

# Houston Texans Media Conference

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Houston, Texas, USA

## Executive VP and General Manager Nick Caserio

### Press Conference



NICK CASERIO: Appreciate everybody being here. Yeah, I guess kind of close the book on the '25 season, I would just say really proud of this team. Really proud of what we accomplished. Really proud of what we have done organizationally.

A lot of work that's gone into this. A lot people were involved in that process. But we have had the best three-year stretch in the history of the franchise. We don't take that lightly.

We understand there is still some work in front of us and that's a challenge that lies ahead. The reality is the more we are playing games in January, that's where we want to be. Like to be playing a few more games in January and February, and ultimately that's the goal. That's what we're all striving for in this league. Ultimately, we feel like we're more than capable of being able to do that.

Now we're flipping the page a little bit and focus on the '26 team building. That process will be fluid. As you all know, there is a lot of different things that take place.

But I think it's important for everybody -- and DeMeco mentioned it the other day - just I think from where we started the resolve, the leadership that he displayed, I mean, this franchise and this city is lucky to have the head coach that we have.

I wouldn't want to work with any other coach, be a partner in what we're doing. He makes me better. I mean, I probably don't make him better, but I think we've got a great relationship. We have a lot of the respect for one another.

We have a lot of the same philosophical beliefs in what we're trying to do and accomplish. We understand there is work to be done, and that's what this offseason is about. Just looking at everything we're doing, figuring out ways that we can improve, whether it's individually, whether it's collectively, whether it's schematically, personnel-wise.

But what the players accomplished this season, some of it historical relative to the franchise, historical relative to the league. I mean, what are we like the second team in the history of the NFL to start 0-3 and make the round? I mean, that says a lot right there.

Doesn't mean we're satisfied with being there. We know there is more work in front of us, but I think we're all proud. I'm certainly proud to be associated with this organization. We got a great program. Proud of our program. I said this before the season started when we met in a tent there in August. Felt we had a good team. We had a good team. We have a good team.

We got a lot of good players coming back. Excited about what's in front of us. Excited to get started on 2026.

Just a couple injury things because I'm sure I'll be asked about them. I think DeMeco got asked yesterday. As it pertains to Joe, here is what I would say. It was a very unique situation. I don't think anybody really had any clarity from the start of the year until now. I would say Joe worked very, very hard to try to get himself ready to play football; it just never manifested itself and came to fruition.

So probably have an opportunity to kind of see where he is in the offseason relative to next year. But, again, it was very -- it was as unique a situation, an injury as I've been associated with.

It's just -- I don't want call it a freak thing but just kind of a freak thing. Joe worked really hard, put his best foot forward; just didn't work out.

And then Tank, I don't think DeMeco got asked about him the other day. Tank is doing awesome. He's been in the building every day. As a matter of fact, he's here today. He's got a great attitude. We would anticipate him being ready for the start of the offseason program.

So great spirits. Got a great attitude. Good player. So I'm sure he's excited. He can't wait to get started. Saw him yesterday and had a big smile on his face. All right, now it's time, because we're focused on 2026.



So just, I mean, I'm sure I was going to get asked about them so I figured I would just address those couple injury situations.

All right.

**Q. Why is there uncertainty regarding his situation?**

NICK CASERIO: Regarding what? Who are we talking about?

**Q. Joe Mixon.**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we haven't seen Joe in a little bit. At some point we'll see him and be able to evaluate where he is, and based on that information see what the status is moving forward.

**Q. You want it have him back if you can?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, he's under contract so we'll evaluate his situation and see where it goes from there.

**Q. Talking with CJ, he's obviously very contrite about the game. He feels badly. As an organization, what can you do to help him get to where he can be?**

NICK CASERIO: Every player in the offseason is about improvement. What are some of the things you can do better? CJ had a really good season. He's done a lot of great things. Done a lot of great things for his team, a lot of great things for this organization.

Any time you pass John Elway in terms of what you've accomplished in a short period of time, I mean, talk about like Hall of Fame quarterback. So CJ played good football this year. Wasn't our best day as a team when you go back and look at the game from Sunday.

