

Houston Texans Media Conference

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Nick Caserio

Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: How is everybody doing? Appreciate you guys coming in.

Yeah, in a decent spot. Kind of recalibrate here this week. Should be a productive week for us. The only difference is we're not playing this weekend. Kind of go through a normal week, number of players that are in here today getting treatment, working out, getting ready for tomorrow, practice tomorrow. Players will be off for four days, then get ready to go for a really good Seattle team the following week.

I think this week is kind of looking at some of the things we're doing, take a look ahead to Seattle a little bit, try to get a little bit further ahead, understanding we're going to have a long week, then a short week.

Season kind of divided up into quarters. Call it the first quarter in the season. Next quarter on the horizon, then a number of games there, really kind of a mini break there once we get to Buffalo. So kind of keep moving along.

I think the big thing from our perspective, we continue to improve, making progress as a team. That's where the focus should be. Lot of football in front of us. Played decent the last couple of weeks. Try to build on some of the things we've done the last few weeks, then try to get ready to go, like I said, for a really good settle team.

Great environment for anyone that has been up there. I will put it up there as one of the best road environments that you're going to play in. If you like football, you like a competitive environment, great fan base that are into it. They put a lot of pressure on the opponent. So it will be a big challenge for us. Excited about the opportunity.

So fire away.

Q. You've often said you're only good as your record suggests. 2-3, how did you all get to this point?

NICK CASERIO: I mean, played good football. Didn't make enough plays. Honestly, we lost three games in the

last possession of the game. That's the NFL. Margins are small. Put ourselves in a good position. Had an opportunity each week.

Can't really control what's happened in the past. All we can do is focus on where we are, try to continue to build on some of the things we've done in the last few weeks.

It's a week-to-week league. You guys look around the league, it is probably as competitive a year as there have been. They put a stat out last week, I want to say number of one-score games, games that went down to the last possession, going back 10, 15 years. That's the NFL. The margins are very small.

I think the biggest thing from our perspective, the number one stat that correlates to winning and losing is the turnover margin. You go through the league, if you take care of the ball and don't do anything else, you're probably going to win games. You can say in the Tampa game, you didn't turn the ball over. We couldn't tackle the MVP of the league, arguably MVP of the league on fourth and 10. That's the NFL. You make the plays, or the other team makes them, so...

Like our team. Like where we're headed. See if we can build on some of the things we have done the last few weeks.

Q. You tell us during draft time, when you're picking these players, you never know what you're going to get. Is that the same philosophy as far as free agency is concerned? Some of the free agency, trades, some of those players are no longer here.

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, for sure. Team building in and of itself, there's nothing that's guaranteed. NFL players maybe have a little more information relative to being able to see them play. Draft players, some risk involved.

Honestly you never know how it's going to go with any player. The reality is we're going to take shots on goal. Some shots are going to hit, other shots are going to miss. I would say, it doesn't really change. The overall team-building philosophy is never linear. Nothing is going



to work out perfectly each time.

You're going to some shots. Some things will work. Some things won't work. In the end, job is just to evaluate, DeMeco and I talk about the team literally every day. Do we feel it's in the best interest of the team and the organization, just keep pressing forward. That's where the focus is going to remain.

Q. With that, the best interest of the team, y'all say that when y'all make moves, with Cam Robinson, he wanted to play more, so it's in the best interest of the player. How are those two things aligned where you might be a little more thin with the depth?

NICK CASERIO: We have four starting tackles in the building, including Trent Brown. Cam's situation was take all the information, evaluate it, in the end make a decision that we feel is the best for the team and everybody involved. It's no different. Our philosophy is the same.

Have discussions, have dialogue. DeMeco and I talk about it. In the end, whatever we feel makes the most sense, that's what we do.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

NICK CASERIO: We have four tackles that have started in the NFL. Is that not accurate? I'm saying we have four tackles. Blake Fisher, Trent Brown. Trent started a hundred games in the NFL. That's what I'm saying. We feel good about the people that are in the building. That's what we decided to go with. Each week we'll evaluate it and figure out what makes the most sense.

