

Houston Texans Transcripts

Friday, May 8, 2015

(Transcribed by Omar Majzoub)

Head Coach Bill O'Brien
DT Christian Covington
OLB Reshard Cliett
RB Kenny Hilliard
CB Kevin Johnson
ILB Benardrick McKinney
WR Jaelen Strong
DE Paul Quessenberry

Head Coach Bill O'Brien

(on his message to the rookies about their orientation to Houston and the NFL) "That's an interesting question. When we talk to the rookies, the first thing that we talk about is, basically since the end of their college season they've been somewhat of a man without a country, meaning, they hired an agent, a lot of these guys hired an agent. The agent placed them maybe in a workout facility. They were kind of making sure that they were taking care of their own skill set as it relates to the combine, those types of drills, the Senior Bowl and all those things. So, the first thing they need to do is realize that they're back to being a part of a team and what it means to be a Houston Texan, so we talk to them a lot about that. As it relates to specially this weekend, they're really here to learn our system, to learn how we do things, to get on our program. This is the way we meet, this is the way we walk through, this is the way we practice and really they don't have time for anything other than that. The first thing they need to do is basically make the team and learn their role and create some value for themselves on this team, but making sure that they know that they're part of a team. They're not here on a field trip to Houston. They're here to be the best football player they can be, which will help our team, and learn what it means to be a Houston Texan."

(on getting the rookies into football shape) "Yeah, very aware, very aware. There is a big difference between training for the 40-yard dash or the broad jump or the vertical leap. All those things are important in the process of getting to this place. They were part of the process of how they ended up getting in the NFL and specifically with the Houston Texans. But at the end of the day, those things don't really relate to the tempo at which we practice. I think with our staff, our training staff, our strength staff, we really work together to go out there today, especially starting today, and monitor these guys, evaluate these guys on what type of condition they're in. Because the worst thing that can happen, and it all happens it's inevitable, that a young man pulls a hamstring or a calf muscle or some soft tissue injury and he ends up being out for two or three weeks and now he's behind the eight ball. They're already behind. We have guys that have been here for a year and change doing our program and so they're trying to catch up to them, so if they get an injury because they're out of shape, part of that is on us. We've got to do a good job of making sure that we push them, we get a good tempo, we get a good look at the plays and the way that the players play in those plays, but also making sure that we look at their conditioning level."

(on what he looks for during these practices) "I think this is an evaluation weekend. It's a really good opportunity for us as a coaching staff to watch these guys perform in the drills and the schemes that we're going to ask them to be in, meaning like what is their fit, how do they move, what's their athletic ability, what is their ability to take the information from the meeting to the walkthrough and then obviously to practice to really understand what we're trying to do. You know, how do they learn? That'll help us in maybe figuring out how to teach them better or teach them in different ways. It's an evaluation weekend on movement skills, athletic ability, their ability to pick the schemes up, and their ability to learn. The other thing that's big is they've been in a mode, most of these guys. They can wake up when they want to, go work out, maybe catch some lunch, and then go back do a little bit, maybe play some video games, whatever they're doing. Now, they've got to get into a consistent routine. What time do you wake up in the morning? Set your alarm clock for whatever, 5:30, 5:45. Let's get over here early, get a whirlpool treatment, get some extra film work, maybe an extra meeting with the coach. They've got to get into a consistent routine, that's part of the weekend too."

(on how he plans to use WR Keith Mumphery) "I would say with all these guys we're looking at versatility within the position they play, so meaning whether it's an offensive lineman or a DB (defensive back). With the example of Mumphery, first of all, we're going to start him out as a wide receiver, probably on the outside, maybe see on Sunday what we can do on the inside. But we do know that what he showed us on tape and kind of his background at Michigan State that he was able to do other things. I don't think you'll see him at running back this weekend, but we know he does have that skill set in his background, so maybe in the future we'll see. Let's see if he can learn the formation and where to line up today."

(on what he likes about WR Keith Mumphery) "With most of these guys with the exception of maybe a long snapper or somebody like that, we looked at the versatility. With a guy like Mumphery and really all the receivers that are in here this weekend, we liked their versatility. For Mumphery, we thought he may have a chance and should have a chance to really help us on special teams. So we're really looking at him to be in this weekend to start off and learn the core special teams, punt, punt return, kickoff cover, kickoff return, be a part of all that. Then obviously, try to find his niche at receiver. We felt like he was an outside receiver that could do some things on the inside and be a special teams contributor. We'll see how it goes this weekend."

