

Houston Texans Transcripts

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

(Transcribed by Seth Medvin)

Head Coach Bill O'Brien
Quarterbacks Coach George Godsey
QB Ryan Fitzpatrick
CB Johnathan Joseph
QB Thad Lewis
C Chris Myers
DE J.J. Watt
Titans Head Coach Ken Whisenhunt Conference Call
Titans Quarterback Zach Mettenberger Conference Call

Head Coach Bill O'Brien

(opening statement) "We placed Ryan Mallett on IR or we will, we're in the process of it if it hasn't been done already. Placing him on injured reserve. I just want to say something about that, too. The other day what we try to do is we try to give the guy complete evaluation from our doctors, maybe other doctors, before we give a final determination of what the injury is. That's why it takes a few days. I know this is a fast-paced news cycle or whatever, but it takes a few days to determine what the injury is, what the extent of it is and we go from there in the best interest of the player. Along the lines of the quarterback position, Ryan Fitz (Fitzpatrick) will be our starting quarterback on Sunday and then we'll figure out who the second quarterback is throughout the week here whether it's going to be Tom Savage or Thaddeus Lewis."

(on how RB Arian Foster is doing) "He was out there practicing today and he looked pretty good."

(on when the injury to QB Ryan Mallett occurred) "I don't know. It's hard to pinpoint with that type of injury exactly when it happened. I believe that he tried to fight through it. I think he wanted to stay in there and I don't think he said much to anybody about. He wanted to try and fight through it and help the team win. You've got to give the kid a lot of credit. He's a tough kid. He's a good quarterback. He'll recover from this and he'll play football in this league."

(on what the injury to QB Ryan Mallett was) "It's a chest injury and it's to be determined whether he'll have surgery or not."

(on bringing in QB Thaddeus Lewis and the plausibility of him learning the offense by this week's game) "It would be tough for him to learn everything in one week, especially in three practices. It will be tough for him to do that, but he's a very bright kid. It would be tough for anyone to do that. Really smart. I had him as an 18-year-old freshman straight out of South Florida to Duke and he was a very mature guy at that age and you could just see that and then some now. He's very bright. He's in here early trying to learn the system, learn the way we practice, all those things. He's an accurate passer. He's got a quick release. He's a smart guy. He's played football in this league. He's had some success in this league. We'll keep working with him and he'll help our team."

(on how he felt QB Ryan Fitzpatrick handled being benched) "He's been fine and he had a good practice today, and he's looking forward to playing against Tennessee."

(on QB Ryan Fitzpatrick saying that taking a step back and seeing the offense from the sideline could be beneficial) "I would agree with that. You'd have to take him for that. That's his opinion and I would agree with that. I think that anytime you take a step back, another guy goes in there and plays, a guy that's played in the system, a guy that knows the system in (Ryan) Mallett, see how it operates with Mallett, that probably did help Fitz. You can see signs of that today in practice. Tomorrow we have to have another good practice and another one on Friday. Like I said, it's a big challenge with Tennessee coming in here on Sunday, but I can see where Ryan Fitz would benefit from watching."

(on if it helps QB Ryan Fitzpatrick that he's play and beaten Tennessee this year already "Yeah, sure, especially for the personnel. I think Tennessee is a much different football team even then they were three or four weeks ago. Defensively they are doing some different things. I think offensively with (Zach) Mettenberger, he's a lot better now than he was three or four weeks ago. It's a big challenge, but I think it does help the quarterback that he's seen this team, he understands the personnel that is out there and things like that. I think that would help."

(on what he wants to see from QB Tom Savage to earn the backup job) "Let me be real clear about that. We're very pleased with Tom's progress to this point. I think it's very difficult to play quarterback in this league as a rookie. I think that's my philosophy. I think that's a difficult thing to do. With us where we are right now at 5-6 and still having a shot, we go with Fitz (Ryan Fitzpatrick) and we'll let Thad (Lewis) and Tom kind battle it out during the week to see who the number two guy is. I think it's a difficult thing to be able to play as a rookie in this league, especially late in the year when you haven't played yet and there are a lot of different things going on defensively. If he keeps practicing the way he's been today, tomorrow and Friday, there is a chance that he could be number two and we would be happy with that because he's progressed."