Q. Offensive line, you made a complete overhaul. How do you feel like that's going the last couple weeks, putting into perspective the first couple, look at it in its entirety?

NICK CASERIO: Overall that group has done a good job. We had moving parts earlier in the season. Ed got hurt Thursday before the Rams game. We had to shuffle things around.

The group that's been out there however the last many weeks, they've played pretty good football. Ed has done a pretty good job. He has played really good football. Sometimes a change of scenery is good for everybody involved in that situation. He's played good football. He is one of the top-ranked guards in the league, something ridiculous. I'm not saying he is the best guard in the league. He has played good football.

Tytus has played competitively. Jake has done a good job.

Laken and Juice have rotated in there a little bit at left guard. The more that Tay has played, the better he's played. He's made some call it younger player mistakes, which that comes with the territory. Good kid, good attitude. Builds on some of the things that he continues to do well.

Overall, that group has worked well together, making progress. I mean, Cole has done a pretty good job with that. We're going to need everybody to try to continue to build our depth.

With Trent going from the practice squad to the roster is really more a depth situation. He was off the roster, but we felt like, all right, we had a roster spot. No shenanigans involved. I am sure everybody is looking at it, what the hell are these guys doing? It wasn't more than meets the eye. It was simply a matter of roster, moving from one spot to the next.

Q. How would you evaluate C.J.'s progress or his performance through the first five games?

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, he's done a good job. The last couple games, he's played the position the way the position is supposed to be played. Made good decisions, been efficient. Completed 81% of his passes. Hasn't turned the ball over.

The reality is, he said everybody gave him birthday wishes last week, he's 24 years old, he's still a young player, even though he's played a lot of football. You learn by doing. You learn by playing. Each year is going to be a little bit different, each opponent is going to be a little bit different, every situation is going to be a little bit different.

He played pretty good football here the last few weeks. The most important thing, he's taking care of the football. Go back to the Jacksonville game, we lost the game because we couldn't take care of the football. If you take care of the football, you're going to have a 75%, 85% shot of winning the game.

It's hard for young players and quarterbacks to understand that. The ones that take care of the football the best are usually the ones that play the best.

Q. Can you tell us anything about Joe Mixon at all?

NICK CASERIO: I think probably over the next few weeks we'll probably have a better idea. He's making progress. I wouldn't put a particular timetable on it. I think over the next three, four weeks probably get a little more information here, kind of see how he's progressing. But taking it one day at a time.



I think once we kind of get to that period, probably have a better sense of which way he's going to go for the duration of the year.

Q. Your assessment of five games in now, the rookie receivers, Noel and Higgins, what you've seen from them moving forward?

NICK CASERIO: That group overall, pretty solid contributions, including J-Rock when he was available. Overall good group. Got a good attitude. Made progress each week.

Putting Noel back there early on, once Braxton got knocked out of the mix there a little bit. Jaylin is going back there, handling the ball, giving us some plays on punt returns, had a couple explosive plays, try to make the most of his opportunities offensively.

I think the other day, the way we mixed and matched the receivers a little bit, four, five receivers, they all kind of rolled through there a little bit. Higgs taking advantage of his opportunity. Seems like when you throw him the ball, he catches it. Usually something positive happens.

Again, that is typically what you want to see. You want to see continual progress, continual improvement not only from rookies and younger players, but your team overall. That kind of seems to be the direction we're headed.

Q. One of the most significant changes you made in the off-season is Nick being hired as the offensive coordinator. What have you seen in his role?

NICK CASERIO: I think it's evolved. Anytime any of us are put in the position for the first time, you're going to have to deal with some ups and downs. It's a learning process. We've all been there. I've been there. Nick is going through it. You look around the league, there's a lot of coaches that go through that.

Got a good attitude, taking the right approach. There's always a little bit of give-and-take. Want to try a little bit more of this, but maybe it's not the best thing for the team. Maybe we're going to shift our focus a little bit here.

Nick is a smart guy, been around football for a long time, seen a lot of things. We've made some modifications and adjustments as we've gone.