You can't turn the ball over. You look at the divisional round, the teams that turn the ball over, they lost the game. Buffalo turned the ball over four times; Brock Purdy, the Niners turned it over three times; Caleb threw three interceptions.

So in the end, our ball security, I think this is a franchise record for least amount of turnovers. We've shown we can take care of the football. We did a poor job of it in the game the other day and it costed us. Still had an opportunity to win the game despite how poorly we played, which I would say that game was emblematic of the first three games. When you go back and look it the first three games of the season, that's what happened.

The reality is what can we do better individually, and as a player you got to look at some of the things you can you work on and what are some of the things that you can do to improve your performance.

So, again, I think taking care of the football for a quarterback, like -- and we talked about this, DeMeco and you will both talked to all the quarterbacks about this, including CJ. Your No. 1 job as a quarterback is to mitigate risk. Period. End of story. Every single play.

If you do that, you're going to give your team a pretty good opportunity to win. If you don't do that, it's probably going to be a little bit harder. I mean, Drake put it on the ground the other day a couple times. Unfortunately we put it on the ground more.

That's why the result was the result.

**Q. Over the last three seasons you all have done a lot to build this defense up and finish with the No. 1 overall defense this year. How can you duplicate that type of success on the offensive side of the ball and how much of an emphasis will that be in this offseason?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we're focused on building a good team. That's what we do every year. We got a lot of good players on offense. We'll try to put the best team together we can for the 2026 season and go out and try to play winning football. In the end it's not about offense or defense or special teams. It's all three phases. Everybody is involved.

We got a lot of good players really throughout the building, so in the end it's about how do you execute with the opportunities we have on each Sunday or Monday, whenever we play? That's what the focus will be.

**Q. With what you know about Joe now, would you expect he would be able to play next season?**

NICK CASERIO: It's hard to answer that right now because we haven't seen him in a little bit. At some point we'll see him, get a better idea, maybe do some follow-up examinations and get more information.

Once we have more information I think we'll be able to make a better assessment.

**Q. Is there a reason why you haven't seen him so much? All the other injuries were around the facility.**

NICK CASERIO: That's not correct. We had some players that were here and some players that weren't here. Every

player is their own situation. At some point we'll have an opportunity to visit with all our players before the 2026 obvious season starts, and at some point we'll have an idea where everybody stands.

**Q. From Bobby Slowik last year, went to Nick Caley, do you feel validated in that decision and is Nick Caley, are you comfortable in that decision, and you comfortable saying he's going to be calling plays in 2026?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would anticipate Nick being here next year. I think Nick learned a lot. First opportunity as a playcaller. I would say offensively probably the last two to three months of the year played pretty good football and did a lot of good things, so there was growth and improvement. There is always areas we can improve and get better.

That's what -- DeMeco mentioned the other day this next couple weeks right after the season is kind of looking at everything, go through coaching staff, going through other aspects of the staff. Is there anything we have to do? All right, then look at some things schematically, start to go through the self-scout, figure to out, all right, what are some of the things we did well?

DeMeco started this when he got here, so the other side of the ball basically goes through and watches the respective sides. So like the defensive coaches will basically go through and watch and entire offensive season. Offensive coaches watch the defense. It's basically just for observations. Hey, through that lens what do you see? Hey, what are some of the things we did well? What are some things that caused problems? What are some of the things that -- maybe a little bit less of this, whether it's schematically or personnel-wise.

And there is good communication. It's a great exercise. We didn't do anything like that in New England, but I think there are some teams that do that. What we're trying to do is say, hey, we know where we are as a team. Sometimes when you're working on one side of the ball you see it through one lens. When you're on the opposite side of the ball you see it through a different lens.

The rapport among the staff is really good so we can communicate honestly and openly with each other. It speaks a lot to who DeMeco is. That's what we're going through right now.

Yeah, I would anticipate Nick being here next year. All of us are just trying to improve and do what we can to make the team and the organization better.