(on C Greg Mancz) "We thought we had a guy there that had been injured and had somewhat of an injury. I'll just tell you it was a shoulder injury, but it was doing well as far as our doctors were concerned and our trainer. We liked what we had seen from him at center. We also think that there's a potential, again back to the versatility theme here which is important, that maybe he could play guard, but we'll start him off at center. He won't be able to do much right now because he's still rehabbing, but we liked his intelligence and his ability to play center, so we'll take a look at that when he can start to get out there and practice."

(on what he looks forward to during rookie minicamp) "I think we all as coaches, we really enjoy coaching our players, so we've had a really good start to our offseason program with the guys that have been here, our veteran players. Now, we get to begin to mold these younger players into teaching them what it means to be a Houston Texan. Watching these guys go out on the field and take our subject matter from the meeting to the walkthrough to the field and watch these guys improve. I think coaching – I tell these guys all the time, one of the things about coaching is teaching, you have to be a really good teacher. Part of it is motivation and then to me one of the things that's really enjoyable for a coach is watching improvement. Taking a young man from where he may start today and then you see maybe by the end of June where he's improved. I think that's something that we really enjoy as coaches and that really takes place starting today with these younger players. Let's see how they can improve. It's a progress league, I said that to you guys a lot last year. It's about getting better every day, so we feel like we've got a good group to start that progress with today."

(on what he hopes to see from WR Jaelen Strong) "I want to see what type of shape he is in. I want to see how well he picks things up. It's not an easy offense to learn for a young receiver. If you look at the past with our receiver position, it's not always easy for a young guy to jump right in there and learn all the things that we do right away. We're going to leave him in one spot, on the outside for a while and teach him that and watch him get better. But I would say his conditioning level and then his ability to take the subject that we're teaching in the meeting out to the field and get better every day."

(on if there will be pressure on rookie wide receivers after last year's great performances) "We have high expectations for the guys that we've drafted, especially those first three draft picks. We certainly have high expectations for those guys, but we know that each guy is a little bit different in how they'll take the information and be able to perform on the field. We're not looking for a Pro Bowl player on the first day of practice. We just want guys that are going to work hard, be dependable, practice hard, and be consistent. If we can do that with all these guys, we'll have a good rookie class if they can perform that way. Jaelen (Strong) is no different. You're right, the receiver class from last year, that's a heck of a class. A lot of those guys went out there and performed really well, whether it was (Odell) Beckham Jr. or Sammy Watkins or whoever. I don't think that we're looking for that on the first day from Strong, but we have high expectations for all these guys, especially those first three guys that we drafted."

(on if Arizona State moved WR Jaelen Strong around a lot) “Yeah, I would say they did. They did. He played – but there’s different types of ‘moving around.’ If you’re in a certain personnel grouping and he ended up in the slot, he can still run some outside routes from that position. I would say that he’s primarily, like I said, an outside receiver and as he learns maybe he can do some things on the inside, but we’re going to leave him on the outside right now and see how that goes.”

(on if he was surprised S Kurtis Drummond went undrafted) “Nothing surprises me, it really doesn’t, especially when it comes to the draft. Anything can happen. Everybody has different ways of drafting, different eyes for talent, and all those things. I’m just worried and concerned about the Houston Texans. We saw a guy there that we had worked out. We felt good about. When he was there in the post-draft process, we had a relationship with him and we were able to secure him here as an undrafted guy here in Houston. I’ll say this, one of the messages is like it really doesn’t matter where you were drafted. That’s where you were picked. Okay, that’s great. That’s in the past. Now, it’s about what you do from this point forward. Starting last night, I don’t really care. You can go through our roster. I read off a bunch of names on our current roster of the guys that have been with us for a year or so and where they were drafted or not drafted. It’s really just about what they do from this point forward.”

(on what the Texans do to help rookies get acclimated) “That’s a big part of their introduction throughout the whole year. I can tell you for this six-week period that they’ll be here. We have a nine-week offseason program, so three weeks with the veterans here and now we add the rookies to the mix here. As soon as the rookies get in, starting I believe this afternoon, from this day forward, sometime in the afternoon they’ll have what we call a rookie development program, which Sean Washington, our director of player engagement, is in charge of. That can range anything from teaching them how to set up a bank account, to how to get around the city, to life skills, like I was saying before, nutrition, when to wake up, rest, hydration. One of the things we’re going to do this year, too, which Sean has agreed to which I really appreciate from Sean, we’re going to have certain coaches talk to these guys in some of these sessions where a guy like, for instance, Mike Vrabel can go into the room and not talk about linebacker play, but talk about what it means to be a pro and what it takes to be a pro and be a consistent guy for multiple years. We’re going to do more of that and involve the coaches in that too. We invest a lot of time in that and we believe in how we do it and hopefully it works.”

