

Houston Texans Transcripts

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

(Transcribed by Omar Majzoub)

HARD KNOCKS PRESS CONFERENCE

Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Robert C. McNair

Executive Vice President of Football Operations and General Manager Rick Smith

NFL Films Supervising Producer Ken Rodgers

NFL Films Director Matt Dissinger

PLAYER AVAILABILITY

T Duane Brown

ILB Brian Cushing

QB Brian Hoyer

CB Kareem Jackson

C Ben Jones

QB Ryan Mallett

NT Louis Nix III

G Xavier Su'a-Filo

DE J.J. Watt

Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Robert C. McNair

(opening statement) "Well, we're delighted that NFL Films and HBO are going to be with us for training camp. It's a great opportunity to showcase our team. We in Houston know our team. We know our players. We know our coaches. We love them. We support them. We have great fun with it, but there are a lot of people around the country who aren't familiar with us. So this is an opportunity for them to get to know what a great team and great organization we have. We're delighted to have y'all with us, Ken (Rodgers)."

NFL Films Supervising Producer Ken Rodgers

(opening statement) "Thank you Mr. McNair and Mr. Smith for having us. I say 'us' because Matt (Dissinger) and I really represent two companies up here today. Like most people in the room, HBO Sports President Ken Hershman's travel plans were impacted by the weather here in Houston, so he couldn't be here today. The thoughts of both companies and I know the Texans are with all those in the Houston area affected by the floods. I'd also like to thank Jamey Rootes, Kevin Cooper and his staff with a special thanks to Amy Palcic who, while driving myself and Matt back from dinner the other night, let us crash in her car until 2 a.m. while we were trapped by the floods. We appreciate that. It was a 'Welcome to Houston' moment for us. Of course, deepest thanks to coach (Bill) O'Brien for allowing us unprecedented access into the practice fields, offices, even homes of himself, the staff, and his team. Producing this show is something that HBO and NFL Films never take for granted and we're extremely grateful for that opportunity. A lot of people ask, 'Do I have to have HBO to watch Hard Knocks?' The answer to the question is yes, but there's multiple ways to see the show. Certainly, we would love for everyone to tune in for the premieres starting Tuesday night, August 11th at 9 p.m. central. You can also watch On Demand on HBO On Demand or on your mobile device on HBO GO. For the first time this year, you can watch on HBO NOW, which is a streaming On Demand service that doesn't require a cable subscription. There's many ways to watch, we hope everybody will. This will be the 10th year that NFL Films has partnered with HBO on Hard Knocks. It's the first time we've featured a team in this division, but we're far from strangers to Houston. NFL Films has a long tradition and appreciation for the city, its history of professional football, and for the fans of the region. Starting from the championship days pre-merger, through the 'Luv Ya Blue' era, and starting in 2002 here with the Texans, we love this city, we love this franchise and we're really looking forward to showing all of those things to the rest of the country. In fact, I believe Steve Sabol and Mr. McNair discussed Hard Knocks as long as seven or eight years ago, so this has been a long time coming. On behalf of NFL Films and HBO, we're again thrilled to be here. Thank you for having us."

Robert C. McNair

(on how much he had to convince Head Coach Bill O'Brien to do Hard Knocks) "Well, coach has been involved when he was at Penn State. He had a lot of filming activity, so he's no stranger to this. The main thing that we're going to emphasize is this is something that is not going to be a distraction for us. We're going to go ahead and carry out our duties as we normally would. I think after a day or two everybody will be used to having the people around and it will be practice and business as usual. I think that it will give everybody in the country an opportunity to get to know our coach better. He's a great coach, great personality, and I think people will see that."

Executive Vice President of Football Operations and General Manager Rick Smith

(on his comfort level with the Hard Knocks access) "We're very comfortable. We've got, as was mentioned, NFL Films and HBO Sports, we trust them implicitly to handle our preparation. You go to training camp for two primary reasons, to get your football team ready for the season and to figure out who the best 53 men are to accomplish your goals. We feel like that by no stretch of the imagination is this going to prevent us from doing that. We feel very comfortable. We trust them. It's a great partnership. They've put a good product out before so, from that standpoint, just as Bob (McNair) said, we will operate and function just like we always do. There is a part of the editing process that we are a part of, but we trust them to make sure that we're well represented."

Ken Rodgers

(on Hard Knocks having the trust of the team) "I would say the show thrives off that trust. It's something that pre-dates myself, before I was actually even born. The first time NFL Films shot a training camp, we wired coach Vince Lombardi in 1967. That was my former boss, Steve Sabol, who was the cameraman that day. As partners with the teams, we've been shooting training camp every year. Way before Hard Knocks, we had specials on the birth of the Buccaneers, where we followed the Buccaneers for the entire preseason in their inaugural season. Since 2001, we've been doing this show. The trust is there because of the quality programming and the fact that we are interested in documenting truth. We will show what is happening here at training camp. There's no preconceived notions going in of 'Oh, here's the storyline for this year and the Texans.' If you were to ask 'What's this show going to be about?' I will say whatever the Texans goals are for this preseason. We'll show it honestly. We'll show it fully. I think that's why teams embrace the show and the ones who have been on the show have been extremely happy with the portrayal because it's the truth. It's exactly how it happened at camp."

