



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sunday, January 3, 2016

POSTGAME QUOTES FROM HOUSTON TEXANS

OWNER BOB MCNAIR
HEAD COACH BILL O'BRIEN
RB ALFRED BLUE
LT DUANE BROWN
ILB BRIAN CUSHING
RB JONATHAN GRIMES
WR DEANDRE HOPKINS
QB BRIAN HOYER
CB KAREEM JACKSON
CB JOHNATHAN JOSEPH
OLB WHITNEY MERCILUS
WR JAELEN STRONG
DE J.J. WATT

TEXANS OWNER BOB MCNAIR (Transcribed by Ryan Cantrell)

How does it feel to be wearing that hat?

"It feels good. It is the first hat, but we want more hats, so it is good."

What is the feeling like to be where you were half way through the season to finish like you did?

"Well, it's good to see that perseverance and hard work pays off and that is the message for everybody. That is what they did, they stuck together and worked hard and didn't let any outside distractions bother them and they just went out and started playing good football."

What was the difference from 2-5 to 7-2 to finish the season?

"That is hard to say, I think we did a few things I think we simplified a few things on defense, as an example, so that the players could play quicker and with more confidence and I think that is when our defense really picked up. The coaches made a few changes here and there and simplified some things and I think the whole idea was to focus on what we are doing and to not worry about the past, but focus on the future and go out there and play smart football and if we do that than we are capable of winning."

How proud are you of this team now?

"I am extremely proud of them because so many people had given up on them and I felt all along that we had some real talent on this team and I think that is what we have seen now. They are hardworking and they don't point fingers when things are going bad. You find out what kind of character you have on your team when things go bad and everybody starts pointing the finger at the other guy, that did not happen."

How special is this title among some of the others?

"Well this one is best because it is today. The next one will be better."

What kind of performance did you see from DE J.J. Watt and OLB Whitney Mercilus today?

"That is terrific and (OLB Jadeveon) Clowney should be back on the field next week. It is going to make it even more exciting."

At 2-5 did you have some doubts? What was your mood?

"Well, I was angry because we weren't playing to our potential. We knew we were a lot better team than that and we weren't playing well and coaches got that turned around and that is to their credit."

How special is it to be hosting a playoff game at home?

"That is what you always want so we are looking forward to that, playing at home and our fans are looking forward to it. Our fans have been great. You know our fans never wavered. They were always here, supporting us and giving us that home-field advantage. All of us really appreciate that, it makes a big difference for us."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



What kind of job has Head Coach Bill O'Brien done this season?

"I think Bill has done a great job. He did a few things when we were 2-5. He told the team I want you to look in the mirror and ask yourself the question, 'are you getting the job done, is there something that you could be doing better,' and he said that I am going to do the same thing and so he did and he came back and he made some changes and he started giving them a little more time off and a few things like that they could notice that made a difference. He was saying I am doing my part and I want you to do your part and I think they listened to that."

What is your reaction to T Duane Brown going down today?

"Well, it is a real shame because he has worked so hard and he is one of the real leaders on this team and to have that kind of injury, number one it is an unusual injury as I understand it, and it is just a shame that it happened and that he is not going to be able to enjoy this as a participant on the field. He'll enjoy it watching it, but it is different if you are not out on the field."

HEAD COACH BILL O'BRIEN (Transcribed by Omar Majzoub)

How do you feel right now?

"I feel good for these guys. I think these guys have fought hard to get into this position. I just feel really proud to be associated with these guys. There was obviously some adversity early in the season and these guys rallied. We've got good leaders. We've got good young players. We've got good role players. Now, the second season starts. That's what's exciting. It's also really exciting that we didn't back in. We won our way in and I think that's pretty cool."

What's it mean to the team to comeback from a 2-5 record to make the playoffs?

"Well, the last thing I read was the funeral that we were going to have on Kirby. Hopefully, we put a hold on that funeral. That was when I put the papers down for good because I didn't want to see myself in a casket, that's for sure. But no, I'm proud of these guys. These guys worked hard. We demand a lot of these guys. We're in here early in the morning. We practice hard. They really put a lot of time in, so when you see their efforts rewarded and they do the things that you're asking them to do and they come out on the winning end, I think everybody feels good about that. I think our coaching staff did a nice job. But again, do we want to rest on our laurels of where we are right now? I think it's great. I really do. I think it's a good thing, but this is the second season and we'd like to try to keep it going."

Do you feel you can win a playoff game with your momentum and defense?

"There's no question that in this league on any given Sunday, anything can happen. That's number one. When you're into this tournament, you can go back and look at the history of the playoffs in the NFL. I mean, it's really the teams that make the least amount of mistakes. The teams that make the most of their opportunities. The teams whose best players play the best in January. Those are the teams that win. So, we have to understand that. We got to really try to build on our momentum. I think we do have some momentum, but we're only as good as our next game. We really have to continue to try to build on that."