**Q. Do you think that you guys are doing everything you can in terms of around CJ for his development? I know young players, that's a key time in their career. Are you looking at what could be done differently to help him continue to develop?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, look, in the end we're trying to do what's best for the team. This program is not about one individual, so we're not building a team based on one person, one facet of anything.

We're trying to look at the big picture.

**Q. I understand that. The important part...**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, doesn't affect how we look at the team. So what do we need to do to build the best team possible, put the best team together, and then give ourselves the opportunity to compete on a weekly basis, which we've certainly done that. We put ourselves in a good position.

In the end I would say our shortcomings come down to execution. When you look at the game the other day, can't turn the ball over five times. We control that. I would say the three touchdowns that New England scored we didn't play the coverage or the technique the right way on calls that we have done countless times.

So in the end, like we've proven that we could do it, but in games of that magnitude, the margins are as small as any, and you either make the plays and do the right thing or you don't.

In the end, and the players know that too. Talking to some of the players on Monday, they know it. When they're articulating it that's what you want to see and hear. Tells you you're on the right track. In the end, it's about the team. Let's build a good team and in the end get the best 53 guys.

And like we've talked in October, before the season, whoever comes in this building, at some point they're probably going to have to play. So that's where we to build as much depth throughout the roster, because at some point we're going to need everybody.

This program is not about one person. It's not about one individual. It's can we put the best team out there. In the end the team that wins the Super Bowl is the best team. That's the truth.

**Q. Contract extensions, was CJ a goal of your front office at all?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I would say contractually we haven't talked publically about anybody's contract. I would say every situation with every player is case by case, so we'll handle business how we handle business.

Everybody is in kind of some different categories, so we'll kind of take it case by case and deal one player at a time.

**Q. Will Anderson expressed his desire to be here for his entire career Monday. What do you think about Will and the hope to keep a good football player like that as long as you can?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, similar answer. Take it case by case. Will is a good player. We drafted him because we thought he was a good player and he's been a good player. He's improved each year.

Again, there is never a linear path, so I'm sure you'll be calling the agents all the time asking what's going on. We'll take it one day at a time and figure out what makes the most sense for the organization.

**Q. From a standpoint of just knowing that you don't have to get a contract extension, would you at least consider looking at their fifth year options?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, there are some things business-wise we'll look at and discuss. That's what the offseason is about. There is a timing element that's involved in some of that so kind of work through it here I'm sure throughout the course the spring.

**Q. ... made a lot of the changes. Some worked; some didn't. How do you feel overall about the personnel changes?**

NICK CASERIO: First part of the question? I'm sorry.

**Q. From an offensive personnel standpoint, you guys made a lot of changes in the last offseason to this season. Some worked; some didn't. How would you overall analyze some of the moves you made on the offensive line, how it kind of unfolded throughout the season?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, we feel with the got contributions from everybody. The big wholesale change or overhaul was the offensive line. We talked about that at different points. We talked about it in October as well because it kind of coincided with the Cam trade and that.

But in going back to the spring, DeMeco and I both felt we would have a pretty competitive group. We felt that it would be improved. In the end up we end up with one

player that started who had -- I know Tytus played multiple positions, but he was really the only player.

The rest of the offensive line was a number of new players or changing spots. Overall, I would say that group certainly improved. I think Cole did a phenomenal job with that group, him and Coach Yenser, like we talked about, using everybody.

Eventually it kind of settled down once Tae was able to settle in at left tackle. He played really good football. I would say he made some young football player mistakes and there are some things technique-wise he can improve, but we felt once Trent got healthy he would go out there and play pretty good football and he did.

I would say Jake Andrews gave us a good level of play. He probably played on honestly hurt, on one leg for about half the year, which speaks to his toughness.

And then Ed, Ed had a good year. Probably had his best year. He's a free agent. Have to see how that goes.

Overall certainly improved. There is always things we can do better, but we got contributions from everybody. Blake had to go out there and start against the Chargers. Played pretty good football.