Robert C. McNair

(on what Head Coach Bill O'Brien said about being on Hard Knocks) "Well, we had discussions about it. The main thing is that we're not going to be doing anything that's going to give any of our opponents a competitive advantage and NFL Films understands that. Really that's not what they're trying to represent and present, so that was the main focus of any discussion. I think we're all comfortable with it."

(on his initial reaction to the idea) "Well, was this the best time for us to be doing this? Because we've considered it at other times. I think it is a good time for us. I think our franchise is ready to make a big move. We feel like we have a good team, but I think we're going to be a better team this year than we were last year. We just want to keep climbing and keep improving. I think it's an interesting story for people around the country to see what's happening with our franchise."

(on showing training camp when profanity is used) "Maybe we'll watch our language better, who knows? I think that training camp is an emotional time. It's hard work. You got a lot of players out there, people competing for a job for their livelihood. There's an awful lot of energy, an awful lot of activity. People are going to show their emotions, so that will be part of it. We'll try to be as clean as we possibly can."

Ken Rodgers

(on showing training camp when profanity is used) "I'll also note that the premiere of each episode airs in primetime, as does the replay on Wednesday nights. But there are many re-airs during the day that are censored versions for those young fans who want to watch this team. They can watch during non-primetime hours and see a cleaner version of the same show."

(on if he censors or bleeps profanity) “We actually do both. When we can, we pull out the words completely. If the mouths are moving, we will bleep. Sometimes there’s even song lyrics that we want to make more family-friendly, so HBO is very committed to having both those audiences, as is the NFL. This is the one time of year where we present a documentary this real and this in-depth. This isn’t a game recap. This is full coverage of five weeks of camp. The league has been very great in supporting this sort of treatment, but we want to make sure there are options available for our younger fans.”

NFL Films Director Matt Dissinger

(on what storylines there will be with the Texans) “There’s, of course, storylines, but we’ve learned to go in without preconceived notions as I said. We’ll come up with 25 or so storylines going into camp that we think are storylines. A lot of them will be called from those in the room here. We’ll certainly be reading and following everyone. We’ll be here on the ground researching as well. Once we get to camp, we sort of let those storylines play out or not play out. The best part of the show are often the storylines that come out of nowhere and that we couldn’t have seen coming. A young, bowling ball fullback nicknamed ‘The Terminator’ in New York wasn’t somebody on our list. That same year, a real quiet kid named Danny Woodhead was on the show. We didn’t target him as a star of the show going in and he became an important player for the Patriots and coach (Bill) O’Brien later that year when he left the Jets. I think it would be very easy to say, ‘Here are the stars of the team, this is going to be the show.’ That’s really not the case. We follow whatever is happening and that’s often a surprise to us. We really don’t have many preconceived notions going into what episode one will entail. I can tell you that coach O’Brien will appear. I can probably name some other players, but other than that, who knows?”

Rick Smith

(on if the players know and their reaction) “Well, coach (Bill) O’Brien informed the team about this. Their reaction, I would guess without speaking for them. I can’t, I haven’t talked to any of them. But our guys understand that our focus is football and preparing. We had a great OTA start today. They’re out there working extremely hard. They’ve had good sessions up to this point in the offseason program. That’s their focus and I suspect that will remain their focus.”

Robert C. McNair

(on what’s different this year than in years past that made them chose to be on Hard Knocks this season) “Well, I just felt like number one, I think we have a terrific coaching staff. I like them very much. I think that we have a number of players, you know (DE) J.J. (Watt) is almost the face of the league, he’s certainly the face of our franchise, we have a number of interesting stories. We have three good quarterbacks who are going to be competing for a position, we’ve brought in veterans like (NT) Vince Wilfork who would come in and work with some of the younger players and give us a little strengthening in the middle of the line. We’ve got other people in the defensive secondary and some young guys coming along. I just think there are a lot of interesting stories there, fans around the country who will be delighted to see.”

Matt Dissinger

(on techniques and skills used to gain the high quality shots used in Hard Knocks) “What we have on the ground is about five to six crews, two to three people per crew, and those are the main cameras that we have. We also have up to eight robotic cameras that we place in the coaches offices. What eventually happens inevitably in every one of these camps is that we blend into the background, and some point between weeks one and two, inevitably a coach or player will say, ‘Man I don’t even notice you guys are around anymore.’ Once you get to that level of comfort and relaxation and trust, I think that’s when people let their guard down and can’t help but act naturally.”

Ken Rodgers

“Our footprint is actually super small when you think about what’s on the show and how much material is on the show. Matt (Dissinger) and his crew are under 30 people that will be here. It’s out on practice, those five crews of three people each, you’re talking 15 to 16 people at practice, and everyone who’s been at practice knows that’s not much of a footprint. Really has a lot to do with the wiring, we can shoot far away and pick up things that are happening without being in people’s faces. That’s really a credit to our technological staff, our cameramen and our audio technicians. The simple answer is when Matt and

his crew get here, their first goal is to make great television, and their second is to stay out of the way. By staying out of the way, they gain more material from the players and coaches.”

Matt Dissinger

(on when they determine to start and end shooting during the day) “The answer is before anyone gets here and after everyone leaves. That’s one thing that I pride myself on and my crew, is that we put in the hours, we put in the training camp hours. These are, as long days as anyone on the team has, we want to be here longer. That’s how this type of show gets made. If you’re not here all the time, you’re not going to be able to capture the best show. Not all of my crew are going to have to work those hours, I’ll manage it, but we pride ourselves on being here all the time.”

