feel like we ran the ball really well. Our O-line blocked very good, run and pass. Our tight ends, same thing. I think we're clicking. We're starting to see progress and production. I think more than anything our process is right, like we're doing everything right, like we're ID'ing the right way. We're not making the same mistakes we did earlier in camp.

I think that's what you want to see at this point. Hopefully we have a great week next week as well.

Q. What did you think about playing the game for the first time with your new OC?

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, it was great. He's still learning a lot, being a first-time play caller. I think he handled it great. He's very communicative. He loves to wild guys up and bring juice, and I think that's a great thing for offense.

I'm excited to work with him. He's a great guy, loves football, knows football, knows why we're calling things, how to call them, when to call them. He's been great, and I'm very grateful to have him as an OC.

Q. One non-football question, if you don't mind. Some Houston fans had questions about your hat today. Can you tell me about your decision to wear that?

C.J. STROUD: I love hats, like I wear hats all the time. I

probably have every team, but I support the Astros and the Dodgers because I'm from L.A. It's kind of contradicting, but I still love the Astros. It's all good, I understand. It's all about the swag, baby (laughter). No, I'm just kidding.

Q. C.J., what have you liked from what you've seen over the past few weeks about the offensive line and how they've improved? And then ask you specifically about Aireontae Ersery as well.

C.J. STROUD: I think our O-line has done a great job. We're a run the ball team first that wants to establish the run. I think we brought in guys who are tough, that like to run the ball. I think that's first and foremost.

Then the communication, I think Coach Popovich has done a great job with those guys, coaching them tough, training them tough at practice, getting those guys ready for every day, because up there, you've got to be really gritty, want to grind, want it dirty, want it the worst way. I think this O-line wants that. I think he's done a great job, him and Nick have done a great job making our plays fit our scheme and like what the guys are good at.

Then Tae, I think Tae has one of the best mindsets I've seen from a rookie in my couple years in the league. He texted me the night he got drafted -- when I texted him and I was like, hey, Bro, excited to have you on the team, and he was like, I'm going to die on the O-line for you, Bro. I'm going to die out there. I was like, all right, Bro. I appreciate you saying that.

That's just his mindset. He wants to be great. He asks the questions. Going against Will and Danielle every day makes him really good. I think, when he faces other guys, it's kind of easy, but he still keeps up the same tenacity and that same work ethic. Very mature guy, loves football, loves his teammates, and I think he's going to be great in this league.

Q. C.J., how do you feel about having kind of the keys given to you? Do you feel like you handle that and feel good about where you are in the process of being able to make those decisions at this point for the offense and in camp?

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C.J. STROUD: Yes, I do. It's kind of like what I've done in the past, like high school, I had a lot of other ways to get to plays, protections. Same thing in college, like Coach Day put a lot on me protection-wise and some of the alerts and cans and audibles that we had, and he helped me a lot that way that really prepared me for that.

Our schemes the last two years really didn't have those capabilities, at least yet, so I really didn't get to do it. But this year we've introduced that, and I think it's been great to just have some ownership, know what's going on, not always have to throw all these guys in my face. Always kind of know where it's going to come and how it's going to come. Always on the same page communication-wise.

Me and Jake, I always feel like we're on one accord, same with J-Pat and the rest of the centers. I think it's been great just to have some ownership.

Q. How's your relationship continued to grow in that wide receiver room, and how much do you like the addition of Christian Kirk?

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, it grows pretty much every day, like since OTAs. We do our annual trip, and I think that went well. We all got to bond.

I think Christian brings that veteran status in the room, but also knows how to play, plays fast, has some swag, doesn't just run routes on paper, and he teaches the young guys, like, hey, this will work against this leverage. This will not work against that. I think it's great for the room.

It's growing every day. Hig and J-No doing a great job, Metch, J-Wat, vets as well doing great. Braxton looks amazing. I can go on and on. I think that room is really good.

You going to ask me about my Astros fandom again? I love the Astros. I'm sorry, I like hats. Excuse me for having a little bit of personality. (Laughter).

Q. First, more importantly, Nico has had two 1,000-yard seasons, and he was able to get that last year even though he missed five games. What do you feel like he can do this season? Do you feel like he can do even more?

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, I think he's one of a kind, man, like he's a unicorn: Fast, strong, jump ability, route running, release at the line of scrimmage. He has it all.

It's my job to connect with him, I got one from him today, but I think the sky's the limit for him. Even in this offense,

like guys in New England, like Randy Moss, Josh Gordon, they have the little guys like Edelman -- sorry. I don't mean to call him little. But quick guys like Edelman, Amendola, like Braxton, C. Kirk, J-No, Metch, those quick guys. So we have a little bit of everything. We have the big Zs that are fast to take the top off.

I think that opens it up for Nico to get a lot of coverage to him this year, probably a lot of double-teams and Cover-2 to his side. I think having C. Kirk, having J-Wat, having Metch, J-No, Hig, like those guys help with just speed and verticality up the field to free Nico up a little bit more.

Q. You've been an NFL quarterback for the last three years. What advice do you have to the young boys who want to walk in your footsteps that just see the glitz and glamour but don't see the grind?

C.J. STROUD: I would say you don't get to this position without grinding. For the guys who are trying to get to the positions, like high school, college, whatever, like work ethic, like you said, it's key, man. You have to put in the work, put in the time. That's huge.

For the guys already in the league, I think they've done that. They wouldn't be here if they didn't. For the guys who are in the league, confidence, man.

I was talking to our broadcast team, they were like what are the two things you wish you didn't hear coming into the league? The two things I explained was how hard it's going to be. I don't believe in putting my own convictions on people. Like I think it's like a scare tactic to make you want to play harder or work harder, but I think the guys in positions to be starting quarterbacks or backups, whatever the case may be, they naturally kind of work hard, they put in the work. If you don't, you kind of get weeded out.

So I don't agree with like everybody saying how hard it is. Yes, it's hard. Every level is hard. You go from high school to college, it's hard. You go from college to the NFL, it's hard. That's kind of a prerequisite, and you kind of know that coming into it.

The second thing was interceptions. It's part of the game. Of course you don't want to throw interceptions. It's not something where you're like F it, I'm just going to throw it up. Excuse my language. I'm just going to throw it up. But you know, it's part of the game. The great quarterbacks know how to throw an interception and move on, know how to get a completion after and get your rhythm back. Those are kind of the things that I would say to them.

I love what this league is bringing. There's a bunch of young guys that I think will be really good. I'm excited to



compete against them this year.

Q. You mentioned the Toronto trip.

C.J. STROUD: Spying on us, Bro? I'm messing with you.

Q. Is there anything that stands out funny about that trip or anything -- you know, I don't know, Nico was telling me that y'all were like tourists.

C.J. STROUD: Oh, yeah.

Q. I'm just wondering is there anything that stands out about that trip?

C.J. STROUD: Every trip that we do is kind of different. We're always tourists, I feel like, at least some guys, unless you're from there. Toronto was different. It was cool, like dope city, by the water, skyscrapers are cool, food is good. I loved it there. We have Metch is from there, and then J. Wayne was from there as well. They showed us around a little bit. We definitely did some tourist stuff.

The people there are so nice, really nice people. They're like really -- the one thing I learned, they're really in tune to their lineage, like where they come from. If they're what we call as African American, they know if they're African Canadian, I guess it would be, they know what tribe they're from, how they got there. It was something that made me want to do it, like get into that more, like asking people out there. You're in tourist mode for sure, but I think it's a good thing. Get closer that way.

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