

Houston Texans Transcripts

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Head Coach Bill O'Brien
OLB Jadeveon Clowney
DE J.J. Watt
NT Vince Wilfork

Head Coach Bill O'Brien

(on DE J.J. Watt's vocal leadership) "Having been around J.J. now for a year and a half, he's really worked hard on his leadership skills. He is certainly one of the leaders of our team, both from obviously his ability as a player but also the way he carries himself in the locker room and the message he has every day. This guy's everything you're looking for in a great player. He's a great leader and obviously a great player."

(on what he wants to accomplish in this week's preseason game) "I'll tell you what, I don't think it's too much different than the first two. I think that we want to get a lot of guys playing time. I think there's still some, at different positions, some tough decisions to be made, and we want to make sure we get guys in there that we really need to look at and give them quality time in the game. I don't see this as being totally different than the other two games. I know the general concept out there is the third preseason game is like a regular season game. For this football team right now, I would say the week is like that. We're trying to get back into a regular season mode where we introduce New Orleans and work on different things that New Orleans does, but when the game comes, it's still a preseason game."

(on how difficult it is to get the roster down to 75 and then to 53) "Very difficult, great question. I mean it's a very difficult thing. It's probably, as a head coach, I think it's one of the hardest parts of your job because you've got guys here that have really, really worked extremely hard. I think you guys probably know, we grind these guys pretty well. We demand a lot of them. They're in the weight room right now lifting. They were yesterday after yesterday's practice. Meetings, walkthroughs, and so every guy in that locker room has really put a lot of time and those decisions are tough. That's what you want, you want a competitive roster, you want to have tough decisions, but it's still not an easy thing to do with guys you really care about, you really enjoy being around."

(on having guys here who've been cut from other teams that challenge for a roster spot) "Yeah, I mean I would say the first thing that I would say to that is that, here in Houston when they arrive here, really all we care about is what they do here. So that's a testament to them that they've come in here and played well and done a lot of good things here, whoever those players are. I pointed out a guy like Mike Mohamed the other day. There's a guy that's been cut multiple times but has come in here and played really well last year. He's having a good camp this year, he's a tough guy, he's a great teammate, there's other examples of those types of guys. At the end of the day, what they did in the past, certainly we use that maybe when we evaluated them to bring them in, but when it comes time to making the roster, it's what have you done here on the practice field and to a certain extent on the game field."

(on the determination of guys like LB Mike Mohamed to work hard and make the roster) "Absolutely. I think that is another really good question. I think one of the things that stood out to me about a lot of these guys, and using Mike as an example is football is a tough deal. Football is a sport where you really get knocked down. There's basically tryouts, you either make it or you don't make it. Sometimes you don't make it. I think most of us, with the exception of a very few, have probably been cut from teams and it's really, at the end of the day, it's really kind of a microcosm of life, like how do you handle it? I've been cut, I've been fired. Okay, well I'm going to go move on to something else in my life or no, I'm going to keep grinding and stay with this dream and keep trying to make a team and maybe the right team for me is the Houston Texans. I think that's the case for a number of these guys and those are our type of guys in a lot of ways. A lot of guys that have been knocked down and picked themselves back up, tough guys. I coached Wes Welker in New England. Wes Welker started out in San Diego, he was cut. Went to Miami, obviously traded to New England. Went through a lot of ups and downs in his career and obviously came to be one of the

best slot receivers really to ever play the game. I've been around a lot of those guys and I really enjoy being around those guys."

(on how NT Louis Nix III is doing) "I'd say he's improved, he's working hard, and I think just from being out there he's improved. I think last year was tough for him because he was injured and he wasn't able to be out there but he's improved."

(on if OLB Jadeveon Clowney is on track to play in the season opener) "Yes."

(on OLB Jadeveon Clowney's progress) "Sure, I think he's doing well. I think we've got a good plan in place for him from a medical perspective putting him into practice. You guys are out there, you see him, a little bit more every day. I think yesterday he had a certain amount of reps, today he had a little bit more. He wants to be in there more which is a great sign. That means he's probably feeling pretty good, and a lot of that has to do with how he's feeling, with how the knee is feeling. I think he feels decent and he's worked hard to get back to this point. We'll just keep inching him forward to be able to go in that first game."

(on G Jeff Adams) "Jeff has come in here, he's a tough guy. He's a smart guy. He's a versatile player. He can play tackle. He can play guard. Obviously, we have him at guard. There are times where, just like all those guys up front, things haven't gone so great, but overall, I think he's been a consistent performer in training camp and he's done a good job. He's been out there every day. He's been out there every day, which is very, very important. You see the improvement in his game every day just because he's out there all the time."