J-Pat, we've always viewed him as a swing guy, inside, sort of that sixth, seventh offensive lineman. That's the role that he had.

So we have some players who will be free agents in that group and some players under contract for next year, so I'm sure it'll be some different players in that group next year, but we also have some guys that under contract are coming back.

So looking forward to kind of putting that group together, but overall, like they were improved. I think the pass protection was improved. Certainly was improved relative to last season. It's always a combination of factors involved. There is personnel, scheme, a lot of different things. It's not one particular thing.

But overall that group played pretty competitive football from kind of from start to finish.

**Q. Just to clarify something you said earlier, you anticipate Nick Caley coming back. Has that decision been made? DeMeco said that he would take the week to decide.**

NICK CASERIO: We're working through it right now. DeMeco and I talk every day. I don't think I'm speaking out

of school here. If I am, then someone will beat my ass.

**Q. With a football injury designation, can you disclose what happened to Joe? Is it something you guys don't want to disclose? Is there a reason why we can't just have what happened?**

NICK CASERIO: He didn't do anything off the field. Wasn't like he was riding a snowmobile. It was more of a medical condition or situation that just we never -- it really didn't improve maybe as much as everybody would've hoped.

I'm not trying to evade the question. I think that's the reality of the question. He didn't jump off a building, he wasn't cliff diving. He wasn't doing anything irresponsible. It was a freak thing. Honestly never seen it, just the condition.

**Q. Hope that situation will improve for next summer?**

NICK CASERIO: We'll see. Believe me, I'm not smart enough to be a doctor. I'll leave that up to the medical experts. Going back to some of the earlier questions, as we get more clarity, more information, we'll see where we are moving forward.

**Q. Talked about Tank Dell earlier. You guys have a superb performance. Do you have any indication that he's going to be able to compete at a high level?**

NICK CASERIO: Good question. TBD. He worked very hard. I think our performance group, they do -- I mean, they do a really good job. I think the players feel that, so we have the resources available. Each player is a little bit different, so what's required for one player might be different for Tank and his situation.

But, I mean, I would anticipate him being available for the offseason and then really April, May, and June probably have a better idea. Once you get on the field you probably have a better visual representation of what that looks like.

If you clear that hurdle, then training camp is more of like, okay, what does this actually look like? So knowing Tank, he's probably cautiously optimistic that he's going to be able to go out there and be Tank Dell. I think everybody is hoping that's the case, but you never know.

Injuries are -- like none of us control injuries and what happens. But I think everybody is rooting for Tank. He's worked very hard and had a great attitude. Excited to see him out there moving around. Nobody is more excited than he is, so it will be good once we start getting on the field and getting on the grass to see what that looks like.

**Q. What goes into your process of evaluating players and maybe some projections as to what that player can do and then how that affects, hey, we have the guy in the building, maybe want to go outside the building? How do you go about that? I know obviously everybody hopes their guy gets better. How do you build in sort of all the different factors?**

NICK CASERIO: That's the \$100 million question. Yeah, no, you have to go off what you've seen to this point, and I would say with younger players, there certainly is a projection element. They have a body of work that you've seen, and then you to project a certain level of improvement and growth you hope takes place. Doesn't guarantee anything.

Then you look at your team, what the expectation is for the role, and as we get into free agency, all right, supply and demand, what's available? What are our options? Do we have an option already in place that's comparable to what's on the market? Is there an opportunity to upgrade that?

The draft is its own entity. I think our philosophy on the draft is just get good football players in here with the right mentality and mindset regardless of the position that they play. That's how we approach it. That's what DeMeco and I believe in. That's how we'll go about it.

Yeah, you have to take inventory of what do you have, who has played, who is under contract. All right, what does that look like moving forward? I think we have right now 55, 56-ish players under contract for 2026. Doesn't mean they'll all be here, but if we had to line up and go play a game tomorrow with those 55, what does that look like?

I would say certain positions from a volume standpoint feel pretty good. Other positions we just don't have a lot of supply so, all right, where does that exist? Where do we go find it?