(on if something were to happen to QB Ryan Fitzpatrick during the game how much of the offense would be scaled down for QB Tom Savage) "I think if Tom were to go into the game it certainly would change some of the things that we would do. It would change just from the mere fact of Tom's skillset compared to Ryan's skillset is a little bit different. Some of the plays that he can run, some of the plays that he knows best, those are the plays that we would call with Tom in the game. At the end of the day, we would do what we needed to do to win the game."

(on an update on RB Arian Foster) "I think he has a good chance to play. I think he's fighting through some of the things that have gone on throughout the year, some of his injuries. You know, he's played a lot of football. He's had some carries and some big games. He came out there today and he looked good today and we'll see how feels tomorrow. I would say that there is a good chance for him to play."

(on the importance of having RB Arian Foster on Sunday) "I think anytime you have your full complement of players out there, meaning you have a healthy 46-man roster, it's a good thing for your team. Like you said, he's a good running back. He had a good game against these guys before. It would be good to have him out there."

(on what QB Ryan Fitzpatrick has to do better his second time around as starter) "I think some of that you saw today in practice. I think, like I was asked before that maybe it helped him a little bit to sit back and watch a little bit even though he really wanted to be in there playing, I would agree with his assessment there. When I watched him go out there today in practice he was pretty good. He had a good grasp and good grasp of the tempo and the way we want to get in and out of the huddle, the things that we wanted to do. Hopefully we'll see that again tomorrow, Friday and he'll go out there and hopefully have a good game on Sunday."

(on improved offensive line play with QB Ryan Mallett center as compared to the last four games with QB Ryan Fitzpatrick as starter) "I think the line has improved and I also think that Fitzy (Fitzpatrick) has improved in that area to as far as pre-snap knowing where to go with the ball, post-snap making quicker situations. You know, that's part of it, too. The quarterback throws it on time and doesn't sit back there and hold the ball. I think that's an improvement that we've seen with Fitzy in the practices the last couple of weeks."

(on an update to CB Kareem Jackson) "I would say that Kareem would not be available this week, but he would definitely have a chance to play after this week."

Quarterbacks Coach George Godsey

(on how QB Ryan Fitzpatrick handled not being the starter for two weeks) "Like I've talked to you about the whole season with Ryan, he's been a professional with what's going on at that position. He's prepared the last two weeks as if he was the starter just like we require that position. First team, second team, practice

squad player, we want them all to prepare exactly like they were the guy that was going to take the first snap. There is nothing really different from Ryan other than he is going in with the first snap when we start the game this weekend.”

(on QB Thaddeus Lewis) “I think that’s going to be the challenge with both Thad and myself. Really no background from this season together, so it’s really going to be spending every minute trying to catch him up and trying to do what he does best when he’s out there if he’s the guy that’s take some of those snaps in whatever situation.”

(on how tough it is to teach a guy like QB Thad Lewis the offense quickly on the fly) “He has some experience in the league. Not as much with our offense, but that’s going to be a big challenge for him. I think one of the requirements of a professional football player is that he accepts that. I know how difficult it is, but you don’t sit there and pout. You go out there and attack it like it’s any other job. I think that’s kind of both of our jobs.”

(on where QB Tom Savage is right now in terms of handling the system) “I think that’s a good question because he’s still a rookie and a lot of the reasons at the beginning of the season that we had given him to really improve on this year; I think he’s really taken that criticism and worked each week. He’s getting very limited reps throughout the year with the first group or even the second group. It’s a lot of scout team duties, but this week will be different for him. It will be a challenge for him. It will be a challenge for Thaddeus (Lewis) and all of us to really get on the same page and make sure that when that situation occurs, if that situation occurs, that he’s ready to go out there and execute what we feel he can do to move the chains.”

