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Houston Texans Transcripts Saturday, January 11, 2025

Head Coach DeMeco Ryans

“Just first off, as always want to give glory, honor, and praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Man, what an awesome opportunity we had to to play a playoff game here at home. Just thankful for all our guys and the effort, the way they played today. That's the complementary football that we been looking for and we been needing as a team. Just outstanding performance on all three phases. Really proud of all our guys. I can go through each position group, everybody stepped up and made a play when we needed to make plays. Our best players stepped up and made big plays for us to win this game. And none other than C.J. [Stroud] Just want to make sure he gets the love that he deserves. Like the play that he made on the fumble snap and throw to Hutch [WR Xavier Hutchinson], that's the play that sparked our entire -- not our offense, but our entire team. Seeing the way all our guys responded after he made the play. Then to come back with another big scramble on the next drive, just outstanding performance by C.J.”

On how they were able to pressure Chargers QB Justin Herbert throughout the game.

“Playoff football, first things first you have to stop the run. That's where our interior defensive lineman really played great today, is stopping the run. You stop the run, you force teams to have to throw the ball. That's where our entire D-line cut it loose and got a lot of pressure on the quarterback. Every guy from Will [DE Will Anderson Jr.], Denico [DE Denico Autry], everybody, Mario [DE Mario Edwards Jr.] with the sack. All across the board those guys were rushing together, disciplined with their rush lanes. Everybody did a good job keeping Herbert in the pocket and we were able to get him down several times.”

On how the fumbled snap that led to a big gain on offense before the end of the first half impacted the game.

“Yeah, offensively we started slow. Started slow, put out ball on the ground too many times, and needed a play. That's what it looks like when your best players step up and make the plays. That's what playoff football is about. That's what being a big-time player in the league is about. Of course, you see the fumble snap and I'm just thinking, please pickup the ball up. And then we were able to see CJ improvise and see Hutch keeping his eyes downfield. Having that confidence in himself and ability to avoid the rush and still keep his eyes downfield and find Hutch, that was an outstanding play. To me that was the play of the game that really created momentum for our entire team.”

On how well the defense performed today. Our defense, they dominated today. That's who we want to be. They played our brand of football. Talk about stopping the run first. That's what I'm most proud of, is how we stopped the run. You make teams one dimensional and that's when our D-line causes havoc. Very proud of our defensive line, but more so proud of our DBs. Stingley's [CB Derek Stingley Jr.] been outstanding all year. Steps up again for us today, gets two picks when we needed them most. He made outstanding plays. E Murray [S Eric Murray] with the touchdown. Kamari [Kamari

Lassiter], for us to have off the turnover, Kamari goes out, and you talk about a momentum shift. For him to pick the ball after, outstanding play for him. The way our DBs are playing opens up a lot for us defensively. Really proud of our entire group.”

On C.J. Stroud’s ability to scramble outside of the pocket and the adjustments that OC Bobby Slowik made on offense

”Yeah, the scramble play, you see that confidence from CJ. You see he felt the need to make play and he did. That’s what you call you put the team on your back. That’s what he did. Put the team on his back and to see our sideline go crazy when he makes that scramble, I mean, you can feel it then. You can feel just the game shifting at that moment when he makes that scramble for the big play. Just offensively for us to be able to buckle down when we needed it most, control the line of scrimmage and run the football, like we needed to run the football, that’s what I’m proud of. Our offensive line stepped up. Got hats in the right places. They were grinding. That’s a tough front, a tough defense. Defense did an outstanding job all year. Did a great job today. It was tough to run against them, but we were persistent and Joe [RB Joe Mixon] did a really nice job making some plays.”

On how the presence of injured WRs Tank Dell and Stefon Diggs on the sideline pregame impacted the team’s performance during the game

”Yeah, seeing Tank and Stef there, it’s encouraging and uplifting for everybody on our team. We know how much both those guys meant to our team, the leaders they were in their own way, and how much energy they provide to our entire team. So it’s great seeing them. I think put smiles on everyone’s faces; understand who we’re doing it for. We’re doing it for our brothers. It was great to see them today. Would’ve loved to have them on the field, but just to know they’re here still supporting through all they’ve gone through, just continues to show our special our team is.”