It's a good question, but that's kind of the balance and that's kind of what we work through here, understanding that -- even whatever we have think it is, then we go to training camp, something changes, something happens, and there is a player that's going to end up on this team in November and December that we're not even thinking about or talking about that's part of the calculus. Like Ja'Marcus Ingram this year, Damone Clark, players like that. And I would say those are a little bit more need based. Hey, we lost a player; what are our options?

In the spring it's a little bit more of like there is a vast array of people available. All right, free agency is step one. All right, what does that look like? All right, the draft, that's

step two. All right, and go from there.

We have what, eight picks, call it eight picks. I'm sure that number will change. Let's call it eight draft picks. So however many players we have on contract, undrafted free agents. So the players can come from everywhere.

Hopefully that answered your question a little bit.

**Q. You talked about the success the team has had over the last three years, and you always have been able to do that because of some of the contracts that you have right now. Coming up you're going to have to -- this organization will have to spend a lot of money to keep the talent that it has. At what point do you feel like the window of success will start to close?**

NICK CASERIO: It's always open in our book. You can build a team a myriad of different ways. Contracts are contracts. You can fit them however you need to fit them. How do you keep good players, what does that look like?

There is a little bit of balance. Okay, how are they structured? Got to stagger them. Look around the league. There are plenty of teams that have highly paid players, like eight to ten of them. The Lions, they got a good team. Down year this year, but got some of the best players in the league. They found a way.

There is always a way. You got to be creative. You try to think a little bit ahead. We've sat here and talked how we kind of look at the team building in two year increments. Not like, well, here is the window. It's more of just the contracts, what do those look like?

Some contracts will run off; some will come on. All right, how do you balance that off? In our book the window is always open. We're going to try to put together the most competitive team possible every year. However we do that we'll fit the contracts, and whatever those look like and go from there.

So that's kind of how we view it.

Again, I can't speak to other teams and their philosophy. Our goal so to have a good team every year, and we'll figure out a way. Whoever plays, we don't really care. Tommy Togiai wasn't a figment of anybody's imagination two years ago and he's now one of our best defensive players.

He got here in the middle of last year in October on a practice squad. I mean, the guy like played as well as any defensive tackle in the league. There are players out there everywhere. Our job is to find them.

The contracts are the contracts. So that's kind of its own entity. We'll deal with that accordingly.

**Q. Higgins and Jay Noel, what did you like most about that? Where would you like them to step forward next season?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, two really good players. Excited about their future. I mean, I think Higgs showed he has a chance to be a really good player. He was as productive as any of our offensive skill players over the last month or two of the season.

Jay Noel showed what he can do in the return game. Probably get some more opportunities here offensively. I mean, two good football players. That receiver room, I mean, if you didn't do anything, which I'm not saying we will or won't, but if you didn't do anything, it's a pretty good room. Higgs, Noel, Nico, Hutch. Nobody talks about Hutch, but nobody has improved more from the time he was drafted to where he is now. He's become one of our most dependable players. Talked about Tank a little bit. Justin Watts in under contract. Kirk is free agent; see how that goes. Barrios is a free agency. See how that goes.

I mean, it's a pretty good room. Feel like we can go out there and play good football with that group. So great kids, great attitude, good teammates, selfless, no ego. Just go out there and work and do their job.

Jay Noel showed his versatility. You know, punt returner, kickoff returner. So when he played offensively, he made a lot plays, so I'm sure we're going to see more Noel next year.

**Q. (Regarding the Falcons.) James and the job he's done and him getting that kind of attention.**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, have a lot of respect for James. Known him a long time. Probably known him as long as anybody in this building. Hired him as a scouting assistant. Finished his career at Georgia Tech. Hadn't been involved in scouting; probably didn't have much of an NFL career ahead of him; he knew that.

Wanted to get involved in football, so I hired him as a scouting assistant and he's grown, done a great job. Great person, great family. Works really hard. Rely on him for a lot. He's earned his opportunity, so credit to him.

