

TEXANS HEAD COACH DEMECO RYANS

POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

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Patriots 28, Texans 16

DR: First and foremost, and all glory, honor and praise to God. I'm just thankful for the season that we were able to have. Didn't finish the way we would have liked to have seen, but I'm proud of this team, proud of these guys for just being a light and shining bright. The guys accomplished a lot of firsts, did a lot of great things throughout this year, provided a ton of inspiration to a lot of people, especially to the city of Houston.

We're not coming back with a win, but we have a ton of fans that are proud of what these guys were able to accomplish this year, and I'm proud of these guys, as well.

Q. (On the turnovers in the red zone.)

DR: When you're in a game of this magnitude, we've done a great job all year of protecting the football and running the ball well. That's been our formula. To come here when we needed it most, we didn't protect the ball, and it's tough to think that you're going to win a game when you turn the ball over five times.

We still had opportunities there. Guys still battled. That's why I love this team. Even though you shouldn't be able to come back from five takeaways, we were still fighting, we were still scratching and clawing to be in that position. At any point did you think about (indiscernible) C.J. Stroud?

DR: No, C.J. is our guy. I believed that he could come back out in the second half and flip it. I believed that he could play better, and he did that in the second half. He did play better. We had some positive drives there in the second half. I believed that he would do that, and he did that.

As I always tell our guys at halftime, it really doesn't matter what happened in the first half. You have to flush it, remove it, and you just have to go out and finish the right way. We've been there before. We've been in situations much more dire than this, and we were able to bounce back.

In my mind, there was no doubt in my mind that we would be able to overcome that.

Q. Given how well you ran the football against Pittsburgh, did you anticipate having this much difficulty against their defense?

DR: We knew their interior defensive linemen were really good players, Milton and also Barmore are really good players, and they did a good job, and they controlled the front tonight. Last week we were able to control the front. We were able to run the ball. We did not control the front well at all, did not run it well, did not do a great job up front, did not run it well when we had opportunities. So credit to the Patriots for what they did up front with their interior defensive linemen.

Q. What do you think contributed to some of C.J.'s turnovers today?

DR: I would have to look at the tape to see exactly what happened, what were the miscues on the interceptions.

Q. At any point did it look like his confidence had started to waver or shake in that first half?

DR: No, I just feel like you just keep battling. That's my main thing. In a game, a lot of bad things happen. That's the nature of the game. Bad plays happen. But you just move on and you go to the next play. That's where you can't let one bad play turn into another. You just keep punching. That's what I wanted to see our guys keep doing.

Q. I know you're not a fan of excuses, but when I was out there, the field was pretty slippery. It was one of those rare weather conditions where it wasn't snow, it was kind of just icy mix. Were there grip issues for C.J. Stroud in the game?

DR: You would have to ask C.J. about that one.

Q. What did you see from C.J. when you said you were confident he would come out in the second half? Did you feel like his confidence was still strong?

DR: Yeah, he came out the second half and we had a really nice drive there at the beginning of the second half to go down and we should have scored there, but we ended



up getting points, and we got us in field goal range and we were able to get points. Yeah, I felt our entire sideline felt it. He bounced back and gave us a really great, positive drive to start the half.

Q. What did you see to him after this game?

DR: Keep your head up. I love you. I got your back. That's what I told him at halftime. This whole team has your back. We're in this thing together from day one. It doesn't change for me.

We have a really special group, a tight-knit group, and when things don't go your way, you have bad performances, it's not a time to point fingers or say it's on one person. If anything, it all starts with me. For me, as the head coach of this team, we didn't perform well. Obviously I didn't have our guys ready to go in this moment. So that starts with me. We stick together.

Q. You have such a high standard for the defense. How do you think the defense did overall in this one?

DR: I thought the defense did good. Will, Danielle, they did what they always do. They got after the quarterback. They gave us opportunities, got the ball out multiple times, so it gave us opportunities to stay in the game.

Q. With 12:16 left, it was 3rd and 6 and you decided to punt it. Why did you make that decision? You were on the 36 with 12:16 left and you decided to punt it --

DR: We didn't punt on 3rd down.

Q. On 4th and 6 --

DR: Yeah, at the end of the day, I make decisions there in the game for us to get the ball back, get the ball to our defense and see if we can make a play.

Q. What's the source of your faith in C.J.? I know you have a deep faith in him. What's the source of your faith?

DR: I believe C.J. has done a lot of great things throughout this entire year. I know C.J. I know what it means to him. If anybody, you think about how anybody is feeling at this moment, you think about C.J. I think about the man, first and foremost. It's not about the player.

Of course it's not what we would have hoped for. It's not what we thought would happen. But I still stand by the young man, believe in him and what he's done for us to be in the position we're in right here today. It's because of him and all of the guys on our team, for battling, fighting hard,

making the plays to put us in this position.

Q. There will be a lot of time to reflect and think about what went right, what went wrong. As you head into this off-season, what do you feel like needs to happen --

DR: I'm not in the mood to talk about the off-season right now. Right here, right now, I'm proud of our team for making it to this moment. Our guys did an outstanding job, a place where a lot of the teams would love to be. It didn't end how we wanted it to end for sure. We keep battling. One little hiccup here, right? We just keep battling.

Q. You haven't seen the tape yet, but it was uncharacteristic to have so many turnovers these last couple games. Any idea as to what the source of that is?

DR: I wish we knew. We don't want to have the turnovers. That's the most turnovers we've had probably all year. We've been top in the league at protecting the ball all year, and for us to come out in these past two games and have the amount of turnovers we've had, it's not winning football. So we've got to find a way to not have that, clean it up and get it fixed.

Q. Do you feel like that touchdown play kind of deflated things for you guys?

DR: It never deflates us. When there's time on the clock, we're always in it. They make plays, too. That is the NFL. The other team will make plays. Credit to the kid, he made a really outstanding one-handed catch. That was a really great catch by him.

Q. What is missing to get over this hump of the divisional round for the third year in a row?

DR: We've got to play better football. There's not any secrets. We've got to protect the ball. We've got to play better football when we get in this moment. For the past three years we have not played well, haven't protected the ball well, and we have not executed well in this moment. So it's not a magical elixir that's going to happen to get past the divisional round. It's still football, and you've got to go out and you've got to execute football really well in these moments, and we have not done that.

Q. From your perspective you mentioned how you're proud of this team. How do you balance that in this moment, wanting to get over the hump but also being proud of your team getting to this point?

DR: You keep the main thing the main thing. For me, we

can't go back and replay the game right now, so in this moment right now, it's a moment of gratitude, a moment of thankfulness for not only our players but man, we have a lot of people, our support staff, coaches who pour a lot of time and effort into what we do to be here.

So I'm just thankful for the people that I have working with me. It's a joy to show up to work and work with the people that I get to work with on a day-to-day basis. That's what makes it special. So it's easy for a lot of people to dwell on the negatives in this moment. We get it; we lost a tough game, big game. But at the end of the day, God is still good to us and this is still a special team, and I will never shy away from saying that.

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