On how the team’s 99-yard drive positively impacted on the team

”To start with, not only that drive, but just how we were sputtering along to start. I just loved the way our team just responded, our offense responded, how resilient they were. A lot of bad things happened. We fumbled the ball. No one panicked. Everybody just kept playing. Even though we put out ball on the ground several times nobody panicked on the entire team. When you need it most, our offense needs to step up and get something going, for us and to have a 99 yard drive, outstanding by everyone. That’s what we want to see from our offense throughout the entire year. We know it’s been some inconsistencies. But to see everybody put it together when we need it most here in our first game of the playoffs. Again, more happy for everybody and just where we can continue to ascend if we do things the proper way.”

On if he specifically challenges his best players to rise to the occasion

”The unique thing about our team, our defense, is I don’t have to challenge those guys at all. They understand the moment. They understand like why we’re built the way we’re built. It’s for or D-line has to do to dominate. When our D-line plays this way, not only does it help our defense, but it just brings enthusiasm to our entire team. So they understand that from the moment they sign up to play here for the Texans. Like we’re heavily dependant upon our D-line and they did an outstanding job today.”

On if there was a special moment on the sideline after the fumbled snap that turned into a big gain before halftime

”Yeah, no doubt. With CJ making that play, I mean, I feel like it sparked excitement in everyone. It sparked confidence in everyone. That’s what you needed. Just because of what happened previously

on a few drives, it wasn't going right. To see him make that play I feel like every win knew, okay being like we're ready to go now. A little slow start but it's not about how you start it's as you about how you finish and we finished the right way offensively to gain over 400 yards offensively. Like that's an outstanding day versus a really good defense."

On the reaction from the sideline after the blocked field goal was returned for a score

"The blocked field goal, honestly, I was pretty upset before the blocked field goal, so I wasn't really looking until I heard the big thump and we got it. I just see D Lo [CB D'Angelo Ross] pick the ball up and he's coming towards me. I couldn't do anything but smile. It's just as bad as that play happened, we did a good job covering all day. Ladd [WR Ladd McConkey] makes a play. He's an exceptional player. He makes a play on us and splits us and goes the distance. So I'm pretty upset at the moment. The blocked field goal definitely put a smile on my face."

On the impact that RB Joe Mixon has had on the team heading into the postseason

"Yeah, Joe has meant a lot to our team all year, right? The leadership that he brings, he has playoff experience, he's been there, so he has good advice to give guys on what it takes to win in the playoffs. Also things of what he would do different from being there and being able to go all the way. So value that experience that he has. More so value the person that Joe is. Great energy every day. He wants the football. You want to play well in the playoffs you have to be able to run the football. So Joe did a great job there today and he doesn't do that without the way our guys block, tight ends, receivers, also the offensive line. Like collective effort there which allowed us to run the wall the way we did."

QB C.J. Stroud

On what it means winning another playoff game in his second season

"I'm just so blessed man. Just so thankful for my God who I serve, Jesus Christ. Just having an opportunity to play another wildcard game here in Houston and get a win. Our crowd was rocking. It's an honor and privilege to be able to be in these shoes. I don't take it for granted. I'm so grateful and amazed how the Lord has uplifted this team. It hasn't always been easy this year, but this is just another thing that we can use to motivate us even more to get to the divisional round, whoever we play and play well there. Amazing though. I'm so happy and so blessed."

On his fumble and how the play changed the momentum of the game

"Even after I made the play, I was kind of mad at myself. I didn't look at the snap, so it just went straight through my hands. I'm looking and trying to see the defense and went through my hands. Luckily bounced right back up to me. I tried to just save the play. 'Hutch' [Xavier Hutchinson] did a good job trusting me and I trust him, so he kept on the move. After we made the completion, I looked at the sideline and everybody was turned up, and that turned me up, because I was still kind of mad at myself. Those are the type of plays that change momentum, and a team can rally around plays like that. Shoutout to Hutch for making a great instinctual play and I just tried my best to save the play."

On his performance in this environment

"I would say just all the adversity this year has made me not only a better football player, but better human, better man of God. I don't take it lightly. People always see our mountaintops, but one thing that people don't understand there are valleys, too, times just going through it. In my life, I'm very grateful for both. I haven't always been that way, but my character is being built as I continue to play this great game. I'm really blessed to have the teammates I have. As I'm playing more, everybody is coming to me and telling me how much they trust me, and they think I'm the best in the league."