(on if he’s going to have to stay at the facility all night to get QB Thad Lewis up to speed) “I think that’s really part of my job. Stay here all night. Really all of the quarterback and myself, there is a lot of time that’s spent not here on the phone, talking, making sure we catch each other up to speed as far as what he likes because each quarterback is different. Even with Ryan Mallett and Ryan Fitzpatrick there is some things there that maybe one quarterback likes more than the other and we feel comfortable with calling a certain play as opposed to another. Our offense is capable of changing with whoever is back there.”

(on if it makes sense to teach small portions of the offense to QB Thaddeus Lewis this week) “There is only so many hours this week that we can go ahead and really teach the information that we have in the playbooks. To a degree, sure.”

(on what he likes of QB Thad Lewis) “He’s very calm. He’s got some experience in the pros. He played quite a few games last year at the end of the season, did fairly well. He knows a lot of the personnel in the league. For a person who’s been here for a first day to go in there and do some of the things that we ask within our offense, the different modes, I think he did a fairly well at adapting quickly to not only our personnel but our cadence and getting with our offensive line and pointing out points that are needed in the run game and the pass game. That’s a big step for one day. We’ll just try to build on that tomorrow.”

(on how a guy like QB Ryan Fitzpatrick stays prepared even when he’s not the starter) “It’s a long year and I think at the beginning of the season in the spring we talked to all the quarterbacks. Everybody in the room is needed for us to win. It’s not just the guy that’s out there, but when you are out there and it’s not your number that’s called that week just because the position really only has one of them on the field at a time, the more experience you get, the more you understand that, the more you’re able to adapt and change and understand really the business aspect of it. Really just put that behind you and move on. I think he’s done that well. I couldn’t have asked for more of an understanding person from a quarterback standpoint than Ryan’s been. It’s been great actually.”

(on QB Ryan Fitzpatrick’s comfort taking back over the offense) “That’s why it’s a little bit easier to kind of just take control like he did today. I think you go on a corner and you kind of just wait and wait and don’t prepare like a starter. You don’t do the things that you’ve really done for the first nine weeks, when your opportunity comes back again. It’s now, ‘Let’s restart the engine,’ instead of picking up really where you left off.”

QB Ryan Fitzpatrick

(on shaving his beard) "I'm kind of mad you guys didn't tell me I looked like that. I finally had some time to look in the mirror and thought it was disgusting. I decided to trim it down a bit."

(on what his kids shaved after he shaved his beard) "'Dad, you have the longest neck in the world.' That was one comment. The girls, they like it actually. They weren't scared, so that was good. And the boys want me to grow it back."

(on how much work it took to take his beard down) "We had to chop it down piece-by-piece. It was definitely a significant amount of time to take it off."

(on his thoughts of being back in the starting role) "Just going about my business like I always do in terms of preparing and getting myself ready, getting the guys ready, going out there in practice and trying to get better every day and showing up on Sundays."

(on the advantage of going against a defense he saw every day while in Tennessee) "I talked about it a little bit in the first matchup we had with them. I think it's a bit of a wash. It's a new system, so it's not a system that I saw day in and day out last year. In terms of the personnel, they know me just like I know them. And there is plenty of film out there now, and so I think it's a wash in that regard. Anytime you play a division opponent in that second game there is always going to be a few wrinkles and things that you have to adjust and try to prepare for. It should be a good game."

(on how he's learned over the years how to handle going in to and out of the starting lineup) "A lot of it is about being the same guy every day and having confidence in yourself, preparing the same way and then going out there and doing it. Staying steady I think is the biggest thing for a quarterback in this league just with so many ups and downs throughout the year."

(on if there is anything he has to work through after being back in the starting lineup) "The last few weeks have been interesting to take a step back and kind of watch the offense go. But for me to go back out there, it's kind of like a second chance for me I guess out there. There were a lot of times where you don't have that opportunity maybe. Something was taken away from me and I didn't know if I'd get a chance to go out there and play again. Renewed sense of excitement and energy or whatever it is."

(on if he will look for the tight ends more) "I'm going to try and throw it to whoever is open. I think Garrett (Graham) has done a great job all year in terms of really putting in the work. He got some catches in the two minute drive in the last game. Those are guys, I'm going to try and spread it to the open guy."