Rick Smith

(on teams who have been on Hard Knocks in the past not having great records) “I will say this, over the years historically, there’s been some concern about competitive advantages that people may have from watching the show and what I will tell you is those concerns have really been mitigated by two things. I think we’re in a different age, access to our players and what we’re doing in practices is just so much increased that I don’t know that they get that much more information. Then secondly, over the years as we’ve talked about this and obviously making the decision on having the invitation to do it this year, the level of trust that’s been developed by us watching the show as well as the conversations that we’ve had with respect to their information and knowledge of what’s competitively a problem and what’s not. Then again, we have a part of the editorial process that if there’s anything that’s there that we think might hurt us from a competitive standpoint, we have the ability to make sure that that gets eliminated.”

Ken Rodgers

(on teams who have been on Hard Knocks in the past not having great records) “I’ll note that we will not take credit for the last five teams to appeared on Hard Knocks that have a better record than the year before they were on Hard Knocks, but we also don’t feel we’re in any way to blame when the team has a rough season. We have so much respect for what it takes to win football games, that if we thought it was a distraction or affected on-the-field performance at all, well the league wouldn’t allow it, the teams wouldn’t allow it, I don’t think we would allow it because we grew up under Steve Sabol and his respect for the teams and what the sport means. Every play of every game has more importance than whether or not you appear on Hard Knocks when it comes to your win and loss record. It’s a great television show and it’s for the fans. As I said, our second goal next to making great television is to stay out of the way.”

(on if coming to Houston last year to cover the Atlanta Falcons pushed their decision to choose the Texans this year) “I think one thing we saw was not necessarily the players or team because we were covering the Falcons, while the Texans were really great in welcoming us to camp, they knew that we were only covering the Falcons. So we didn’t have a chance to put microphones on any Texans and that’s not something we really did a lot of reconnaissance of, but we did see a great fan base and the practices here being something that generated a lot of excitement locally, and that’s something we look for strongly is a fan base that’s interested in camp because the energy at camp is really great when fans are there. You can feel it through the microphones and cameras, you can feel the players are amped up when the fans are out there, and the fans just bring a great level. We’ve rarely seen a camp as exciting as the one when we came here last year. Although we had been thinking about the Texans for quite a while as a possibility on the show, our couple days here last year really helped cement the fact that this is a great city and franchise to cover.”

(on if they will be able to show behind-the-scenes access to injuries that happen) “If it doesn’t affect competitive balance. Injuries are part of camp, certainly there are some injuries that are more sensitive than others, we’ve had plenty of tough, season-ending injuries on the show. I think that’s something that we don’t expect access to be denied but we certainly don’t want to affect any competitive balance whether it’s in the preseason or in the regular season. If there’s a knee injury and it’s public, we’re not going to show what the time table is if it’s not public because we feel that might affect preparation for week one, two, three or four, that’s a sensitive area and something we’re well aware of at NFL Films to keep our eye on.”

Robert C. McNair

(on what he hopes people around the country take away about the Texans during Hard Knocks) “Well first of all, the last year has not been the best year for public relations for the NFL. Our team has not had the kind of problems that existed with many teams. I think it’s a wonderful opportunity for the rest of the country to see that we’ve got a first-class group of players and coaches and this is the way we would like to see the game presented and these are the type of participants in the game. I think it’s something that can be very positive, not just for us but for the league. I’m quite proud of our players and the way they do represent us.”

Ken Rodgers

(on what the process for picking Hard Knocks is like) “We don’t discuss the selection process in detail, but I can say as we do every year that we discuss the show with several teams. The Texans were at the very top of the list of teams we were interested in so we’re thrilled to have them. I think nationally there’s going to be a lot of interest in what’s going on here in Houston. Certainly we’ve recognized that nationally there’s interest in this team in the last year. I will say though that the selection process sort of has this reputation of kind of being cloak and dagger, and you have to understand, NFL Films works with the teams, all 32 clubs, year-round. So this isn’t like asking someone out on a first date, we’re working with these teams year-round. We’ve mic’d coach (Bill) O’Brien multiple times, we spent the season with him in 2009 when he was part of the staff of the New England Patriots when we did a ‘Football Life’ on Bill Belichick and spent the entire season with the Patriots coaching staff. We’ve been in the draft room with Mr. Smith, we’ve shot Mr. McNair in the owner’s booth. There’s multiple projects. We produce 1,000 hours a year of programming. This was like talking to a friend about the show. We consider the Texans friends and this wasn’t some big ask, it was really just one of many conversations that we have about our various programming throughout the year.”

(on if the Texans coaches get to see what goes on the air beforehand) “Rick (Smith) alluded to it, there is a process. Tuesday mornings, the morning of air, the Texans can watch to head off any competitive balance issues that we missed. That does happen. There are sometimes phrases or single words in let’s say an action montage where it’s just a bunch of rapid cuts of yelling and screaming and hitting and punching sleds, and there might be one word in there and it might be ‘dogpile’, and we don’t know what that is in there, and the coach will say ‘Hey, that’s one of our audible calls. Can you take that out?’ and we’ll do so. Again, our role isn’t to help other teams for competitive balance, our goal is a character-driven show that really X’s and O’s haven’t been a big part of this show because the HBO audience is watching things like ‘Game of Thrones’ and they’re looking for characters, they’re looking for stories, they’re not really looking for the X’s and O’s breakdowns that you can find on other networks.”