When you hear that, guys in NFL don't say that lightly. When the other side of the ball is really good like you say and they're giving you your props, it's motivational to keep going. Even when it's not perfect, because life isn't perfect for anybody, we're all going through things, for me to still have my teammates and head coach, Jerrod [Johnson], Bill Lazor, and Davis [Mills], always feeding motivation and positivity into me has really been helpful and helped me a lot not only in between the lines, but off the field use well. Case Keenum has been a big part of that as well. Really what I did today was a testament to people around me and how the Lord is working on me."

On the defense keeping them in the game and them fueling the offense

"Man, it fueled us for real. That's one thing that's not good, when the defense keeps getting stops and we're doing whatever with the ball, not moving it. And then the time of possession was like ten minutes to one, which was crazy. It was good for us to have that 99-yard drive. That was huge. That really gave us the momentum to win the game. I think we played full complementary football today from offense to defense to special teams. 'D Lo' [Denico Autry] takes it back. We got the block. I don't know who blocked it, but that is just a testament to the head coach we have. The faith that he puts in us to keep going. The city we represent. Everything is really coming together at the right time. I really feel like this is just the start and I'm really just amazed of the environment in there as well. I really believe that we're just getting started, and hopefully we continue to get this momentum rolling."

On WR Stefon Diggs and WR Tank Dell being on the field pregame

"It's always special to have your brothers in there. I've grown really close with 'Stef' [Stefon Diggs] over this year. He texted me before the game and just gave me a whole bunch of motivation and said he was praying for me, and I appreciate that for real. I've been around Tank [Dell] all the time. Even now. It was good to see him back smiling, around with guys on the sideline, everybody saying what's up to him. I think that was good for him and his spirit. Keep him in your prayers and keep uplifting him, because it's hard time for both of them right now. I hope they were smiling a little bit as we were playing. I think their careers are long, long from anything to being done. This is just another bump in the road, and they're two of the best receivers I played with for real. They remind me of the guys I played with at Ohio State. I'm honored to have friends and brothers like that."

On teammate WR Nico Collins

"Nico [Collins], like I told you, was born out the womb great. Nobody knew it but his pops and his mom. That dude right there, he's really elevated himself as an NFL number one receiver. He shows that week in and week out. I'm just so happy for that guy. I think this is just the start for him as well. Another 1000-yard season. He's still hungry for more and he's in here every day working on his body. I know he's hungrier than ever. I'm happy for him. Super blessed to be a part of his journey. He's another brother of mine."

On his message to his teammates early in the game

"It's not fun when you have two early turnovers and punting the ball, getting three-and-outs. It's all about chopping wood and carrying water. That's one thing I love about our team, we always, no matter if the defense is up or offense is up, everybody is always watching and everybody is always into it. I just think that's a recipe for success. While we were kind of down, I remember Will [Anderson Jr.] coming up to me and Azeez [Al-Shaair] uplifting me. That helps. It's not like, dang, man, we keep making stops; what the offense doing? It wasn't that. It was like, man, we trust ya'll. You're going to get it going, but we're going to hold up until ya'll get rolling. I think that's amazing. It's not how you start it's how you finish. It's cliché, but it's the truth."

On the offensive adjustments made during the game

"That's something that I kind of saw on tape, other than Bo Nix this year they didn't really spy. And [Patrick] Mahomes as well. They did it. They didn't really spy other quarterbacks. I kind of saw it on film and thought one of them. The interception I threw, I think that was in the second quarter. I kind of looked on the thing and saw that I had a running hole. That next play I didn't like really just have it in my mind I was going to do it. Once I saw them back up, I just took off and trusted my slow speed. I thought I felt my joy coming back after I got up, and it's just one the best feelings in the world. After you make a play, you're just turned up and your teammates are turned up with you. That's one of the best feelings in the world. I think that kind of gave our team juice. I think me using my legs is definitely going to be helpful this postseason."

On Ohio State Football

"Will [Howard] is doing a great job. Go Bucks, baby. I'm so happy for that guy. So happy for Coach Day. I look at team, Jesus us has his literal hand on that team with Trey and with Will, and Jack Sawyer making plays. I remember when that dude was a freshman just coming in wet behind the ears and now, he's a big captain. So happy for that team and rooting them on, but I don't think I got it from him, no."