We've talked about this. You probably figure out what you have with your football team over the first four or five weeks. We have five games in the bank here. Figure out what we're doing well, what are some of the things we can

build on.

Nick has done a really good job. Had a good attitude, good approach. Works really well with the staff, communicates with DeMeco on a regular basis, trying figure out what is in their best interest. In the end it's about the players. Done a good job. Glad he's here.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I mean, similar to Cam's situation. Kind of take the information. In the end took a shot on goal, didn't work out, move on. Let's focus on the rest of the team and the players that are here.

Really nothing more to it. I'm not trying to oversimplify it. But that's the reality of the situation. Certainly wish him well. Good to work with. In the end that's a decision that we made, move ahead.

Q. Why didn't you try to pursue a trade with another team?

NICK CASERIO: I think there's an assumption that you pursued a trade, didn't pursue a trade. We talk to teams all the time.

If a team is interested, we're going to listen. If there's something that makes sense, great. If there is not, we figure out what the best course of action is.

Q. C.J. and Will are up for contract extensions this off season. Can you resign both in the same year?

NICK CASERIO: We'll worry about that in the off-season. Right now it's a big waste of time. I think the focus will be on the season, figure out what we can do for the 2025 Houston Texans. Off-season, we'll have discussions when the time is appropriate.

Q. When you hire somebody Caley who hasn't called plays before, how much do you bake in the learning curve and needing to win?

NICK CASERIO: Any coach, any job when you're put in the position, there's a learning curve that's involved. You go from an area scout to college director, there's things that you're going to learn that are different than the job that you had previously.

So no different than the coach. Position coach going to a coordinator spot. There's some things to figure out, managing the staff, what is your responsibility, where do you allocate your time and resources. It's all part of the process.

You're evaluating the individual, evaluating the coach. There's things that you are going to like about the coach, you're going to give him an opportunity. Sometimes you're going to learn by failing. Things aren't always going to go the way you expect or want them to go. I mean, it happens to all of us.

So you learn from it, try to internalize it, figure out how do we make the corrections, come up with solutions, keep pressing forward.

Nick is a smart coach, got a good attitude, got a good offensive staff. Have to keep moving ahead, building on some of the things we've done here the past few weeks understanding we're going to have challenges every week, regardless of who the opponent is.

Q. From your perspective, what has DeMeco helped with working with the offense?

NICK CASERIO: Honestly DeMeco hasn't changed since he's been here day one. He's the head coach. He's involved in everything. How he chooses to allocate his time, he's always going to do what he feels is in the best interest of the team. The head coach is ultimately responsible for everything involved.

Honestly I think the whole Matt situation, the defensive staff, they meet together on a daily basis. There's not anything earth-shattering there. How you call a game, how does what on game day. Sometimes it will be the same as it week before, sometimes it will change.

In the end, our philosophy, DeMeco and mine philosophy, is whatever we can do to help the team, do the best for everybody involved, that is what we are going to do. DeMeco hasn't change since the day he has been hired to where we are now.

Q. The offensive system, I know some of the foundational pieces, New England, we always talk about the New England system is back. I'll say I talk about it.

NICK CASERIO: You in the New England system (smiling)?

Q. Tell me as much as you can tell me. Tell me as much as you can without giving away too much. How is this different than the Brady New England system?

NICK CASERIO: Again, I think anytime kind of generally labeled this system, that system. I would say football evolves over time. Again, the offense as it was

constructed in '01 is different than the offense in '07, different than the offense in 2010. It kind of took on multiple different shapes and sizes.

Offensive football, forget about the New England system, any system, it usually goes back to what are the foundational things, core principles, what is your personnel, who do you have on your team, what are some of the things you're going to ask those players to do. How you call plays, route concepts. Honestly, everybody has the same concepts.

Probably the biggest I would say difference or some of the things that are specific systematically from a protection variation standpoint, that's probably where you've seen some.

Q. More simple for the offensive line?

NICK CASERIO: It can be. Honestly, again, not biased, but sometimes it simplifies it for everybody involved. I think defenses have done a good job of evolving.