Rick Smith

(on if the Texans will have the same number of public training camp practices as in previous years) “We are in the process of finalizing all of those dates. We are still looking at exactly how we’re going to organize practice, but we would have as many as we’ve had, it would be just as we’ve done it in the past. We’ll have those open practices like we’ve done in the past.”

Ken Rodgers

(on if the NFL Films staff will be following the team to New Orleans for the preseason scrimmage) “We will be following the team. New Orleans and the Saints won’t be part of the story line, we’ll be following just as we followed the Falcons here last year, we’ll be following the team to their home and away games, so that’ll be part of the story is their trip to New Orleans. But again, it’s not, not that that team has anything to do with Hard Knocks, we’ll be following the Texans as they travel, not the team on the other side of the line of scrimmage.”

Rick Smith

(on general managers on previous Hard Knocks shows having a pretty significant role especially when cutting players and if he plans to embrace that) “I don’t know that I’m embracing that, this is an emotional time during, it just depends on what the conversation is. If we’ve got an extension or something like that, I’ll be happy. It is an emotional time, it’s a tough time, those conversations are not taken lightly and so again, part of the reason why this is such a successful show is it’s an organic show and it shows the

reality of pro football. There are times when that's not a fun part of the experience. I think our football team will be ourselves and I think that's all we're being asked to do. I think we represent, we handle those situations as sensitively as we can and as professionally as we can and we'll continue to do that."

T Duane Brown

(on Hard Knocks) "I think it could be a good opportunity for us. It will be just business as usual. We have big plans and big expectations for each other this season. America will just get a chance to see what goes on."

(on if he has been coached about Hard Knocks) "No, I can't say that. I think we're all professionals first and foremost. We know what's important here and that's to win. We're going about it business as usual, doing what needs to be done to do our jobs on a daily basis and to win football games. Just try to ignore the cameras as much as possible I think. That's our biggest point."

(on the Houston flooding) "That was devastating. Thoughts and prayers to everyone who lost their lives and families and the people that are still recovering from the devastation that happened throughout the city."

(on not having C Chris Myers) "Chris is my guy. He's been a great player for us, a great leader for us for eight or seven years here. It's different. We have a lot of guys that have played a lot of football. Ben Jones is someone who is really smart. He's filling that center role pretty well so far. Xavier (Su'a-Filo) is looking to make a big jump in his second year. He's learned a lot on the go. He's got the offense down pretty good this year. I think use this time right here to just rebuild our chemistry as much as possible. I think today was a great start for that."

(on if he is excited about OTAs getting underway) "Absolutely. It was kind of like the first day of school yesterday, kind of like a snow day. Today to be able to come in here and see everybody again, get the ball rolling, we're all excited. We have big expectations for each other this year. Today was a great first step in that direction."

ILB Brian Cushing

(on being on Hard Knocks) "It'll be interesting. It'll give us some good publicity and a good chance to show what kind of organization we are. Most importantly, we've got to get to work and not make it a distraction."

(on keeping football as the main focus) "Oh that'll be the main focus. I mean that's why we're here and that's what we get paid to do. The entertainment will come with whatever we're doing but we'll focus mostly on taking care of what we have to, and let them edit whatever they want to edit, but we're going to be ourselves."

(on the first day of OTAs) "Yep, first day of OTAs and I felt good, everything was good. It's nice to participate more than I have in about two or three years. This is my first OTAs in a while so I'm just really looking forward to having a really good offseason and I just think from the whole team's perspective we look pretty good."

(on if he was antsy to get back on the field) "Yes and no, I'm just excited to be back. I wouldn't say antsy but just excited to be playing again and be back out there with the guys."

(on what his expectations are going into the season) "I think we're just expecting to take it day by day, kind of short-term goals and looking to improve. Like I said, day by day, there's not too much we can look ahead to right now and then obviously we're going to have a break again after OTAs again before we get back into camp. So just to kind of do the best we can right now."

(on if he was affected by the floods at all) "No, not really. Not as bad as some of the other people were. We're fortunate, so it was pretty severe."

(on Founder, Chairman and CEO Robert McNair saying he expects the team to be better this year than last) "Well I mean that's the goal every year, you're looking to improve upon every single year and I think our second year really in the scheme with the coaches now that we've had, I think guys are a lot more comfortable in the building and overall with everything we're doing. So like I said just looking to build upon what we did last year and definitely improve."

(on how he's feeling health-wise) "Best in a while, best in a while. I had a really good offseason. I'm just healing up and getting back where I need to. I feel like I'm best physically where I have been in a long time. I'm just excited to see what comes from that."

(on playing behind DE J.J. Watt and NT Vince Wilfork and what kind of opportunities that opens up for him) "We'll see. I mean watching Vince up in New England, he did a lot for the New England linebackers and a lot for the guys. I think obviously playing behind J.J. is going to take a lot of the attention off myself, but I think there's a lot of guys in this defense that really complement each other. I think we play really good complementary defense and you can't really focus on one guy because there's really kind of an impact player at every single level."

(on what his early reaction has been on rookie LB Benardrick McKinney) "Big, strong kid, smart kid, came in and learned right away. Just seeing where he was after the rookie minicamp he was doing really well. That's the kind of people we want coming here, and want to play football, and want to learn, and want to be the best they can, and want to contribute, and help this team as best they can."