Can we ask you about the playoffs now and you won't get upset?

"I never get upset at you guys. You know that. When have you ever seen that?"

Has everyone bought into the team philosophy?

"I don't even know. I just think that – the phrase 'buying into', I don't even know what that means. I think when you're a part of a team and you're the head coach, you try to give direction and be as good a leader as you can be. I think one thing that we try to do is break it down into 16 one-game seasons. It didn't go well early on. But I think overall the guys really did understand that, look, once that game happened on Sunday, we had to review it on Monday but we had to quickly turn the page. I think that's what you have to do in this league. You have to have a short memory. You have to learn from your mistakes, but you have to have a short memory."

What are your thoughts on the defense today?

"I don't think you can say enough about this defense and the way they've played over the last eight or nine games. I mean, these guys have played really good football. There's a lot of trust on that side of the ball amongst each other and with the coaches. You've got some guys playing some great football. Obviously, J.J. (Watt) had an unbelievable game today. You've got better tackling, better communication. All the things that you need to play good football in this league and good defense in this league, you're having it."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



Did you see the kind of play you want in all three phases before the playoffs?

"I think we have to get a lot better in certain areas. We had too many false starts, too many penalties on offense where we're not set and things that are line of scrimmage penalties that are unacceptable, especially in the playoffs. But I did see some great examples of complimentary football, where the defense got a takeaway and we turned it into points. I think we have to continue to play that way. We have to play really good defense. We've got to take advantage of the opportunities the defense gives us offensively and we've got to get better on special teams. There's a lot of things we can improve upon and that's what's exciting about having another chance to go out there and get better."

What's it mean to lose T Duane Brown heading into next week?

"It doesn't look good. I don't know his exact injury, but Duane Brown is one of the hearts and souls of this team. He's one of our leaders. He's been in this organization for a long time. He's experienced the ups and downs. He's a great person and great guy. Hell of a football player. Tough, tough football player. So anytime a guy like that goes down, you don't replace that guy. You may have to replace him with a couple guys and things like that. But I'm sure Duane will be around to help us continue with his leadership."

Do you know what you will do with the offensive line next week, specifically at left tackle?

"I just walked in here. But I would say that what you saw today is similar to what we would do if that's the case with Duane (Brown). What you saw today."

What about having an owner like Bob McNair who let's coaches 'do their thing'?

"I don't think you can work for a better owner. I don't think he lets us 'do our thing' though. I mean, we meet every Monday and he tells us what he thinks. He's not in every meeting and things like that, but he's the boss. He's the boss and he wants to win. He wants to win for the city of Houston. He wants to win for these players. He bought this team years ago trying to bring a winner to this city, so I think anytime you can go out and work for a guy like that – he's a fair man, an honest man, and a good man. It's easy to come to work every day."

How would you describe the culture that you've tried to create here?

"I think the big thing in football is you have to be in it together. You're a leader, you're the coach, and they are the player. I mean, that's obvious, but you just have to be in it together. When things don't go well, you can't stand up in front of them and consistently point the finger at them. First thing you have to do is look in the mirror. I encourage communication. I think I'm tough on them. Sometimes I'm probably a little overboard on them. But I just want what's best for them. I think that we as a staff, we believe in how to win. We have a system and a method of how to do it, playing complimentary football, playing tough, practicing competitively, meeting a lot, walking through, and trying to be on top of the details. So hopefully that's the culture that we're creating here."

How much pride do you take in your first two years?

"I think it shows that you're associated with good people and you have to give those people a lot of credit. Of course, the head coach always has to stand up here and answer the questions and be the face and things like that. But I think it's all about the people. It's about the players and how hard they work. It's about this coaching staff and how hard they work. Then that group of people coming together and trying to put a winning product on the field, that's what we're trying to do. Again, hopefully, we can keep it going. We've got a little momentum right now. We experienced some injuries today, so hopefully guys can get healed up and help us win. But this is the second season, this is what you play for."

What about the job RB Alfred Blue did today?

"I think he's been running well for a while now. I think the last three or four weeks, we've been playing that – basically, running back by committee, which I think is the way to do it. It's not by committee, it's more about the packages that they're all involved in. He's really run with a purpose. Really, he had a couple called back today, especially the long one. He probably almost had 180 yards rushing if that wasn't called back. I'm happy for him. He works really hard. He's a great teammate. He's on special teams. He's in all the meetings and trying to do what's best for the team. That's really why I'm happy for him."

How does the running game help you on offense?

"I think with our team, the way we're constructed, we have to be able to run the ball. I'm not saying we have to rush for 300 yards a game, but I think we have to be consistent in the running game. We've got to be able to be in



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



manageable third downs. I think when you're in a bunch of third and longs because you can't run the ball, that's going to be a problem."