(on if it's easier being on the bench and coming back in after being out two weeks as compared to eight or nine) "It's never easy to be on the bench. I've continued to prepare the last few weeks. Just tried to still get my throws and get the rhythm, and I think just all the experiences of things that have happened through my first eight, nine games or whatever, and the different things with timing with Andre (Johnson), DeAndre (Hopkins) and the tight ends, D.J. (Damaris Johnson) and those guys, that stuff still carries over. I've just got to go to work today."

(on if it's good to hear the team still believes in him) "Yeah, for sure. That's a big part of playing quarterback. Just making sure that not only I have confidence, but the guys around me have confidence around me. There were some weird looks today. People didn't notice me, recognize me that much. Some said that my lips look big and funny, whatever. We'll get out there today and go to work."

(on if there is any awkwardness that he has to work through) "I think that's a good question. I think from the outside looking in you could definitely see it that way in terms of the awkwardness, but I think a lot of it is about being a professional. I've tried to be a professional about it and understand; from day one Coach Bill O'Brien has told us that he is going to do whatever he can to put the team in the best situation to win. That is what he felt. Like I said, I didn't agree with it, but I was a professional about it just like he was. It's the NFL and you never know what's going to happen. And here we are a couple weeks later, with an unfortunate situation with Ryan (Mallett), ready to go."

(on when the offense is working, what in particular is working) “We could kind of rehash every game. I think the successes, the real successes we’ve had, we’ve been able to run the ball real well and just mix the run and the pass. The games that we’ve done well, we’ve stayed on the field. Again, it comes down to third downs, and just converting the third downs and keeping us in those manageable third downs where we’re not having to go for the third-and-15 miracle conversions.”

(on what he thinks he needs to do differently now that he’s back in the starting lineup) “For me, it’s just the preparation has to be the same just in terms of making sure that I’m going to go out there -practice, it’s great to go out there and get things running smoothly- and during the game, just better execution. I can’t really put my finger on one thing. Just go out there and have better execution.”

(on the irony of him starting against vs. Tennessee after spending last season back-and-forth as the starter) “Yeah, it has. I’m getting kind of dizzy.”

(on if pressing pause on the season was a good thing for him) “I don’t know. We’ll see. I feel like there might have been some good the last weeks just sitting back and being able to watch it. I certainly wanted to be out there.”

(on what he could learn from being out as compared to being in) “It’s seeing it from a different perspective. Being able to see it with Coach (George) Godsey and Coach (Bill) O’Brien on the sideline and the way that the plays are being called. Being able to see somebody else operate the offense. Being able to see the whole picture and all the body language on the field and on the sideline. There are a lot of different things that go into it from a different perspective on the sideline there.”

(on how special Thanksgiving is for him and his family) “It’s an awesome time for everybody. It’s fun; I’ll have a lot of family in town. It’s fun to kind of get everybody together. Just realize and pause from our normal lives to give thanks and realize how thankful we all are. I think everybody in this locker room is very thankful to play the game for a living. It’s always a nice time to reflect on that.”

(on how hard it is to actually play quarterback in the NFL) “There is no doubt. The longer you’re around, the more you’ve played, the more difficult you realize how difficult it is to do it at a high level for a long time. That’s the goal. Just to continue to try and get better every week and continue to try and execute more consistently and at a high level. Hopefully that’s what we’ll do.”

(on if it makes it more special that he’ll have a lot of family in attendance on Sunday) “I mean, I always have a lot of family here. They’re crazy. They come out for most of the games. No, I mean, I’m getting to a cool point now where my boys are getting a little bit older and it’s fun to have them come to the games and for them to know a little bit about what’s going on, be critical of my play a little bit or be excited with touchdowns. That’s getting to be cool.”

(on how old his children are) “My oldest is soon to be eight. My other one is soon to be six. The two boys.”

(on if his kids have asked him any tough questions) “They ask, and the great things about kids is that it all comes from such an innocent place. They ask different questions, but yeah, for me, at the end of the day putting everything in perspective with my family and my kids, just trying to be the best person I can be as a role model for my kids as a father, for my wife as a husband and when I get in here just the way that I present myself. They all kind of go together.”