(on G Xavier Su'a-Filo) "I would say hopefully we get Xavier back to playing the last preseason game. He will not play this week. Hopefully, we would get him back to be able to play against Dallas. That's the hope. Now, I wouldn't etch it in stone because, again, he's injured. There's no doubt about the fact that he's injured and he's trying really hard to get back. A great kid, we believe in Xavier and we're hoping he can get back to be able to play in the game against Dallas."

(on WR DeAndre Hopkins saying he watched Patriots film when O'Brien was first hired and if that is common for young players) "I think when you have a young player like that, that knows that he's a talented guy and he has a really good work ethic, it's probably not unusual for that type of player. I wouldn't say that every player does that, but once he saw that I was hired as the head coach, I'm sure he knew that we were going to bring at least a foundation of what we did in New England and some of what I did at Penn State and things like that. He's a smart guy and I'm sure he wanted to be prepared when we got in here. I'm sure he did watch some tape in preparation for when we got here."

(on if WR DeAndre Hopkins' work ethic helped him progress through the learning curve faster) "That's probably more of a question for him but I'm sure it helped that he was able to watch the tape and say, 'Okay, I probably would play this position in this offense or that position in this offense,' and watch how the routes are run. I'm not sure how much he could glean from watching that, but the one thing the guy has is a tremendous work ethic. Every top-notch player that I've been around has that work ethic. Here is a guy—I'll just give you an example: we came back for early training camp and he was back because he had been injured, so he was back and we wanted to make sure he was okay and ready to go. This guy was going 100 miles an hour in early training camp. We only had 50 or so players out there. I thought he did a great job and that just shows his work ethic and that he couldn't wait to be back."

(on if he has seen the rhythm of the offense with QB Brian Hoyer so far as the starter) "We saw rhythm earlier, but it's getting a little bit more reps in there today and yesterday. I think it has helped. We'll go upstairs now and watch the tape and we can see how it is, but I think you could sense a little bit better rhythm with the offensive line and the communication and the receivers and the tight ends and the backs and all those things. I can sense a little bit better rhythm, but we have a ways to go. we have to continue on that road. We can't take a step back. We have to keep moving forward."

(on how LB Benardrick McKinney is doing) "I think he's doing okay. I think he's really working hard to get back. I don't know if he'll be back for the Dallas game, but I know he wants to get back. He's chomping at the bit to be back and I think he's doing better."

OLB Jadeveon Clowney

(on Head Coach Bill O'Brien saying he is on track to play in the season opener) "Oh Bill said that, huh? It's pretty good. I'm working hard, coming out here with the team. We're doing good. I'm feeling good. I just got to keep working and getting better and better every day. Hopefully, leading up to me playing in the first game."

(on if he is surprised by how well he has responded since surgery) "No, I put in the work, so I knew it was going to pay off."

(on what he's liked about the last few days) "Really just not paying attention to my knee. Everything else is just playing football. It's going to come together. I'm not worried about that part. Just out here getting the work in really. Being out there, getting the plays in, learning the defense even more better than I do now. That right there I was looking forward to. Just being out there, running through the defense helped me a lot. Now, it's just being out there."

(on how much he trusts his knee) "I think I've been trusting my knee for a while. I just got to go out there and play. I'm out there now just worried about playing football. I don't worry about my knee. I think it's doing well. I put in the work. I worked hard on it. I trust it now. I'm just here to play football."

(on if he has ever been off the field for this long) "No, never. I told the guys, I'm rusty. I'm just trying to get as many reps as I can. I tell the coach to put me in as much as possible, but they're not trying to really rush me back right now. We're just taking it one day at a time, working me in slow. I'm still trying to get as many reps as I can, so I can be ready for the game."

(on if he's thought about the feeling of taking the field again) "No, I'm just going to be - it'll come. We'll see."

(on if he will be ready to play in every situation when he returns) "I think I'm going to be ready for all situations. Pretty much wherever they put me in or whenever they want me to play, I'll be ready."

(on if he is hoping to play in the preseason) "We're on a schedule right now. We talked about a schedule and we're probably going to stick to that schedule. Practice reps are getting me right. I think practice is going to do it and we're doing good at practice. I'm getting a lot of reps, mental reps, on the field reps, and I think it's going to do good for me when I get into the game."

(on learning the defense after missing his rookie season) "When I learn something about a defense, it really just sticks to me. I learned a lot my first year and it kind of just stuck to me. The second year I learned even more and all of it is just sticking to me. I'm just like playing football now. You'll be a better football player if you know what you got going on and about what the other guys around you are doing. It kind of makes you a better football player."