T DUANE BROWN (Transcribed by Ryan Cantrell)

Did you know the injury was bad news right when it happened?

"I knew when I tried to get up and walk and it was just dead, so I knew something was wrong, wasn't quite sure what, but yeah."

You looked devastated coming off the field, is this the low point of your career?

"I give everything to this game man, I give everything, my heart, my soul, my being to this game, to this organization, to this team and I find a lot of joy being out there with my guys every Sunday. Being sidelined for any amount of time, is devastating for me. This is the most serious injury I have had in my pro-career. With all of those thoughts flowing it was emotional for me. I appreciate my teammates coming to show support. I appreciate the fans, the Jaguars, some of them came over there and showed some love, but it is part of the game, so I'll bounce back."

What does it mean to you that everyone came out there and patted you on the back?

"It means a lot. I appreciate the respect that I have from my teammates. It's mutual. It sucks man, but it is always easier when you know you have that constant support system."

How does it feel to wear that hat?

"It is awesome. It is awesome, man. It doesn't come easy and knowing everything that we went through this year, to be crowned division champs at this time it means everything."

What did Head Coach Bill O'Brien say to you after the game?

"Hang in there. He told me he loved me and he appreciated everything that I have done. You know, I am still on this team, I am still a part of this team, mentally, spiritually, so I will still be able to give my leadership abilities even if I am not out there."

RB ALFRED BLUE (Transcribed by Stefan Nolet)

Why was the team able to have success despite starting four different quarterbacks during the season?

"It's what we've been taught all our lives, 'Next man up.' I think every guy that comes in and replaces the other guy does a great job of coming in and filling in."

What was your mentality after the loss to the Dolphins?

"Just come back and take it one game at a time. We took that bye week and just settled down, came back and Coach O'Brien told us, 'Just settle down, just take it one game at a time.' And that's what we did."

Do you feel like you're hitting your stride at this point in the season?

"Yeah. On the back end, you have to run the football to win, and we know that. The defense has to play great, and they are playing great right now. And we understand that and that's what we have to continue doing."

Does the offense feed off of the defense when it plays well?

"I think we all feed off each other: special teams, offense and defense. Once all the three phases are clicking out there, we're going to play good."

What does the loss of Duane Brown mean to the team?

"That's a big loss. He's the leader of the offense, leader of that o-line and it's going to be a devastating thing with him being gone like that."

What was it like walking into the locker room after winning the division?



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



"It was a good feeling, but we knew we had to stay humble, and we knew we had to go out there and earn it tonight. I think everybody understood that, and I think everybody played that way tonight."

What did you see today about how well you performed?

"I would say the o-line made my job real easy. They gave me running lanes, the receivers blocked out there and it made my job real easy out there. I saw the lanes fairly easy out there, and I just cut and went up field."

ILB BRIAN CUSHING (Transcribed by Ryan Cantrell)

You have fought through significant injuries to get where you are. How does it feel that you are back and a key member of this defense going into the playoffs?

"It feels really good, but it is about the team. It is a really good feeling for me, but I am just proud to be a part of this team and play with these guys. I am very happy to be back, playing like myself to help these guys out the best way I possibly can."

Is this defense playing the best that it has in a long time?

"I think so, but it only really matters how you play each game. We can win now, but we got to take care of business next week and play as good as we ever have been and play our best game next week and not rest on the past, not rest on the previous week or previous weeks and go on out and just have a great game every single week from here on out."

How special is it to get that game at home?

"It is great. It is great, we have a great fan base. A loud stadium definitely works to our advantage. It is one of the things that we are really excited about is to come back here and play again at home."

WIDE RECEIVER DEANDRE HOPKINS (Transcribed by Edgar Veliz)

How does it feel to secure a playoff spot?

"It feels great. We worked all year for this. We have three more games left. It feels good right now."

How confident are you about playing three more games?

"That's been our motto. Go out there and play with confidence. Speak and make it in to fruition."

What has it been like to play with four different quarterbacks?

"I go out there and do my job. The only thing I can do is control my position. I can't control what goes on with the quarterback position. The only thing I can go out and do is be consistent."

What does it mean to secure a playoff spot without relying on help from other teams?

"After the second half of the season, we wanted to come out and not depend on other people to lose or win. We wanted to handle business ourselves."

Why is the offense succeeding right now?

"That's credit to the coaches, getting everyone prepared. If somebody goes down, it is next man up at all positions. Duane (Brown) went down today and somebody else stepped up. It is kind of like the whole season with the quarterback situation. One quarterback goes down another quarterback steps up. You have to give credit to the coaches."

What is like to see everyone rally around Duane Brown?

"He's a leader on this team. If somebody else went down with an injury like that the whole team is going to be out there. It's a brotherhood."