I think what you're trying to do is trying to equip the players and the quarterback for answers if there's an issue. There's going to be times where the defense presents situations where maybe they have an extra player that you can't block or you can't account for.

It's really more I would say in the protection system front than it is anything else. Route concepts, run gains, some of those other things. I mean, honestly it's probably universal. You look around the league, maybe some teams emphasize a few more things relative to others.

Again, I want to say it's actually a very player-friendly system. It's quarterback friendly. You have to learn the terminology, what you call things. Sometimes you got to be able to translate a little bit.

But even that system evolved over time. It's not certainly cut and paste. It's not you take this playbook and then you drop it in. There's always going to be core elements.

I think we're all a product of whatever our foundation is, what do we learn. But even as you grow as a coach, in personnel, you're going to make some changes and adjustments as you go. I don't want to say you're going to modernize it or equip it to this game, kind of mirror some of the defense.

When you look at the way some defenses are playing now relative to let's call it the 2010 through '15, it's definitely changed. Front structure, front modification. Defenses have done a really good job of evolving and they want to



put a lot of stress. When you're coaching defensive football and you're playing defense, what can we do to stress protections. Conversely on the offensive side, what are some of the things we can do to counteract and balance that.

Again, I think sometimes you have to be careful of just making too much of a parallel. It's system to system. It's definitely evolved over time. Unless you've been really in the system, which I've been in a lot of systems over the course of 25 years.

Q. You've been a part of it. That's why I asked. We've seen it not work with Tom Brady. That's one of the talking points that I use. Then we saw it for a number of years, didn't feel like it was evolving as much. You're one of the guys who was there for 20 years, coached in it. Sometimes you were on the headset. I figured would have a better grasp of it.

NICK CASERIO: It definitely evolved. The same thing defensively. You're looking going back to some of the defensive front structures from how it was kind of in the beginning to where it was in the end.

Q. You're saying it's evolving here?

NICK CASERIO: I'm saying offensively and defensively, just in those systems, my experience over 20 years, they were modified and tweaked and evolved.

When you look at where we are with the Houston Texans, we've had a couple different call it offensive systems. But I'd say a lot of concepts we're using currently, we've carried over from the past two to three years.

They're player friendly. There's some carryover. As a coach, you're just trying to figure out what makes the most sense to try to make it work. I think we've done a pretty good job of that.

DeMeco has done the same things defensively. Some of the things he's done in San Francisco, we're doing some things here that he wasn't doing in San Francisco. That's kind of the ebb and flow of this league.

Q. The rookies, the skill players (indiscernible)?

NICK CASERIO: Good attitude. Similar to Tay. There's going to be some good plays and there's going to be some plays that they have to get fixed.

The big thing, as long as you're willing to be coachable, willing to learn and make the corrections, that's all you can ask from those players. All three players, honestly

between the five of them, they don't really say too much. Looks like they pay attention to Stingley. Stingley talks the least amount of anybody on the team. I would say Higgs is a pretty quiet guy as well.

They are good kids. They work hard. They have a really good attitude. They want to be good at football. They put a lot into it. They're certainly making progress. They're going to help us. They've helped us to this point. The goal is hopefully they can help us over the duration of the season.

Q. Update on Jimmie Ward, Autry, Jaylen Reed?

NICK CASERIO: Reed and Autry started practicing here last week. I would say they're probably closer to playing than some others. J-Rock probably after another week or two, probably be available here at some point to practice. Jimmie is making progress. Probably a little bit further out here. But he's been in the building working. I think right now there's a little bit of gray just relative to Watson and Stover. At some point we'll see those players, probably not as definitive as it is with some of the other folks. Kurt as well.

We have some depth off the roster in some different categories. At some point when those players are available, the expectation is they're going to be ready to go here at some point to be able to help the team.

Q. It was a little bit of a gamble to go with some of the cheaper options on the O-line. You tried to trade up to get some of the top guys. Why did you decide to go in that direction as opposed to investing in some of the higher-priced guys in free agency, O-linemen in particular?

NICK CASERIO: In terms of what?