(on if he is comfortable in the defense now) "Yeah, I'm much more comfortable."

(on what it will be like playing with DE J.J. Watt and NT Vince Wilfork) "Yeah, we just try to control the line of scrimmage. That's what we're here to do. Rush the passer, control the line of scrimmage, and get knock back and make plays."

(on if he tried to do too much during his rookie season) "I think I was just trying to do a lot too as a rookie. I was just trying to prove to the guys that I was worthy of being the number one pick. Just coming in here and assumed to be a leader around here because I was that number one pick. I was trying to do just about everything and trying to do it to my best, but you know, you try to overdue stuff sometimes and overthink some things. You got to slow down and play the game sometimes."

(on how he is going to play this season) “Just have fun. I’m just out there having fun. Learn during practice, learn what to do during practice. Then in the games, I’m just having fun, playing my assignment, and doing my job.”

(on if he is excited to hit people) “Yeah, I’m having fun out there now. I’m hitting everybody, talking junk. That’s what I do. I’m loving it.”

(on what his trash talking is like) “You don’t want none of that right now. You don’t want to hear none of that.”

(on how excited he is to play with the rest of his teammates) “I think we’ve got a talented defense. Just being out there with guys I looked up to. When Vince (Wilfork) came in, I talked to him a lot. I was just like ‘Man, I’m happy to be beside you.’ I watched him play when I was in college and I was like ‘Man, that guy’s big and takes two on him. If I can play beside a guy like that and I can get one block, I know I can beat one guy.’ Playing beside him now, I just get a chance to open up and have a good front.”

(on if he has a goal for the number of sacks he wants this season) “No sack numbers. I’m just here to have fun and make plays.”

DE J.J. Watt

(on the chemistry between him and NT Vince Wilfork) “It’s going well. We’ve had some great practices. I think our defense as a whole is really coming together well. I really enjoy the progress that’s being made on a day-to-day basis and the chemistry that we’re building. Looking forward to every opportunity that we get to continue to grow.”

(on the Texans defense looking good on paper) “We don’t play games on paper. We have to go out there and we have to execute. We have to go out there every single day and be the best that we can be. It’s one thing to look great on paper, it’s another one to go out there and prove it every day. That’s what our defense is working to do.”

(on if he watches Hard Knocks) “I see clips here and there, but no, I don’t sit down and watch the whole thing.”

(on if Hard Knocks helps show what the Texans are all about) “I think it gives the people a chance to see our team. To learn a little bit about our team, our organization, the guys. I think it’s cool that some of the other guys, some of the younger guys especially get a chance to get their stories out there and to be seen. So yeah, it’s good for people to see how hard we work and what goes into a season.”

(on QB Brian Hoyer) “He goes out there every day and he works. He puts in the work. He’s a pro. He comes to work ready to do his business. He’s always talking to guys, always trying to communicate with his players. I can’t speak a whole lot to the offensive side of the ball yet, but he’s going to go out there every day and work.”

(on if he is the only one who uses his bed at the stadium) “No, no. There’s a bunch of guys that use it. I kind of bought it with that idea in mind that a bunch - there’s a bunch of guys that like to take naps, so basically as long as I’m not in it, it’s kind of free to whoever wants to. Then if I show up, it just kind of depends. But no, I’ve seen at least four or five different guys in it from different times. I’ve opened it up to the equipment guys and the trainers, too. Because those guys – I don’t know if you guys know anything about what their hours are like, but those guys work their butts off. They’re here early in the morning, they’re here late at night, so I know there’s a couple equipment guys that are definitely taking advantage of it.”

(on if he makes other players change the sheets) “Well that’s the nice thing, it’s in the equipment room so the laundry room is literally right next door. It’s perfect, clean sheets, the equipment guys are awesome. They do the sheets and everything. I mean, I’m telling you, if you guys can get a bed in your workplace, go for it. I advocate highly for naps in the workplace.”

(on if he is excited about OLB Jadeveon Clowney) “Yeah, obviously I’m excited that he’s out there and he’s practicing. I know they are working him in day-by-day. A little bit more each day. It’s good to see him out there. It’s good to see him working. Like you said, hopefully everything stays on schedule and he’s ready to roll for the first game.”