So whatever the Falcons decide to do, but hopefully he's here helping the Texans. He's fortunate to have the opportunity and I'm sure he'll do a good job.

I think we're pretty fortunate. We feel like we got a lot of really good people in building across departs, scouting, sports performance, coaching, and I think that's -- DeMeco and I believe in just bringing in good people, teaching them and developing them.

Our responsibility to everybody in the building is to try to help them as much as possible and let them grow. That's our fiduciary responsibility to each other.

And happy for James. There are some other folks I think will get some opportunities and looks. That's what this time of year is about. You guys look around the league. The amount of movement that takes place is mind numbing. But everybody gets an opportunity. We all got an opportunity. I was fortunate enough to get an opportunity back in the day. It's really what you do with it. Happy for James and see how it goes.

**Q. You feel like you all did enough from a personnel-wise to help the offense grow in a way it needed to grow? Do you think probably some of the injuries stalled that?**

NICK CASERIO: I mean, I'm not really sure of the question. I would say we had one of the best teams in the league. We went out there and competed with every team that we played. I'm not sure like what the question is.

**Q. I can specify. The offense, according to their statistics, didn't take a huge jump offensively. I'm wondering --**

NICK CASERIO: The most important statistic is winning games. That's what we're focused on.

**Q. 100%. But you lose in the divisional round again. Ultimately you want to get farther. Do you feel like you could have done more to get to that point, or were there circumstances that you felt were out of your control?**

NICK CASERIO: We had a good enough team to play any team we played. In the end we didn't execute well enough. You can't turnt ball over five times in a divisional playoff round. Taking care of the football is the single most important stat correlated to winning.

I mean, look it up. It's the truth. If you don't turn the ball over you enhance your chances of winning, it's 85, 90%. So that's the most important stat.

Turnovers, taking care of the football, like look around the league. In the end, we had a good enough team to beat anybody. We played with every team in the league.

There is more room in front of us. In the end if we execute better, still be playing. I mean, I'm not trying to over simplify it, but that's the truth.

**Q. Going back to Sarge talking about the contracts, when a quarterback is on his rookie deal, we talk about it's probably easier to put a team around him. How critical is next year not just for CJ to prove that he can be that guy, but for the organization to believe that he can be that guy and not turn the ball over in the divisional round?**

NICK CASERIO: I mean, every year you start from scratch. Everybody is focused on individual improvement. So CJ has played a lot of good football, won a lot of games, done a lot of great things for this organization.

I think all of us are excited about the opportunity in front of us for the 2026 season. It's a year-to-year league, so we're focused on the 2026 season, trying to put out best team together. Hopefully put ourselves in position we can go out there and play football and win a bunch of games.

**Q. You look at (indiscernible) you signed an extension, that way you could get him a medical redshirt year basically. Tank could be up for an extension next year. Is that something that could be in the works? He missed the season, but you have him for four years.**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, again, it's case by case. You kind of look at everything to figure out, all right, what makes the most sense for the organization?

Players are a part of it, but it's kind of like piece of puzzle. You got all the puzzle pieces. How do you fit them together, going back to Sarge's earlier question. We'll look at everything and how do we line the deck chairs, (?) and will be prepared. I think the one thing we've shown is our ability to kind of pivot and adjust and kind of handle and adapt. I think that's one of the hallmarks of this organization.

DeMeco and I philosophically view things that way. You never get too caught up in doing one thing a particular way. I think the more you're open mind and maintain some level of flexibility, it just gives you more optionality. So we'll look at everything. It's always case by case. Ultimately we'll feel what we do makes the most sense by everybody involved.

**Q. That investment in Joe, do you think it was more (indiscernible.) Are there any lessons you take moving forward?**

NICK CASERIO: Look, good players; helped our team. I would say, and I've said this, every decision, every player you bring in, maybe doesn't go the way that you think or hope it's going to go. Some of it's in your control; some is not. All we can do is look at it, okay, deal with reality and just press forward, try not to get too caught up in one particular thing.