Q. Obviously there are guys who are considered top tier who are the more expensive options. You went after Ed, Lincoln, but they're a little bit more cheaper options. Didn't have the same success last year. Why did you decide to go after those players as opposed to the guys that are considered the top-tier players?

NICK CASERIO: I think we have to be careful about making assumptions they're players we didn't have interest in.

Look, I'm on the phone during the course of March. We talk to everybody, so... Let's say we were interested in a lot more players than the way the picture has been painted. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

If you don't acquire a player, you pivot to the next option. I wouldn't say there's anything different in our approach. Yeah, I'm not sure who those players are, who exactly we're talking about, what the perception is of who is a top-tier player. I think beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Again, we've been interested in a lot of players, made attempts to acquire a number of players. Sometimes it works the way you think it's going to work. You have to evaluate the market and figure out what makes the most sense. That's the approach we've taken since we've been here. It hasn't changed. I'd be careful about making an assumption of what our level of interest was or was not in certain players.

Q. Are you confident those guys can continue to ascend?

NICK CASERIO: Yea, they've improved. Tytus has played really good football. We haven't talked about Tytus. He's playing as good of football as he has any point in his career. He's literally played all four positions other than center. He's done a lot.

Jake has done a good job. Jake has been in football for a couple years. Taking advantage of his opportunity. We talked about Tay. Drafted Tay for the second round. Thought he was a really good player. Put him out there at left tackle. He's played some good football.

I'm sure we're going to lose a player here at some point. I'm sure there's somebody we're not talking about that is going to end up playing at some point like we have had over the past few years. Derek Barnett, players like that who have popped up later in the season.

We'll take it one day at a time. We'll evaluate it, try to figure out what makes the most sense for our team, try to make good decisions as we go.

Q. You mentioned player acquisition in season. You have a little bit extra draft capital for next year. Does that change an approach or willingness to make some trades?

NICK CASERIO: We'll look at it. Have flexibility. Do a cost benefit analysis. Not to get into economics discussions. That's a part of it. If you are going to give something up, what are you getting in return? Are you comfortable with that decision? What does it cost from a contractual standpoint? Some of those types of things.

Try to maintain as much flexibility as possible so we are in a decent. If there's a situation that we feel is out there that makes sense, works out, great. If it doesn't, nothing we

can do about it. We're prepared to handle it with the players we have here.

We're getting close here. You're starting to see a little bit of jockey, teams are losing players. Trade deadline is three or four weeks away. Again, I know everybody gets excited about the trade deadline. Typically it ends up being more of a whimper than anything else. You never know. Every year is a little bit different.

Always be open-minded. One thing we've shown, we are open-minded, be adaptable, be flexible. If there is a situation that makes sense, great. If there's a not, keep pressing ahead.

Q. Along the same lines, in the position that you're in, with the way that the season started, how are you able to maintain not panicking and going out and trying to make some type of changes, watching the season turn around, watching before y'all go into the bye week how you gain this type of momentum, the ebbs and flow of not doing anything drastic?

NICK CASERIO: I think the great thing about this building, it's the same every day regardless of the situation, regardless of the circumstances.

I mean, you all have talk to DeMeco every day. He was the same week one that he was yesterday when he talked to y'all.

I would say week one, like my philosophy or my mentality is the same. Win or lose, I don't really change that much. Try to stay kind of right in the middle. Learn that's the best way to handle it. Can't get too high, can't get too low. Whatever happens in the game, figure out what can we do better. There's nothing we can do. Can't change the outcome. All we can control is what's in front of us. That's the philosophy we try to take.

The players' attitude from week one to now honestly has been the same. You've all seen us practice. They have a good attitude. We've got a good group of players. We've got a good approach. They're very professional how they go about their business.

I think it kind of speaks to the environment that we've created, that DeMeco creates and perpetuates on a day-to-day basis. It's not going to change regardless of what we're dealing with.

Whatever the outcome is, come in the next day, take inventory of where we are, try to make good, sound decisions over the course of time. My experience is that's the best way to handle the program. That's kind of how



we're going to approach it.

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