(on his reaction to the Wells Report about the New England Patriots) “No reaction. Really, I’ll be honest with you, I’m so concerned about the Houston Texans. Really every day, I’m just focused on them and that’s my biggest concern and focus. I don’t have any reaction to that report.”

DT Christian Covington

(on this not being his first time in Houston) “No sir. Happy to be back.”

(on just moving down the street from Rice University) “It’s great. I’m looking forward to the journey that lies ahead. Right now, I’m blessed to say that I’m honored and I’m thrilled that the Houston Texans gave me an opportunity to draft me as a player. I’m looking forward to this journey ahead. I’m looking forward to the rest of rookie camp, minicamp, and then training camp eventually. As far as my first day goes, it’s been a great experience all around.”

(on what he can tell the other rookies about Houston) “It’s a great city. For me as a player in the past, I didn’t really do much. For me, it was just school and football. At this point right now, it’s probably going to be the same thing with the Texans. Right now, I’m just going to put my nose to the grind right now when it comes to football and training.”

(on what he hopes to accomplish this weekend) “Over these next couple days, I’m just trying to basically just get used to the change of the game. You take that next step from college to the pros and you’re going to learn come first day how big the differences are and how big the changes are. I’m looking forward to just getting used to the way this organization runs their football team. I’m looking forward to basically just learning from some great veterans on this team. In particular the defensive line really, you have guys like J.J. Watt, Vince Wilfork, and other established players like Whitney Mercilus and Jadeveon Clowney really.

For me, I see this as a great opportunity. Not just for me, but for the whole team just to learn from them and soak up every bit of knowledge that they can.”

(on what advice Rice Coach David Bailiff gave him) “He told me just ‘welcome back.’ Other than that, he told me enjoy the moment and basically just keep going with this opportunity that’s been given to me. I’m grateful and looking forward to plowing ahead.”

(on his background with special teams) “My background in special teams just really fell around – I guess long snapping. I didn’t do it a lot, but as far as other special teams goes I know I didn’t really have that much of a role back at Rice. As far as the Texans are concerned, I’m willing to go wherever they want me to go.”

(on where he was when he got drafted) “I was back home in Vancouver.”

(on if he lived on campus at Rice) “Yes sir.”

(on what he did between school ending and the draft) “I moved all my stuff back with me to Arizona when I was training for pro day. Eventually, made the move back to Canada. Now, have to make the move back to Houston, so it’s a good little go around.”

(on if his stuff is back in Houston) “Some of it. To be able to bring my stuff back to a city like Houston, it’s great to start a new journey where another one began.”

(on if he has an apartment in Houston now) “No, right now I’m in the team hotel. I’m going to get that all situated once everything is said and done.”

(on if it was surreal to show up to NRG Stadium as a Texan) “Yes ma’am. In the past when it was Reliant (Stadium) when I was with Rice, we played against U of H (University of Houston) a couple times here. To be able to be in this facility now and to be actually amongst the players and actually know that you know that you are a Houston Texan, it’s a great feeling right now. It’s an honor really. I’m still over the moon really. I’m ready to just put the work in, ready to just go full cylinders with this whole thing.”

(on the rookie lockers being in the middle of the locker room) “It’s expected. As rookies, we have to earn our place on this team. I know every single one of us is happy to be here. We’re looking forward to the opportunity that’s been laid out for us and I know we’re all excited.”

(on what college he was in at Rice) “Duncan College. Shout out to my Duncaroos.”

OLB Reshard Cliett

(on his goal for these practices) “I’m trying to make an impression, learn this playbook, so I can get ready and try to make this team.”

(on how it feels to be in the NFL) “At first it wasn’t even real, so I had to really come down to earth to that. I actually got drafted and especially by this great organization.”

(on if he is nervous) “Not really nerves. I’m just really looking to have fun and run around. That’s what I’ve been doing for a good while.”

(on if it’s easier out on the field when he is just playing football) “Yes sir.”

(on the Texans player he is most excited to meet) “Definitely some of the main guys. Definitely J.J. Watt. He is everywhere. Brian Cushing, as a linebacker, I definitely look at him and try to take out of him.”