I think DeMeco and I kind of look at things that way, so that's probably why we get along so well.

**Q. How do you think CJ handled all the hurdles this year, slow start, his one concussion?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, he's said this. It was hard. Any time you deal with difficult situations, adversity, it's just in the end you're the only one that can handle and respond to it. Our job as an organization is to support our players and give them ever source they need and feel like they have going to environment to come to work.

Look, I would players that come in this building love being here. They know what we're about, DeMeco is about, I'm about. In the end we're just trying to win football games with the right people. We understand this league is hard. It's really hard. We're all going to have to deal with stuff. It's not easy, but honestly that's where you kind of get the joy -- at least I do -- is just in the fight.

Just nothing is easy. Everything is earned. That's the beauty of everybody has the same opportunity. All 32 teams when the Super Bowl is played are going to have the same opportunity. I think our division, I mean, has become a really competitive decision.

I've said this, Jacksonville has done an awesome job. Tony, James, Liam did a great job this year. I think Tennessee is going to be much improved. I think Coach Saleh is a hell of a coach. Coach Steichen and the Colts. They've showed year in and year out they can compete with anybody. We're going to have our work cut out for us in the division, but that's why this league, when you go 1-32, the gap between 1 and 32, it's not as big as the numbers suggest.

So I mean, you got to embrace it, and it's okay to fail, but you got to pick yourself back up and try to come up with some answers and solutions. That's how we approach it.

**Q. Looking at execution, how that's kind of the key, right?**

NICK CASERIO: Yep.

**Q. How do you help -- you collectively, all the players -- how do you get to where the execution is consistent?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, just making sure -- and I think we do, because, again, we turned the ball over the least amount in franchise history. Every detail, every practice, every day, every meeting, it's all important.

So I think as a player, in the end it's a players' game. The players take ownership. You just have to have a heightened awareness that any little small thing, like playing a wrong technique. Your leverage on this play is a supposed to be inside leverage. You've done it 90 times. Why the 91st time do you play with the wrong leverage?

It's just this league is about discipline, consistency, and doing it every single snap, every single play. I would say our responsibility is to make sure that we bring the players in that, A, understand it, B, have the mental fortitude do it.

It's not easy, going back to the earlier question. It's not easy but it takes work and it takes communication. That's in the end what makes a team good.

So everybody has good players. Those I would say small details, those finer things, those are the things that if you do them right, look, there is a reason we won ten games over three months or whatever it was. We were doing more of those things.

When there is gaps against good teams, the margins are smaller. We're trying to make the improvement on the margins. That just makes sure that like every single day -- again, look, we would probably be playing 400 games at some point. It's a long season. Every week matters. Every practice matters. Every meeting matters. Every walk-through matters.

DeMeco talks to the team about this all the time. I would say the majority of the time we do a really damn good job of that. When there is gaps, you got to go back and look and say, all right, did I really do what I was supposed to do or did I kind of --

In the end that's player accountability and ownership.

**Q. When you're assessing a player, how do you reconcile body of work, maybe success from a couple years ago versus now? Does recent performance matter more than previous performance?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, you got to be careful taking into a snapshot of, well, here is what it is. You got to look at the entire body of work. This is actually getting into the draft a

little bit, okay, the players body of work. Players started 45, 50 games. Looking at their body of work as opposed to, well, they did this in this game.

Over the totality of it, what does it look like? Then you got to be able to say, here is what we think it's going to be. With NFL players, some players have more body of work than others.

So you're looking at the whole body of work. If they've shown the ability to do things at a certain level, then it means it's in there. It's like, all right, what else can you do?

Every year you're starting from scratch. I think each player looks at it and, hey, I'm going to focus on this. This is the offseason. Whatever your list is, right, if we're going to have a checklist for the players when they come in the building. Hey, these three or four things, here is what we're looking for relative to improvement. Then you can look at the end the year. All right, did they improve that or did they not? It's ongoing, very fluid.

Again, you have to look at everything. You just can't look at one particular play, one particular game, one particular situation.