(on if he feels cutting his beard is sort of a fresh start) “No, I think it was more just me getting tired with having to pick corn out of it. When I eat pancakes in the morning with the syrup and stuff, it would be there for days. My wife asks me, ‘did you have pancakes this morning?’ ‘No, it was four days ago.’ No more of those questions, which will be good.”

CB Johnathan Joseph

(on how Titans QB Zach Mettenberger has improved since the first time the teams played) "I think he's a little bit more comfortable understanding overall the offense and the game flow. Obviously playing more, that's the only way you can go out and get better. It's more repetition and things like that. I think he's starting to figure out coverages more and reading them and getting the ball out a lot more quicker."

(on if there is more pressure on the defense because of uncertainty on offense) "Not really pressure, but we have to come out, do our job and help the team any way we can. Sometimes it may be extra, sometimes it might be something where you're putting the offense in a better situation, shorten the field out or whatever it may be. But we definitely need to come out and do our job first and foremost."

(on if he sees improvement in QB Zach Mettenberger's games) "I think he's more comfortable in the pocket, has more of an understanding of the offense, getting the ball out a lot quicker and he's able to read coverages more and things like that. We can't just go up there and show him the coverage and keep the same look the whole time. We have to mix it up some and give him different looks."

(on what impressed him about QB Zach Mettenberger in the teams' first meeting) "Standing in the pocket. A lot of guys come in here sometimes, young and don't play as much or inexperienced, they tend to get out there and take their eyes from looking down field. I think he did a great job of standing in there. Even with pressure sometimes, he stood in there and he looked and kept his eyes down field and made some throws."

QB Thad Lewis

(on how tough it has been not being on an NFL roster) "It's kind of tough when you're just out and not knowing the situation. Just staying ready. Didn't have any idea what team will call, even if this will be the call. I heard about (Ryan) Mallett's injury, and then fortunately I got the call, so I was happy just to get another shot, another crack at it."

(on if his role has been clarified) "My role hasn't been clarified, but obviously I signed yesterday, so whatever the team needs me to do in any shape, form or fashion to help this team out, then I'm willing to do it."

(on if he has any familiarity with the Texans offense) "A little bit. I had Josh McDaniels a little bit the camp I spent that he came to St. Louis, my second year in St. Louis. It's not all foreign to me. But you have to refresh your memory with it because you've been out and haven't been actually studying it as I would be for the next couple weeks."

(on where he is physically) "Physically, I'm great. I never stopped. I never stopped training. I never stopped throwing. I went about my daily routine. I trained five days a week, so I feel great physically."

(on where he was when he got the call that the Texans wanted to sign him) "When I got the call, I was back at Duke. So I went back to Duke and trained. Just started thinking about some different things life. You know, you've got a lot of thinking you can do outside of football. I was actually at Duke and I was actually getting Thanksgiving plans ready, what I was going to do for Thanksgiving. Those actually got canceled, so it's a good thing."

(on what his conversation with Bill O'Brien was about) "He just told me, 'Hey, you were out top guy on the board. You have the experience. We want to bring you in and hopefully you can grasp the system and do your best.' That was encouraging."

(on rejoining with his former offensive coordinator at Duke, Bill O'Brien) "It's fun. Now I'm a young man, than I was a pup, eighteen years-old, a freshman. And then you've got a coach that is trying to teach you a system that is hard for a guy coming out of high school to learn. Now it's different. It's at the professional level and it's a business. You understand the business side of it and you know the work to put in to come in and be that great quarterback."

(on if he has a sense of comfort knowing that he has a relationship with Bill O'Brien) "I would never say that I would be comfortable going into a situation after being out the league 13 weeks. So, it's just an opportunity and you want to make the best of it."

(on how much did he grow in Buffalo getting some starts) "I thought I grew a lot. Getting an opportunity to start five games, something that most don't get to do in a lifetime and I did that in the NFL. It's just great. Going out there and being comfortable and knowing that I can just play with the guys on this level. Starting those five games helped me and getting two wins out of it."