(on balancing his off-the-field personality with his on-the-field personality) “I think it’s very important to understand that balance. I think it takes time and experience, but I also think it takes understanding both situations. You have to realize that off the field you’re a role model, people look up to you. There’s kids out there who look up to you. On the field, you can’t be successful in this game if you don’t have the mindset that – I’m not going to use the language that I used on the show – but that you’re the baddest dude out there. You better believe when you step on that field that there’s nobody that can block you, whether they can or not. You better believe it because the second that you walk out there without believing that, you’re already beat before you start. It’s a very fine balance, but I think it’s a balance that must be struck because you have to be good off the field, you have to be – live your life the right way, do the right things, but on the field, you better walk out here with that confidence, with that swagger, with that ability to know that nobody is going to stop you.”

(on quickly flipping the switch on the field once his pregame routine with fans is over) “Yeah, that’s why I love my – I love that routine before a game because it kind of shows that two sides all in one. It’s before the game you get to toss the ball with the fans, you get to play catch, you get to have fun, enjoy yourself. Then as soon as it comes time to play the game and you flip that switch and I step across the white line, completely different person. That’s the way that it has to be. I really enjoy the ability to do that once a week on Sundays and then on the practice field as well because it kind of gives you a chance to go out there and let it loose and let it fly. I mean, what other job in the world do you get to go out there and hit human beings for a living? It’s pretty awesome. I enjoy it.”

(on if he always had that on-the-field mentality) “I think it’s one of those things that comes with time. So my rookie year early on, you’re trying to get down the playbook. You’re trying to get everything, but it grows with you over time. It grows and grows and grows. The better you get, the more of it you get. It’s a very fine line. You need to have that confidence. You need to have that belief in yourself, but you also need to understand what you need to work on and how you need to improve to get better. But yeah, when game day comes and it’s time to step on the field, I’ve done all the preparation. I’ve done all the work to have that belief in mind that nobody is going to stop me. I’ve said it before, but it’s the absolute truth. When you step on that field, you know whether or not you worked hard enough to be great on that day. The other guy knows whether or not he worked hard enough to be great on that day. Between us, we both know who worked harder and it’s going to show on the field. That’s what makes the game of football so much fun.”

(on if the 2011 Playoffs were his breakthrough moment in the NFL) “It was that season. It was earlier in that season. Early in the season I wasn’t very good my rookie year. I was pretty poor as a football player. The thing I was doing was I was trying to do everything perfect. I was trying to take every step perfect. I was trying to place my hands perfect. I was trying to do everything exactly how the playbook said I should do it. When in reality, sometimes you have to go out there and let your instincts take over. Let yourself play football. There was a point in that season where I just kind of came in one day and said, ‘You know what? Screw it. I’m just going to play football the way I know how to play football.’ I’m going to make mistakes and that’s fine, but I’m going to go out here and I’m going to play the game the way that I feel like it should be played and the way that I’m proud of playing it. From there on, it just kind of grew into what it is today. I still make mistakes to this day. I’m always going to make mistakes. It’s just minimizing those mistakes and making sure that you try and take calculated risks.”

(on being able to read offensive formations and understanding each player’s role) “Absolutely. It’s a huge part of being a defensive player is understanding everything that’s going on because you can gather so much information by looking at the big picture and then just continuing to narrow it down. There’s many different tactics, many of which I’m not going to tell you, but there’s a lot of different things that go into every single play before it happens. You have to make all these decisions very, very quickly. In that three or four seconds while you’re walking up to the line and they’re walking up to the line, you’re gathering information.

You're processing it all and figuring out what could possibly happen. Then you're going out there and you're playing."

NT Vince Wilfork

(on if he feels okay not playing in the preseason games, like he'll be ready for the regular season) "Well I do what the coaches tell me to do. I've been in the game for a long time, so I'll be ready to rock and roll when it's time to go. That's the faith that he has in me, that's the confidence that he has in me, so anything he asks me to do I would do. It's something different but at the same time, I think if the work that I'm getting on the field in the practice is a lot of work and it's good work. He kind of makes the practice seem like game situations. That's good for this team, not just only me. I think that's one of the positives that we have, to be in this weather, the way we practice, we make practice very, very competitive. I think at the end of the day, we'll all benefit from how we attack practice each day and hopefully we'll be a good team, and hopefully it'll show during the season."

(on if he's playing against the Saints this weekend) "I don't know, ask (Head Coach) Bill (O'Brien)."

(on the pieces he has around him on this team) "Well, I mean on paper we're pretty stacked, but I've been around some teams where we were pretty stacked on paper and really couldn't get it done. I think the biggest thing for us is each day to get better, to put all the pieces together, to compete at a high level, just trust one another, play with good fundamentals. That's what training camp is all about. It's kind of getting the fundamentals of stuff down, getting the base packages done, getting good at technique, just little things, then the little things add up to big things. As long as we do that, and as long as we attack each day to win, that's the key, attack each day to win, I don't care what situation he puts us in in practice, we have to be able to win that day. As long as we do that, I think we'll be okay, I definitely do."