**Q. Nick, can you just talk about the job that DeMeco did this year to overcome that 0-3 start, to be able to coach this team into another divisional round game?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, it was phenomenal. I mean, like he was unbelievable. I mean, I would say just his consistency, how steadfast he was, and being able to get the issues fixed and addressed. Honestly, not really losing sleep or losing his mind.

Here is what I would say: DeMeco is one of the best human beings I've ever been around in my life. He is also one of the most competitive individuals that I've been around, which is why I think like we resonate with one another. I think we're both like very competitive.

You know, he's so genuine, so sincere. He treats everybody the right way. I mean, I'm fortunate to be around him on a day-to-day basis. He did as good of a coaching job as any coach in the league this year. He's not going win coach of the year, but, I mean, you can make a very cogent argument that he should be based on what we did with this team from where we started to how we finished.

Everything starts with leadership. Everything starts with the head coach. I think he's grown. You can ask him. He's grown from the time he started until now. Obviously the play call thing, passed that to Coach Burke. There is no ego with him at all.

He just wants whats because best for the team and what's best for this organization. Period. End of story..

I can't say enough great things about him, the job he's done. Grateful for the opportunity the to work with him on a day-to-day basis, and looking forward to working with him on building the 2026 team.

**Q. This may have been where Cody was going, but obviously CJ Stroud had an improved year up to this the last couple games. You don't take -- and DeMeco can answer -- what happened in the biggest games and use that to how you might approach negotiations, extensions later on the line, or is that all a part of it.**

NICK CASERIO: We don't win the Kansas City game without CJ Stroud. Again, like that's one game. Look, he'll be the first to tell you he didn't play well on Sunday, all right? I'm not going to sit here and tell you he played well either. He knows that.

In the end, all right, got to learn from it. What can we do better? All right, moving forward, look at his body of work. This guy has been a damn good quarterback in this league for three years. I mean, it's the truth.

So, again, you want to look at everything in totality and every player, look at their situation. It's all case by case, so...

**Q. Nick, the tight end position, wondering if you had updates on Dalton and Cade and how you evaluate that position moving forward with Dalton going into his last year?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, both those guys, Dalton will be okay. I don't think it's anything major. Cade avoided serious injury. I think he's going to be okay. Probably going to be ready for the offseason program. Probably not as bad as it looked. Looked pretty bad.

I think he's going to be okay.

Overall got pretty good production from that group. Dalton had a really good season. Broke the franchise record for career receptions by a tight end. A guy whose record I broke of a damn good player. You goes know him very well. We played against OD multiple times in New England. Dalton had really good year. He was healthy. Wasn't healthy last year. He's not going to say anything and make an excuse, but got really good production from them.

I think we were planning on Brevin being a big part of it.



Unfortunately went down a little bit. Cade kind of showed his versatility. Harrison, able to kind of give us some snaps there a little bit. Overall pretty solid group. If there is an opportunity for us to improve, we'll certainly look at it relative to what our options are, but overall good group. Works hard. Very professional. Dalton had really good year and very dependable and instinctive and very smart player.

**Q. To follow up on the questions about the execution in the divisional round, what can you guys do to better I guess add more -- you guys have more overall firepower (indiscernible.) What can you guys do to improve just the overall talent that is on the offense?**

NICK CASERIO: Yeah, I mean, the goal is the same: Try to put together a good team and get players in the building that we feel can go out there and play winning football with. It's a combination of things. Make sure we got enough players. Are we doing some things schematically, there are some things that popped up in those games. You look at those games and other games as well, look around the league. What are some teams doing? What are some things you might be able to incorporate?

So, again offense has really never been -- DeMeco have never sat it our office and said offense is a concern. What do we got to do? Got to play better. There are some things we can do better.

To build a good team, try to get good players in here with the right mentality and right mindset. Again, I guess Nico Collins isn't a good enough player, so maybe we can find a player better than Nico Collins.

I don't know. Try to do the best we can, try to bring good players in this building. You know, try to put together a good team that gives us a chance to compete on each Sunday.

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