(on if LB Benardrick McKinney has been coming to him for advice) "We've talked a little bit here and there. He has, but a lot of guys have. Not just specifically him, but a lot of guys have and kind of vice versa you just kind of reach out to them when you think they might need something too. I've been in this situation too. I've been a rookie and I was there one day, so I know what it's like to be there right now and kind of unsure of the system and what you're doing. Anything I can do to help them and anything they ask, everyone's willing to help."

(on if having S Rahim Moore in the backfield this season opens up some things the defense can do up front) "I think so, like I said, but that's something that we're going to have to wait and see until we really start playing football. I've only really had one practice with him so far but from what I know what he's capable of doing, what he can do, I think it definitely will."

(on if he's spoken to OLB Jadeveon Clowney and how his health situation is) "Yep, he's my locker mate and I see him every single day so we talk a good amount. I think he'll be fine. He's just got a lot of work ahead of him, he knows that, he's kind of just putting his head down right now and grinding through it."

QB Brian Hoyer

(on the first day of OTAs with the Texans) "It was awesome. Obviously with the storms, we got delayed a day. I was really just itching to get out there and practice with my new teammates. It's good to get back out and play actual football instead of doing the drills, coaching sessions, and all that stuff. To get out there and actually run some plays against the defense, it was a lot of fun."

(on what stood out about today) "Just the tempo. You can tell we've put a lot of hard work in. Guys were prepared. There weren't a lot of mental mistakes. Guys came ready to go. It was exciting. We got after it a little bit."

(on the Texans playbook) "It's a lot similar to what I did in New England. There's new things. I felt real comfortable out there and always just trying to get better. Each day you got to learn something new, how to react, what the defense is doing. There's a lot going on, but I think for a first day with a new team and new teammates, I thought it went well. Hopefully, you just build upon that and keep getting better."

(on if he was nervous today with a new team) "Yeah, I was talking to Tom Savage about it this morning. There's a little bit of anxiousness because you can go out and do coach drills and routes on air all day. But once you throw a defense out there with new guys and a new system, you just want to know how everything

is going to go and how you react to things. I thought, as far as that standpoint of going out and playing against our defense, reacting, and things like that, I thought it went really well.”

(on the QB competition getting national media attention) “I’ve been through it before, so I’m not going to let it affect me. I’ll just be myself and really focus on the things that I can control.”

(on what he has seen from QB Tom Savage) “I’ve been a second-year guy in this system. It really asks a lot of the quarterback. I think he’s made, from what I’ve seen on the cut ups of film from last year to where he is now, to having conversations with him, his knowledge of the offense has gotten so much better. He even said to me today that he feels light years ahead of where he was last year. When you come into this system as a rookie, a lot is thrown at you and you’re just swimming. The best thing you can do is try to just hang on, survive, and learn. I think an offseason will let it soak in a little bit. I think he’s done a great job of improving from year one to where he is at right now. Obviously, in this system as a quarterback, you always have to be learning and evolving because it’s such a quarterback-heavy related with the pressure on you, Mike points, reads, and everything. I think he’s done a great job where he’s at in his second year.”

(on the group of receivers) “It’s been awesome. Obviously, (DeAndre) Hopkins isn’t out there, which you can definitely tell. But with the new guys like Nate (Washington) and Cecil (Shorts III), they’ve done a great job. Then you look at guys like EZ (Nwachukwu). The guy who has really stood out to me as a rookie has been Keith Mumphery. He was out there making some plays for us today. We definitely have a lot of playmakers out there, so you just try to go through the reads and get it to the open guy.”

(on what he learned about quarterback competitions from his time in Cleveland) “You just kind of focus on what you have to do. Ignore all the outside noise and the media coverage. Really just focus on yourself and what you need to do to be the best quarterback for that team. It’s something that I’ve dealt with before. It obviously prepared me for what I’m going to have to go through now.”

(on Hard Knocks) “It’s great for fans to see the type of organization we are and the type of team that we have. I’ve been on five teams. I can say without question that this is one of the hardest-working teams I’ve been on. Guys are staying after doing extra on their own. No one is asking them to do that. We have a lot of good leaders on this team. I think we’ll be able to showcase that. As far as me, I think you try to go about your business and do what you would normally do. Try to pretend the cameras aren’t there. For me, it kind of falls in the category of control what you can. We can’t control, that’s going to be in here. All we can do is kind of show the league and really the country what this team is all about.”

(on the tight ends) “It’s been great. I think everybody on offense that I’ve got a chance to work with, I’m really excited about. You talk about the tight end position, you kind of got three or four guys that are a little bit different skill set. You got some guys who can stretch the field, guys who are able to do both, and guys that are quicker than they are. Some other guys can really create area in space. Receivers, tight ends, running backs, we have some really great running backs who can run the ball, but also get open in coverage when they are called upon. It’s been great. Like I said, we’ve put a lot of hard work in so to get out there today and actually practice it against a defense was a lot of fun. You really get to see that work pay off.”

(on his primary goal for OTAs) “For me, getting back into the system with new guys. Try to get better every day as far as communication, being a leader out there. Obviously at quarterback, that’s kind of a big part of the job. Getting everybody lined up. Alignment, those type of things are huge at this time. You take those 12 or 13 practices and really focus on those. Try to eliminate those pre-snap mistakes where it’s alignment, false starts, and those types of things. The quarterback is responsible for a lot of that. I think also building a lot of repetition with these guys receivers-wise, so you know who you’re throwing to and you know what receivers are good at in cuts, out cuts, whatever. This is really the time to learn your personnel and teammates then you regroup after this and you’re heading into training camp with all those things kind of resolved. Now you’re going towards game planning for defenses and things like that.”