(on if he patterns his game after a certain player) "I really don't view it like that. You kind of take the different things from different guys. But ultimately, you want to pave your own way. You just want to be labeled as a good quarterback. Some guys label you as a backup quarterback and things like that. You just want to be labeled as a good quarterback when you get your opportunity to play."

C Chris Myers

(on if matters who is behind center) "We've had this rotation throughout the whole season. Whether it be quarterback, whether it be offensive line, whether it be running back, it's the same way. You're going to game plan the same way every single week."

(on how much the team believes in QB Ryan Fitzpatrick) "He's the guy that's in the starting role right now and he's had a lot of experience in his career, and obviously he proved what he can do early in the season. Obviously there was that transition, but this is the way the NFL works. There are ups and downs and there are injuries. That's the way it is. No one will tell you that beforehand."

(on if there is a difference between switching quarterbacks because of injury) "You just understand it's a nature of the business. It's every single year that kind of stuff happens. It's happened to us throughout the year this year. It's not surprise and you just roll with the punches."

(on how important it is for the team to run the ball) "Yeah, that's the whole mindset every single week is establishing the run and everything else comes off of that. If you could do that early and often, everything else will have some success."

DE J.J. Watt

(on what he thinks of QB Ryan Fitzpatrick without the beard) "He looks different. I just said on the Tennessee conference call, he looks a little bit less werewolfy, so he looks a little bit more normal I guess. I think he looks fine."

(on the injuries to the Titans offensive line) "Obviously it's tough. Anybody, any time somebody has injuries, you never like to hear that. But at the same time it's an opportunity, but you also have to respect the guys that are coming up behind him. Here, everywhere, we have a next man up mentality. They have the same thing there. There is a reason their backups are in the NFL, so there is a reason that they're going to get a chance to play on Sunday. If you get a favorable matchup, you have to take advantage of it."

(on if there is still hope in the season at 5-6) "From as far as I'm concerned, yeah. Do you know something that I don't know? Are we mathematically out of something? Alright. I didn't think so."

(on the play of Titans QB Zach Mettenberger since the last time the teams played) "I think he's continued to get better. I think he's continued to improve. That's what you expect. He's going to continue as he grows. I do expect him to be better this game than he was against us, obviously last time being his first game. He'll be a little bit more comfortable, a little bit more control of his offense, I'm sure. Has some more practices under his belt. So, you look forward to it. It will be a good challenge."

(on if he has any regrets about his selfie-celebration after sacking QB Zach Mettenberger) "No, not at all. I went out there and I did it and then after the game somebody asked me a question about it and I answered it. I don't see anything wrong about any of it. If he wants to do it again, he's more than welcome to. That's perfectly fine."

(on if he felt like he got in QB Zach Mettenberger's head last game) "I don't know. I don't know. Maybe, maybe not. But my goal is to get in people's head with my play. That's the number one way to get inside

somebody's head. That's all I can do is try and out there and play well. When you have success, you get to have a little bit of fun along the way. That's kind of the way it works in this league."

(on if there is extra pressure on the defense to play better with changes on the offense) "I think that's always the goal. Obviously, we want to do everything in our power to help as much as possible. That means getting the ball back to our offense. That means trying to score touchdown on defense like J-Joe (Johnathan Joseph) did this week. Whatever we can do to help our team win games, we're trying to do. We need to make sure we do that to the best of our ability, cause takeaways, three and outs, as much as we can get the ball back in our offense's hands so we can score some points."

(on giving a group of firefighters free pizza) "It was something that really wasn't supposed to get out. It was just between me and them. But I guess when you send it to like 140 different stations somebody has a cell phone. I thought about it a couple weeks back. I know what it's like around the holidays having to go visit my dad or my uncles at the fire station. Some of those guys are working on Thanksgiving, working on Christmas and stuff like that. It wasn't because of the holidays; I just kind of tried to pick a random day. They deserve- everything in the note is true- that's really all you need to know about it is what was in the note. Like I said, I don't want any credit for anything. They deserve the headlines. They deserve things. Not me by any means."