(on how he hopes to handle the first couple days) “Yeah, they are throwing a lot at us, so really just trying to dig deep into this playbook and try to learn exactness of all the playbooks and really learn special teams.”

(on if it has sunk in that he is in the NFL) "I think along on the way it's going to start sinking in, but right now I'm kind of just like up right now. It's a great feeling and it's a great opportunity."

(on not trying to do too much this weekend) "Yeah, definitely want to make a big impression so you want to show the coaches what you can really do, but you really still have to stay focused and really figure out the plays and stuff."

(on his level of anxiousness today) "Well, it definitely was high. After I ate breakfast and went through meetings, it started really flowing."

(on if his Twitter account has had a lot of traffic since getting drafted) "Well, I still really don't know how to use social media as much as I did back in the day, but I got a couple of new followers."

RB Kenny Hilliard

(on being in Houston and how things are going) "It's going great, man. I'm grateful for the opportunity here. It's just been great so far. I've just been putting in the work with these guys and just getting better."

(on staying close to Louisiana and having former college teammate RB Alfred Blue on the team) "It helps a lot. When I got to LSU, he was kind of my mentor. He helped me out through LSU and now, since I'm here, he is going to try to steer me the way here, too."

(on his goal for the weekend practices) "Just coming in and just competing and learning the playbook. Just taking it day by day."

(on if it's like going back to school) "Kind of. There's a time schedule right now. Us as rookies just got to be able to manage all that and just be on time with everything."

(on if the coaches talked to them about being a professional) "Oh yeah, most definitely. We are pros now, so they expect us to be on time and handle ourselves accordingly."

(on dealing with the heat and Houston weather) "Mainly just stay hydrated. When you get a chance, just make sure you put the fluids in your body like Gatorade and water. Try to do that before you go to sleep and hopefully you'll be fine."

(on if splitting carries at LSU will help him in the NFL) "Yes sir. I had my great share at LSU, but now since I'm a Houston Texan, I'm just so blessed and fortunate to be here. I'm happy for the opportunity I have here."

(on if it's like the first day of school) "I mean, kind of. We don't have school, so that's a blessing. I'm glad I graduated from that. Just coming in and doing everything you're supposed to do, yeah it kind of feels like school."

(on what advice RB Alfred Blue has given him) "Just come in and start fast and have fun mainly. Just learn the system and just go out there and do what I do."

(on being back to teammates with RB Alfred Blue) "I never expected that, but it's a blessing for me to be back with Alfred."

(on playing special teams) "I do. I played a little bit of special teams in college, but I kind of backed up. I did play a little bit of special teams, so I am aware of how to play special teams."

(on the biggest adjustment) "Just coming in and learning the system, learning from the veterans and watch those guys. Learn how to be a pro."

(on what it means to be a pro) "Just watching those guys practice, how they practice, how they play, and how they all interact with the guys on the team. For us to come in and learn that and learn what's the role here and pick it up."

(on an NFL running back he looks up to) "I'm a fan of a lot of guys. I'm here with the Texans, so Arian (Foster) is the most current as my favorite running back right now, so I'm going to take it all in and learn from him. See how I can be a pro by learning from him."

(on if he thought he would get drafted) "I'm blessed for the opportunity, man. I really didn't know how the draft was going to shake out, but I'm happy to be a Texan and it's time to get ready."

CB Kevin Johnson

(on getting his NFL career started this weekend) "Yeah, I'm excited, man. To finally be here now that the whole draft process is over, now we can finally just play football."

(on what he hopes to prove this weekend) "I just want to be coachable. I'm excited to come out here and work hard. I'm just trying to fit in where I fit in."

(on if there are any nerves) "For sure. There's definitely nerves. It's your first time playing in the NFL, so definitely anxious and just excited."

(on the history of football in Texas) "Definitely excited to see what it's all about. I've never been to Texas until now, so I'm really excited to be here."

(on if he has spoken to WR DeAndre Hopkins) "No, I haven't seen him yet."

(on what he hopes to accomplish this weekend) "Just to get better. Get to know the teammates and the coaches, just try to work hard out here."

(on not trying to do too much early on) "Oh yeah, I'm just trying to come in here, work hard, be coachable, and have fun."

(on the Houston weather) "Well, it's my first time being out here, so we'll find out."

(on what it means to 'be a pro') "Exactly what he (Head Coach Bill O'Brien) said. Just come in here, getting under the veterans and the coaches, and learning and working."