CB Kareem Jackson

(on Hard Knocks) “I’m a fan of watching it. Not really sure how it’s going to be once the cameras and stuff run. At the end of the day, it’s all about us getting better in training camp. After a couple days, I’m sure we

won't even notice it, especially a week or two into camp. When it gets into the dog days of camp, I'm sure the camera won't bother us. Going into camp, our only focus is to get better and get ready for the season. We have a pretty tough schedule coming up. For us, we just want to get better."

(on becoming more of a leader) "For me, I definitely want to come out and be a leader. Lead by example and be vocal, especially helping the young guys. Being the way that my career kind of played out when I was younger, some of the things that I went through. I could definitely help these guys and keep away some of the bad situations on the field. Whether it's technique or talking through routes or personnel, whatever the case maybe. I definitely want to help them in every way I can."

(on CB Kevin Johnson's ability to recognize routes) "It means a lot. Once you get to where you can recognize routes, you can take a little bit more risk out there and make a lot more plays. He's one of the best at doing that coming out of college. If he can carry that over to now, he can recognize routes and personnel and all those things, he'll definitely make a lot of plays."

C Ben Jones

(on what his mindset is about being able to transition with his position) "Right now it's just the offseason and starting back with OTAs, you're out there trying to get better every day. Guard, center, whatever they ask, I'm just going to go out there every day and try to get better at something."

(on how he feels about potentially being a starting center in the NFL) "I know if they want me to play center I will be prepared and that's why we have a great coaching staff. Wherever they feel me most comfortable, I'll step right in and do whatever they ask."

(on what he's seen from G Xavier Su'a-Filo) "X is a good player. He works really hard, he has a bright future and hey, he's going to keep on grinding and look forward to seeing how he progresses."

(on his thoughts on the quarterbacks competing for the starting spot) "Doesn't matter at all. Whoever is back there, we're happy to work with. We've got a lot of great quarterbacks, we've got (Tom) Savage, you've got (Brian) Hoyer, and you've got (Ryan) Mallett, so whoever is in there we're very confident, all of them have been around this system before. We've got great leaders on this team."

(on stepping into a leadership role with the absence of C Chris Myers) "Definitely, you come out there and you want to have a good first day, just no mistakes and today I worked at center and guard so whenever I was in there at center I just made the guard and made sure everything ran crisp. We've got a lot of great leaders on this team. Just talking about the o-line, you've got Duane Brown, he's been there for the long haul, I think he's one of the most tenured veterans with the Texans, and he's a heck of a leader we've got. We definitely rely on him. He's our voice on the offensive line."

(on seeing QB Ryan Mallett go through a whole practice with them) "Definitely. I don't know how much we see of the quarterbacks, we just handle our job up front and whoever's back there, we hope they complete it."

(on his thoughts on being on Hard Knocks) "Really don't, you can't even tell it's in there because you see practice getting videoed every day, you have the media out there, so you probably won't even tell the difference. Just go out there and execute that day and try to get better every day."

(on if he thinks Hard Knocks will be a distraction) "Not at all, you probably won't even know they're in the room. We film practice every day, the media is out there every day so I don't think anything will change."

(on if he's ready to eat cockroaches or do things like that on the show) "I'm just getting ready and whatever I can do to make the team better, I'm there for it."

(on what it is he wants to avoid) "Just no spotlight on me, I'm just trying to get better every day and hey, putting the team first and ready for a great year."

QB Ryan Mallett

(on how it felt to be back) "It's just fun to be out there with the guys. It's back to work, getting ready for the season. We're starting to form a foundation now, so it was just fun to be back out there."

(on if his adrenaline was pumping) "I was ready to go. I was ready to go today."

(on his level of confidence and having a little swag) "Just a little bit? Come on, I've never lacked for confidence, per se. I felt good out there. I felt in control at the line and with the guys."

(on his chemistry with the receivers) "Yeah, with the group I was working with today. We had a pretty good day. It's the first day. We'll get better tomorrow."

(on the new wide receivers) "Coming in as a rookie, it's hard. We got to get them in shape and get them to be able to go 30 to 40 plays right now being OTAs. We got a little bit of work to do."

(on how the coaches split up the wide receivers) "I don't know. I came to work."

(on if he worked with every wide receiver) "No, I had my group for the day."

(on if he is changing wide receiver groups tomorrow) "I hope so. I want to work with everybody."

(on if he was antsy to get out to practice today) "Yeah, it felt like I haven't played ball in a while, so it was good to go out there and go 11-on-11. Not just install plays and run with the offense."

(on if the Houston flooding affected him) "No, I missed them. They weren't on my side of town. I didn't get stuck. I did have a little flood damage to my car. It was kind of deep on the road. I should have parked in the garage."

(on competing with QB Brian Hoyer again) "It's just like old times. We haven't missed a step. He's come in here, he's worked hard, and I'm trying to do the same thing."

(on his mentality during a quarterback competition) "I control what I do. I try to work as hard as I can to be the best I can every day and get better every day, and keeping improving. That's how I look at it."

(on Hard Knocks covering the quarterback competition) "I probably won't even know they're there, honestly. I'll do what they ask me to do, but I'm here to win football games."