On getting back to having fun

"Yeah, definitely think so. It's not easy to have fun when you're not executing. You know, execution breeds energy and brings that excitement to the game. Once we start executing, we start playing with that swag. I think it pops out on film or pops off. When we're rolling, we're rolling. It's the in between we need to fix. Still a ton of things we can fix, but I definitely think the joy that we have after executing, we need to keep that rolling."

On the team's overall performance in Today's game

"From practicing hard. Like I really believe practice makes perfect. You know, when you're not perfect, you aim small, you miss small. We had a heck of a week of practice. Worked really hard. Our scout team did a good job giving us great looks. Our coaches had a great game plan. I think the work from the cafe to the redshirt to the janitors to our equipment, strength staff, the work that the Texans organization puts in week to week, man, it doesn't go unnoticed. I'm so grateful to be here and grateful for this opportunity to be around such great people. I really think that plays into it. Azeez [Al-Shaair] came up in front of the team and talked about when you order something online from the cafe and you expect it by 7:45, it's their job to get it there by 7:45. It's the same thing, when we're not doing our job on the field, we're taking food off their plate in a sense. It's something he challenged us with. I think we all answered the bell."

On the offenses 99-yard drive

"Those things take time. Execution, like I said, breeds that joy, breeds that fire. So that 99-yard drive, the team was ready to roll after that. We get a three and out, get the ball back around, like the 30 I believe, and get a good play, [John] Metchie is out of bounds, and that's when I take off next. That momentum started to switch. When you do that, execution starts to breed."

On his fumble, making big plays and how they restore confidence

"Savor the play and really mad at myself if it went sour. But just when I looked at the sideline and saw all my teammates happy for this play, Joe [Mixon] was turned, DeMeco [Ryans] was going crazy, when you got the leaders and the captains and everybody rooting you on, there is nothing like it. Our crowd

was on ten today. After that play I heard them go crazy and that gave me juice. Inspired me to keep going. Definitely helped everybody being positive.”

Los Angeles Chargers Head Coach

On where things went wrong today

“They were the better team today. All respect to them. Not being the better team today, I’m accountable for that, so that’s on me. Congratulations to DeMeco Ryans and the Texans. They were the better team.”

On what he means that he’s accountable for not being the better team today

“All facets. What in particular, that’s to go through and look at, but that’s my reaction. I’m accountable. Went bad. That’s on me.”

On today’s performance by QB Justin Herbert

“He played like he always does. Complete beast.”

On what he saw on the first two interceptions

“Again, it’s me. He’s got to be able to finish a throwing motion. Quarterback’s got to be able to do that, and we didn’t put him in the position to do that enough.”

On the challenges presented up front to the pass protection

“The edge pressure. Those are really the best we’ve seen. The pressure on the edge, the pass rush was outstanding.”

On if he agreed with Herbert’s decision to throw across the field to WR Quentin Johnston that was intercepted

“We weren’t really on the right hatch to call it. Again, I take accountability for that one.”

On if he was surprised by the overturned interception

“I didn’t have a look at it, so I don’t know. I’m sure they got it right.”

On if the Texans touchdown at the end of the first half changed the momentum of the game

“Any score changes the momentum.”

On today’s defensive performance

“I’m just proud of our guys. The way they fought in this game, the way they played. Again, respect to the Texans. They had a better game. Coach Ryans had them better prepared.”

On if he could have prepared the team differently

“I’m just stating the fact that he had his team play better. Congratulations to him, and total respect. They played really good offensively, defensively, special teams. C.J. Stroud, respect to C.J. He made some terrific plays. They fumbled snap, picked it up, rolled to his right, made the big play to midfield. He had some real key scrambles in the game. Respect. Coach and the entire Texans team.”

On if the “scoop and scramble” play affected the team’s attitude

“They grabbed quite a bit of momentum, and then it’s my job, our job, to get the momentum back.”

On how drops affected Herbert's performance

"Did it have an effect? I don't know how much. Uncharacteristic, but I thought there were some tremendous catches as well. Some tremendous throws. It's just that they played better, and that's on me."