(on spending time with friends and family for Thanksgiving) "I like it. Big, big fan. It's a time, obviously like I said, growing up in my family sometimes it was spent at a fire house, sometimes it was spent at home or wherever we could do it. And now he, now playing in the NFL and having played Division One college football, you don't get to spend necessarily Thanksgiving with your family. I'm very fortunate to have people down here invite me into their homes and I've had so many people offer, and I think that's what it's all about. It's just remember what you're thankful for and remembering how fortunate you really are because at the end of the day there is always something to be thankful for, and especially guys in our position, myself especially. I have so many different things in my life to be thankful for. It's literally unbelievable. It's just a great day to remind ourselves of that."

(on the most unique Thanksgiving invite he received) "The most unique invite I've got? I get just about everybody. Wherever, if you can think about it, I've probably been invited there. People's houses, fans' houses, fire stations, police departments. Everywhere. I'm very, very fortunate about that. I know one thing, I won't go hungry on Thursday. I'm very thankful."

(on where he is going for Thanksgiving) "After I leave here? I think- well I don't want to tell everybody because I don't want to make the guys house, I don't want to make that a target. I've seen what my house is like on holidays. I'll keep it a secret, but I'll tell you afterwards. I'm going to have a meal."

(on his relationship with the Berry family and where it is today) "They're great. They're as normal as you can be for their situation. They're playing basketball, they're in school. I don't want to call any of them out, but they've got their little sixth, seventh, eighth grade relationships going on, so you've got all the little intricacies of life and they're getting to be as normal as possible. Those kids are some of the best things that have ever happened to my life and I'm so fortunate to have them in my life. It's just so neat how the community, how their family and how everybody rallied around them, and to see how they responded. As you know, that's such a tough situation to be as a child. But they handled it better than any of us could have ever imagined."

(on what he likes to eat on Thanksgiving) "Thanksgiving is a cheat day. Everything. I mean, obviously a huge fan of the pies, turkey, stuffing, not a big cranberry sauce guy. Basically those vegetables stay out of my way on Thanksgiving. But I mean, just going back for like three, four, five plates. That's the best part. You eat a little bit and then you hang out and then you go eat some more and then you hang out and then you have some leftovers. I try to keep it just to that day because I know I've got a game to play in Sunday. But Thanksgiving, Christmas, like those types of days, I get to eat."

(on what his mom makes for Thanksgiving) "My mom makes this éclair cake back home. It's not really a Thanksgiving thing. She just makes it around the holidays and stuff like that. She actually made me one so

I could bring it as a gift on Thursday to the house that I'm going to. I'm not going to show up empty handed because if I tried to cook something, I wouldn't want to put it out there for other people to eat. She left me that. She just left. I get to take that on Thursday. I hope people like it. I'm going to say I cooked it. Don't tell anybody."

Titans Head Coach Ken Whisenhunt Conference Call

(on what he's seen from QB Zach Mettenberger in terms of his growth since his first start) "I think he's a lot more comfortable being able to handle the offense as far as running it. I think going into Baltimore and going into Philadelphia, tough places to play where the crowds can be noisy and playing on the Monday Night Football stage, all those things are experiences that you go through as a quarterback, and he's done a good job of handling them. We haven't had a lot of delay of game penalties or mistakes as far as the calls in and out of the huddle. Regardless of what you think, that's a big piece of playing that position. As far as studying and being prepared that way, he's done a good job. I think just looking at him in the game he's getting better at his reads and he's getting better at moving in the pocket, his footwork. So we're seeing progress in all those areas. He's still a young player in the league. There are a lot of things yet to go through, but he's doing a really nice job of working at it."

(on what are some things that his team can do to keep DE J.J. Watt in check) "Well, he's a good football player. I don't think there is any question about that. It's always hard. You'll have a plan to try and make sure that we can do some things to hopefully keep him from having a productive day, but that's the way it is in this league. You play against some good players. Their defense, Coach (Romeo) Crennel does a great job with those guys. They're very sound in their scheme and they play it well. Going against them a second time, hopefully we'll do a little better."

(on what he says about QB Ryan Fitzpatrick that teams confidently go back to him in the middle of the season) "I think you said it right there. He's a veteran player that's played in this league, has had a number of starts, does a nice job. I think when you're in a situation like they are in losing the quarterback that was playing, getting a player like Fitz in there to play is certainly a bonus."