(on being with the organization for OTAs) "Being my first OTAs, it's my first one here. It's OTAs though. We put our helmets on and go play football."

NT Louis Nix III

(on how it feels to be back and healthy) "It feels good. I haven't played football in a while, so I'm just happy to be back."

(on if he is in football shape) "I think so, but I always want to do better. I want to get better. I do want to get in better shape. I just want to improve every day."

(on last season) "A lot went on my first year here. It was a lot to deal with. It was difficult to maintain it with all the issues, but I'm happy about now and that's what I'm worried about. I'm just trying to move forward and do the best I can."

(on how much he has learned about himself) "I learned a lot. Sometimes adversity hits and sometimes you just got to deal with it. You got to keep moving forward. I struggled with things coming in, but now I feel a little bit more adjusted to everything. I just want to improve."

(on viewing his rookie season as a redshirt year) "I mean, you can see it as that, but for me it's just another year to get better and do the best I can. Try to make the team, make an effort and go out there to be able to play for the Texans."

(on his elbow injury) "I think my elbow has been fine since Day 1, but yeah, everything's good."

(on NT Vince Wilfork joining the Texans) "I thought it was cool. I grew up a Miami Hurricanes fan. I was committed there for a while in high school, but ended up going to Notre Dame. He was one of my favorite defensive tackles growing up, so it's kind of nice having him. He's one of the best players at that position in the league and probably all-time, he is one of those top guys. It's good, him being a mentor. You look at things and he can teach me a lot of things. It just helps make me a better player."

(on if NT Vince Wilfork has started helping him) "Yeah, you got J.J. Watt and him in the room. Those two guys are the guys. One has a Super Bowl, one is Defensive Player of the Year. You want to emulate that. It helps you want to work hard and be just like them. That really helps, them being in the room."

(on if he had to learn the mentality of being an NFL player) "I mean, just the injuries, I had to deal with those. Sometimes mentally that can affect you. I've really never been hurt in my life, but I got through that hump. Right now, I just want to focus on everything at hand."

(on the hardest part of dealing with injuries) "I guess expectations. Coming in you're supposed to be this guy to possibly help the team win. If you were healthy, maybe you could have made a difference. Me not being able to play, I never felt that. I got over that. A lot of guys encouraged me, family, friends, and everybody. I'm just trying to move forward, do better, and just keep improving."

(on where he spent the offseason) "I was just working out."

(on his relationship with Head Coach Bill O'Brien) "Bill is Bill. He challenges everybody. Sometimes you guys make it more than what it is. Bill is Bill. He wants guys to be better. I take no offense to it. I understand Bill. Bill talks to me. I know he just wants me to be the best player that I can be. He sees potential and I see it in myself. I'm starting to get back in a groove of things. I'm just going to keep trying to do the best I can."

(on if the criticism of you from Head Coach Bill O'Brien has been overblown) "It could be. You got to get a story from somewhere. Yeah, I mean Bill would have said the same thing to my face. I took it as he does want to see me on the field. I haven't been on the field. I haven't really been through a practice because I had a lot of issues. Him saying all that, I took that as Bill just wanting to see me be the best player that I can be. That motivates me, of course, because I do want to be the best player I can be. I like Bill when he challenges me. I love a challenge. I can prove a lot of you guys wrong, too."

(on Defensive Line Coach Paul Pasqualoni) "He's a good coach. Getting the groove of things. He is teaching us a lot of things. Him as a coach, he wants you to be the best. You're the product of him coaching, so I just want to go out and learn everything he teaches me. How the guys like J.J. (Watt), Vince (Wilfork), and the little things they see on the field. I can just take that, run with it, and be a better player."

(on his goal for this year) "My goal this year is to make it through a practice, man. That's my goal."

(on his comfort level in year two) "You're trying to learn. It was almost the same as what I did at Notre Dame. You come in as a rookie, you just want to shut up, sit back and do your job. Now, I just want to do whatever I can to make the team. If I got to yell to call up the huddle, that's what I'll do. I'm just trying to do the little things. That's all."

G Xavier Su'a-Filo

(on what T Duane Brown and G/C Ben Jones have taught him) "A lot of stuff, man. Ben's taught me a lot about the offense, he's real smart as well. Obviously he's a center so he's taught me what he sees and

what to expect. Duane has been playing for a long time, he's a great left tackle and just giving me, biggest thing with Duane is he's giving me advice on how to be a good pro, and how to have a routine every single day and follow it, take care of your body and stuff like that."

(on having a relaxed personality but being able to turn it up on the field) "You've just got to be focused and sharp. I think that when you're in the building you have to be focused, just knowing what's expected and what's going to happen and you know when you leave the building you can go home to your family. They're not going to be the same all the time but it's a little different."

(on how much more advanced he feels this year compared to last) "It feels like night and day to be honest with you. Learning the offense again, reviewing a lot of things, I just feel comfortable out there. There's a little bit of time, always things I can work on to get better, but I just feel a lot more confident out there."

(on if timing is his biggest focus right now) "Yeah, I would say so. Just really trying to understand the concept and scheme of our offense, you know the big picture. That's the biggest thing I'd say, the big picture has helped me to understand my job individually."

(on if his mission was life-changing and career-changing) "No doubt, I came home from a mission playing football again so it was just different. I felt like I was more mature. I was more of a man than when I was 19 to 21. It was definitely life-changing the fact that I saw the bigger picture in life not only with my career but just in general."