(on his Twitter followers going up after getting drafted) "I did notice. It was pretty cool."

(on what's most important for him to focus on early) "I think it's all beneficial. Going out on the field, it's very important as far as the classroom and learning, so every single thing we're doing out here I'm trying to take it all in stride and do the best I can."

(on if it feels like going back to school) "It's football, so I'm having fun."

(on his childhood idol as a football player) "I would probably have to say Mike Vick because when I was younger I played a little quarterback and he was cool back then."

ILB Benardrick McKinney

(on being a Houston Texan) "It's an honor being here. I'm just ready to get out there."

(on if he is looking forward to playing under Defensive Coordinator Romeo Crennel) "Yeah, I'm definitely ready for that aspect of the game, but I'm just trying to do good and do good for the team."

(on his strengths as a player) "Definitely just tackling."

(on what today's been like) "I'm just here to try to learn from all the older guys and just give back to the team, help out with the team, and just learn."

(on if it feels like the first day of school) "Not really. I'm just playing the game I love."

(on if the SEC got him ready for the NFL pressure) "Yeah, it has playing ball, but that's in the past. Like I said, I'm just trying to make a big impression and make the team."

(on if he is just trying to be the best teammate) "Yeah, most definitely."

(on what he hopes to get out of the next two days) "Just help the team out and just progress as a teammate and just help out wherever I can do. Just try to get better as a player and as a teammate."

(on if he has adjusted to the Houston weather) "Not really. It felt pretty good to me today."

(on his familiarity with ILB Brian Cushing and if he has watched him play) "Not really, but I know he's a great player. I know he's going to teach me all the things he knows, so I'm just going to learn from him."

(on how his size will benefit him) "Just being physical, being long, being fast, it's going to help me a lot at the next level but the coaches are going to teach me to be a better player."

(on his childhood idol as a football player) "I really didn't have one, to be honest. I really didn't. I played basketball."

WR Jaelen Strong

(on his wrist injury from college and how it feels) "I'm perfectly fine. I feel like I'm just ready here in camp, trying to focus, and learn the playbook."

(on his ability to win 50/50 jump balls) "I do, I feel like it's a good strength for me and helps me. We'll just see how it translates here in the NFL."

(on what it's like to be in the NFL) "Just blessed, just very blessed. I'm just glad Coach Bill O'Brien and Rick Smith took an opportunity or a chance on me."

(on what he hopes to learn this weekend) "Just definitely soaking up all the information we can and again just blessed for the opportunity."

(on what the welcome has been like) "I mean, pretty much same answer. I'm just blessed to be here. Seeing J.J. Watt walk around, it's crazy to me just being in the same presence."

(on if there are any players that his game resembles) "I take pieces of a lot of great players, on the field and off the field activities. Right now, it's just focusing on being a Houston Texan and trying to do everything I can to help our team win."

(on what athlete he looked up to growing up) "Michael Jordan."

(on if he was familiar with the offense before coming here) "No, I didn't. I didn't."

(on if he has started to study the offense) "That's what we're working on right now. Coaches are getting us up to speed and just got to study and stay focused."

(on if he likes Tex-Mex or barbeque more) "Barbeque."

DE Paul Quessenberry

(on what it means to get drafted in the NFL) "It means a lot. I'm going to take advantage of the opportunity that Coach (Bill) O'Brien and the rest of the staff has given me, especially with my brother being here

obviously. It means that much more to me because Houston has been such a special place for him. I couldn't imagine being in a better place."

(on what advice OT David Quessenberry has given him) "Not really much. Just come in here and do what you do. Be a good teammate, play with a lot of effort, and do everything to the best of your ability."

(on how David Quessenberry's experience has motivated him) "It's definitely motivated me a lot. A lot of times people take a lot of opportunities in life for granted, especially as football players. You have all these cool opportunities and you get to travel and do a lot. When that's taken from you so suddenly at such a high point in your life, you kind of realize what's important and that's just being here given this opportunity and making the most out of it. Not getting lost in the day to day."

(on what he hopes to accomplish this weekend) "I just want to prove to these guys and this organization that I can be a good teammate and be a good player."

(on bonding with the fellow rookies) "Yeah, it's definitely a good experience to be with these rookies. We got a good group of guys, solid teammates. It's a good experience."

(on being in an NFL locker room) "Yeah, it's definitely an eye opener, but a good opportunity none the less. I couldn't be more thankful to be here in Houston."