(on how important it is to try and figure out the quarterback position before building the rest of the roster) "I guess everybody has a different philosophy on how you do it. I know the quarterback position in the NFL has been one that it's hard to find those elite players as is seen by a lot of guys that have had chances or have been drafted high that didn't have success. I think certainly it's an important piece of your team, but there have been different ways teams have gone about it. We're going through the process of looking back and seeing where he (Zach Mettenberger) fits in that whole equation. We're encouraged by a lot of the things we're seeing on the field."

(on possibly playing without OT Taylor Lewan) "The next guys got to play if Taylor can't play. We don't know for sure that he's not going to play. We're certainly hopeful that he will. The next guy in line has to step up. I think everybody really knows that in the NFL. You have a limited number of guys to do that with. Players that have been working like Byron Stingily's been working all year in a backup role, when they get their opportunity it's always a chance for them to show us what they can do."

(on OT Taylor Lewan's progress) "I think Taylor's doing a nice job as a young tackle. There is always going to be some plays like you'd like to have back. I don't care where you are in your career. As far as the position and growing and going against some pretty good rushers, he's done a nice job."

(on what he's seen from RB Alfred Blue) "I think he's a good looking young running back. Good size, good speed, runs with powers, can do a number of different things. He's a good young back."

Titans Quarterback Zach Mettenberger Conference Call

(on how he reflects on the J.J. Watt sack-selfie celebration and postgame comments) "It's kind of irrelevant towards football, don't you think? It's not something that's brought up. It's never really brought up in our locker room, except for media. Yeah, just let that thing die I guess."

(on not having a big twitter presence since J.J. Watt's sack-selfie celebration and postgame comments) "No, I don't really tweet that much anyways. So that really didn't have anything to do with my twitter life I guess."

(on how much he feels he's grown since his last meeting with the Texans) "I'm not quite a seasoned vet. I'm only making my fifth start and I'm still growing. It's still a learning process. But I'm a totally different player than I was that game. I'm going to continue to work hard and take each game as a learning experience and just try to go out there and get the win."

(on if he gets noticeably more comfortable as every game goes by) "Yeah. The more you play, the more you grow as a player. Just time at practice, game reps, walkthroughs; just things slow down for you the more you play. You have to ask why it's so easy for guys like Peyton (Manning) and Tom (Brady)."

(on if he keeps in touch with other rookie quarterbacks in the league) "Tom (Savage) and I kind of talked a little bit. We've known each other since high school. That's really the fact of the matter. We've all known each other since juniors in high school. It's kind of a cool group, cool fraternity. We keep in touch as much as we can."

(on what he remembers about RB Alfred Blue as a teammate) "Blue is an outstanding guy. He's one of the funniest individuals that I've ever had the privilege to play on a team with. I've missed playing with him; I've missed working with him every day. He's doing a heck of a job down there in Houston."

(on the challenges the Texans defense presents) "99."

(on if he expand on his thoughts on J.J. Watt's impact on the Texans' defense) "I think it's pretty noticeable. 99."

(on the success of his former college teammates and fellow rookies) "To grow up with those guys really, you go through this process together. And then after my game watching Odell (Beckham Jr.) make arguably the greatest catch in NFL history; seeing Jarvis (Landry) having another stellar week with a couple of touchdowns, Jeremy (Hill) doing his thing, running the ball, getting touchdowns, Alfred (Blue) playing really well—we were all in the same offense last year and we're all having so much success this year."

(on how much he keeps up with LSU football and if he gets to watch the game tomorrow night) "Yeah. It will probably be the first game that I get to see the whole thing because we usually have meetings during the games on Saturdays at night. I'm excited to see them play at Texas A&M."

(on how different it is being a quarterback in the NFL than it as from his experience at LSU) "Instead of 120 FBS teams there is 32 highly marketable teams. I don't know, just the stage you're on is so much bigger even coming from the SEC and a program like LSU. It's so much bigger and just kind of handling everything that comes with the job has really been the biggest difference."