(on where he went for his mission) "I stayed in the states. I went to Florida and Alabama and learned how to speak Spanish serving amongst the Hispanic population."

(on his thoughts on Hard Knocks) "You know, it's just an opportunity for us to work hard and kind of go about our business. There are going to be a few more cameras and we're trying to make sure that that's not a distraction, go about our business and do what we're planning on doing this year."

(on if he thinks this team is on Hard Knocks to be showcased to the world) "You know what, I think that's for people to decide but we're not really concerned about it. I think that we know what kind of team we've got and what we want to be and we're not going to relent until we feel like we're heading in the right direction so like I said a few extra cameras isn't going to be a distraction for us and I feel like as a team we're just going about our business."

DE J.J. Watt

(on how he feels about being on Hard Knocks) "You know, it is what it is. We'll use it as an opportunity to show the world what our team is about, the hard-working guys that we have, some of the great personalities that we have on our team. It's happening, so we'll handle it."

(on if he's going to embrace being on Hard Knocks) "I'm going to play football, and that's what I'm going to do. You can't really change who you are. You go out there and you play the game. I think you're a little bit different between the lines than you are off the field, that's what makes great players great, so maybe they'll see a little different side, but that's the way it goes. Maybe I have to choose the vocabulary a little more wisely but that's about all. I'm plenty sure people are sick of seeing my face now so maybe they'll pick somebody else."

(on who some of the other players are with big personalities that might emerge during Hard Knocks) "I think that Ben Jones is going to be a big winner. I think there will be plenty of story lines following him and his escapades and some of the things he eats, some of the things he does, just Ben Jones being Ben Jones, I think that'll be great."

(on if he ever thought about how he would respond to Hard Knocks if it ever came to Houston) "I think it's something that fans of the game love to watch but I don't think you ever really, as a player, I don't know if you ever really advocate for, for your own team because you know what it brings, but I think our team is going to do a great job of avoiding any distractions and I think we're going to use it to bring us together as

a team, we're going to use it to help showcase our team to the world, and I think that when you're put in a situation like this you have to try to use it to your advantage."

(on how the first day of OTAs felt) "It felt great, it feels great to be back on the field, back with the guys, to be working. This is where we feel comfortable. This is where we feel the most at home when we're out there playing the game and working, competing and trying to get better. We feel really good about starting off and I think our team is in a great spot on day one."

(on expectations for this season) "I think we expect to come in every single day and make ourselves better. I think that that's what made us have success last year and I think that's what's going to make us have success this year is just every single day doing what we can to get better. I think that our team has done a really good job from the workout standpoint, from guys staying after to do extra work, to guys watching extra film, taking care of their bodies, I think our team really understands what it takes to be good, and I think it's been a lot of fun to see that put into action and I'm looking forward to seeing that moving forward."

(on how excited he was to get back on the field) "Yeah, I think there's very necessary parts to everything. The offseason is great because you get a chance to get away and clear your head, but I think you get itching to come back. I think it was the perfect amount of time because I was really itching to come back and I think it's been great to be back with the guys and there's nothing better. I realize, like I've always said, we only get so many years to do this, so you try and take advantage. There's nothing better than that camaraderie in that locker room atmosphere, so it's great to be back with the guys."

(on his soccer experience overseas with the Chelsea football club) "Unbelievable. It was such a cool experience. There were two moments that really struck me. So I was sitting at the game watching the game, and there was a little boy behind me, maybe 10 years old, and the whole game he was pointing out his favorite players, literally the entire game, from warm ups started he was like, 'Look daddy, it's John Terry, or, hey look daddy it's Didier Drogba,' and I was just sitting there the whole game and he'd be like, 'Go on John score a goal,' and I was sitting there wondering what it's like for kids in the stands watching our games. It was one of those things where it help me put it into perspective what it's like for fans to watch our games and it kind of reminded me how special this opportunity is that I get to play in this game. It was really, really cool. Then the second one was them lifting the cup, lifting the trophy, seeing all the fans go crazy, knowing they had a parade the next day, that's the feeling we're all chasing."

(on the leg bruise he got from the Buffalo Bills game last year) "That bruise happened in the first half of the Bills game like I said. That was a beautiful block by Fred Jackson, he did what anybody would have done which is exactly what I would have done. I had to make a decision between trying to block the pass or trying to protect myself and I decided to try to block the pass, and Fred made me pay for it which is what he's known to do, so he got me pretty good. I went in at halftime, the staff did a great job of taping me up and making sure I was ready to roll. I obviously had a little bit of success in the second half, so I'll use that as an excuse for why I was slowed down on the interception."

(on how long it took for the bruise to go away) "It took about a month and a half, two months for it to completely go away. It hasn't been any problem at all since, I was just looking through my phone the other day and saw the photo. Obviously I didn't post it during the season because I didn't want people to know too much about it. Now there's no problems, I haven't had a problem with it since maybe a month and a half after it happened."

(on if he was affected by the Houston floods at all) "I did not. I made it in here okay in the morning. I didn't get the text message until I was on my way in so I was already here and got a good workout in yesterday. But obviously, seeing the photos and seeing what happened around the city was incredible, I've never seen anything like that. Our thoughts are with everybody in the city and we sure hope that everybody's doing okay. I was okay, so I'm glad for that."