(on how much the young guys come pick his brain during training camp) "I think we have a great group of guys, especially young guys, and they're working very, very hard. It's easy to be sitting down at lunch or at dinner and we have tables full of veterans with younger guys, younger guys with younger guys, veterans with veterans, I mean we have a mix. The one thing that I love to see, and I've been seeing this the whole time I've been here is we all mesh together. I don't think there's anybody in there that's going to separate themselves from the rookies. The rookies, they're not bashful, but at the same time, they're respectful. I think everybody in this locker room is very respectful towards one another. I like seeing that because at the end of the day, we're all professionals. I think you've got to give rookies a chance to learn what it takes to be a professional. You can't walk and hold their hand all day or all the time. You've got to be able to put some type of trust and faith into a younger guy and put the faith in the leaders and the captains of your team that we're going to get them through what they need to get through. So far, so good, like I said, we don't have a bad group of guys. This team is made up of great-character guys, and that's how we want it. That's how we're going to win. We're going to win with guys like this. I'm very excited to have this opportunity to be here with these guys. It's been nothing but a blast for me to be here and just to see the way we work, and Billy O. (Head Coach Bill O'Brien), and the staff, and the organization what they put together. It's special, so I'm excited."

(on what he's seen from rookie DT Christian Covington) "He's a hard, hard worker. I mean he's coachable. He has so much passion for the game. It's tough to be a nose tackle and to ask to do some certain things. Sometimes they look at how I play a play and they really can't play a play like I play, just the size difference and strength difference, but at the same time, he has some quickness that I don't have. I think we have to do a real good job of using the tools that we have and what we don't have try to learn how to use them, and try to get better using them. Our skill sets are a little different but at the same time we both – the one thing that I always like in a player is the passion that you have for the game, and he's a guy that has so much passion. He works hard, he don't complain, that's a good thing. He has some good traits about him that he should be a good professional at this level because of what he's given to the game. He's just a hard worker and I'm happy to be in the room with him. He asks questions. I love to work with him. I just love the way he approaches every game. Every practice he approaches with the right attitude, so that's a good thing for him. It'll pay off for him in the long run."

(on his thoughts on NT Louis Nix III and giving him guidance) “Well I don’t try to look at guys and critique guys. That’s not what I do. I just try to pass on a little knowledge and a little wisdom that I have playing the game the way I played it for all these years. Being in a similar system to what we have here, I’m always just giving pointers, and I’m trying to make guys understand the game, not just a certain play. You need to understand the game in general and look at it from a different scope. That’s what I like to do. I don’t just like to look at the center or the guards, I like to look at the whole offense and I like to see the offense break the huddle and see what they’re in. I like to look at the running back and see where his eyes are, I like to look at the receivers. Is it slot, is it pro, is it trips, is it wild wide, I like to see the whole thing and that’s one of the things I try to teach the guys is formation recognition. Just being able to recognize formations, because nine times out of 10, if you can be able to recognize that, the offense will give you what they want to do. So it’s just being a smart football player. If we can do that, we’ll be very successful. That’s one of the goals of mine is trying to get the guys in my room to understand that especially the younger guys that really don’t have much playing time under their belt. Just to understand the whole aspect of the game, not just the guys they’re playing in front of but all 11 on offense. That’s something that I’m going to continue to work on because I think that’ll make us a better defense.”

(on formation recognition) “Oh yeah, that’s something where I learned a long time ago, and that’s probably the first thing I look at. Sometimes I don’t even listen to a defensive huddle call, I get that and when the offense breaks I just turn to one and ‘Hey, what are we in?’ and they’ll tell me because I’m so locked in to what the offense is doing. I know somebody’s going to give me something. I just don’t know who it may be. It might be a receiver one time, it might be a tight end, it might be the running back, it might be the quarterback, might be offensive linemen. At any given day, I don’t know who’s going to get me the information I need, but I’m alert for anybody on that offensive side of the ball to give me what I need. Like I said, that’s just one thing I think as a defense, if we can learn that, just recognizing formations and understanding how teams want to attack us, we’ll be a successful defense. We’ve just got to do it the right way. That’s part of training camp, that’s what we’re here for. It’s a learning curve, but at the same time, we’re getting good work in and we’re grinding. Hopefully it’ll pay off for us in the long run.”