On how much they were affected by this week's adjusted schedule

"I don't think we were affected."

On what he saw when Herbert threw to Johnston on the fourth and two and if Johnston was in the right place

"That we didn't get the first down. I really didn't see his release, so I can't answer that question."

On if that fourth-and-two play was designed to be deeper

"Yeah, just a little bit. Sometimes the release, the coverage affects that. If we had it over, would like to have called a different play or kicked a field goal there."

On how much Texans QB C.J. Stroud ran the ball today

"He did a great job using his legs. Scrambling, converting first downs, making big plays."

On adjustments that made the run tougher as the game progressed

"I can't completely answer that, what exactly they were doing. They were doing a tremendous job of knocking back at the line of scrimmage and tackling. They were very effective stopping the run. It was a really good run wall by them."

On WR Ladd McConkey's record-setting performance

"He was a beast. Incredible player. Tough as they come. We love the way all the guys fought and battled and the effort that they gave was outstanding."

On if the team is headed in the right direction

"It's my favorite ball team I've ever been on. One thing I can promise you is the sun will come up tomorrow, and we'll be attacking it with an enthusiasm unknown to mankind."

On why this is his favorite team

"It just is. Favorite football team. My family at home, those are my two great loves. My family at home and this team."

Los Angeles Chargers QB Justin Herbert**On how tough the loss was today**

"It is tough, I let the team down. You can't turn over the ball like that and expect to win. I put the team in a tough decision with four turnovers. The defense hung tough they got us some turnovers. They gave us opportunities, but I just have to be better."

On if anything changed for him this game with all the turnovers

"Nope, it is just on me to protect the ball and be better about that. It was aggressive downfield, and you got to do a better job of getting the ball out, throwing it away, or better ball placement. That is on me."

On what he saw on the picks he was throwing

"Like I said, I just have to be better about that. Throw the ball away, throw it further. I have to do a better job of not putting it in harms way."

On the throw to Chargers WR Ladd McConkey

"That was on me to make a better throw and like I said I have to do a better job of protecting the ball. I can't expect to win games when you turn over the ball like that and especially throwing interceptions like that."

On if the Texans defensive pressure was the toughest one they have faced all season

"Yeah, I think they did a good job. That is on us to be able to execute and handle that. I think we did a poor job of handling the pressure and I have to find the quick outs, throw the ball away and do a better job at protecting the ball."

On the Texans cornerback group

"I think it is on us to execute. I turned the ball over and that is on us and that is on me. I have to do a better job. I thought the guys outside did a great job of fighting and getting open. That is on me as a quarterback to be able to deliver the ball."

On what he saw on fourth and two throw to Chargers WR Quentin Johnston

"He was the only guy that I could see there. We have to do a better job of getting the ball out and getting to a position to where we can convert on that. It is a play that we practiced, and we thought it was going to work and we didn't execute."

On if he was the first read on the play

"He was."

On if he was expecting Chargers WR Quentin Johnston to have more depth on the route on the fourth-and-2 play

"No, I'd have to take a look at that. I think it was fourth-and-short. We thought we could get him with a route like that. Q's been good with those routes and it didn't go our way."

On what he can say about how Chargers WR Ladd McConkey played today

"Yeah, he just finds a way to make plays and he's done such a good job competing all year. And we're a better team with him and unfortunate the way it went. But he's a true ball player and incredible to watch him play today."

On if he feels the organization is headed in the right direction

"Yeah, I think that they've done a good job there. Definitely on the right track going forward. And it didn't show today and it's the horrible thing about football. I mean, everyone feels terrible. No one feels worse than I do and we have complete trust in [Chargers Head] Coach [Jim] Harbaugh and he's going to get the team right."

On what he thinks it will take for him to get over the hump in the postseason

"We'll just have to keep watching film and assess the play and obviously it was not good enough by any standards today. And it was – I put the team into jeopardy, tough position with all those turnovers and it's on me to get better and keep pushing forward."

On what he can say about how the defense played today

“Yeah, they’ve been good all year. They’ve done such a great job of limiting those touchdowns and they’ve forced a bunch of turnovers and they’ve done such a great job of just getting us the ball back and that’s on us as an offense and me as a quarterback to be able to execute when we get those opportunities.”

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