What does it mean to play a playoff game at NRG Stadium?

"Homefield advantage. Hopefully that is going to help us out."

How much momentum carries over to next week?



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



"A lot of momentum can be taken forward from today and the game before. Guys are going out there playing with confidence. You win a couple of games in a row, you have a chip on your shoulder."

What are your thoughts on the performance of J.J. Watt and Whitney Mercilus?

"It was great. Those guys practice like that. They constantly stay after the quarterback. It wasn't a surprise what they did today."

What is the confidence level of this team?

"It was one hundred."

What are you most looking forward to during the playoffs?

"Getting a win. We are not happy with just winning the AFC South. There are bigger goals ahead for us."

If you do play the Kansas City Chiefs, what do you remember about that game?

"We lost, so I really don't want to remember too much from it. I remember the first play, an interception. That sticks out."

How did QB Bryan Hoyer play today?

"He was great. He came out there and led us to victory. He played with confidence even though he wasn't out there a couple of weeks. It didn't surprise anyone that he came out there played the way he did."

RB JONATHAN GRIMES (Transcribed by Stefan Nolet)

Getting your first receiving touchdown had to be fun?

"Oh yeah. It was definitely good to get in that end zone. I hadn't scored in about two years, so it was good."

What does it feel like going to the playoffs?

"That's awesome, too. I've never been to the Playoffs in the NFL, so it's all new for me, and I'm going to take it one game at a time and take full advantage of this."

How did this team go from starting 2-5 to winning the AFC South?

"Ignoring the noise and staying focused. The whole time, we didn't doubt each other, we knew we had to fix a few things. And it looks like we're on the right track right now. We still have a lot of things to clean up though."

What was the biggest part of the turnaround?

"It's a team concept – just everybody working together. It's not like a dictatorship. We're all buying in and believe in one thing and fighting for the same thing."

Was the bow after your touchdown run a tribute to Arian Foster?

"Yeah, I had to do that because he worked hard this whole offseason. I know, because I was right there working with him. So, I just wanted to show him some love."

Can you talk about how the coaches involve you and RB Akeem Hunt as all-purpose running backs?

"It's good. They have a lot of confidence in us, and we just try to contribute every time we get in there."

QUARTERBACK BRIAN HOYER (Transcribed by Stephanie Weaver and Christiana Johns)

How great was this for the team and you personally?

"It's been a crazy year, but I think this is where we wanted to be. When we started at the beginning of the season, this was our goal, and it's just the first the goal. Like I said, it's been a crazy year, but we've stuck together as a team. The way we are playing football right now is very team oriented, and everybody believes in each other and that's what it takes."

How nice is it to wear a champion's hat?

"It feels good. It does. It really does. Like I said, it's been a crazy year, but we've stayed the course. When we could have split apart, we really came together. I think you really see that. I think you see when guys make plays how excited the team is, how together we are. It think we've just got to keep doing that. Whatever it takes to win."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



Is the opportunity of making it to the playoffs why you came here?

"Yeah, for sure. Obviously there were a lot of reasons, my familiarity with Coach O'Brien, with the offense. Not only that, but I played against this team last year. I knew what they were capable of doing, so to be brought in and help contribute to this goal is very satisfying, but like I said, it's just the first goal. I was fortunate enough to go to the playoffs with the Patriots, but I wasn't really playing. So it feels good to have a part of it, and now like I said it is just the beginning. It's like a new season.

Were you concerned about your safety at all today?

"No, not at all. Like I told everyone all week long, if I had any hesitation, I wouldn't have been out there. I really trusted the medical staff, our training staff, the people who I consulted, and I felt like I was ready to go. You go out, and you just play the game. I think anytime you play hesitant, that's when you're more exposed. I felt good, take some hits and get back up and everything is fine. So now it's on to the playoffs."

Can you talk about the loss of Duane Brown?

"Duane has been here the longest. He's put a lot into it. It was tough to see him carted off and know that we aren't going to have him. He really has been the leader on offense because he's been here the longest, and he's put in the most. It's our time to step up. We've had injuries all year long, and the next guy stepped up and that's what we're going to have to do. We are going to play for Duane because he deserves it."

Do you have any concerns about lack of productivity in the second half?

"I thought we were running the ball pretty well. You know, we went for it, and we didn't get it on fourth down. We settled for a few field goals, but I think to see our running game, I think at one point that one drive lasted eight minutes in the fourth quarter. That's huge. You're going to need that when it comes to the playoffs. You need to be able to run the ball to win. Our offensive line, and Blue, and the running backs did a great job. It's good to have that part of our offense really working."

Was it comforting to see the defense playing well too?

"Yeah, for sure. Like I said, we've really come together. They're making plays, we get excited. We make plays, they get excited. We've got to continue to do that."

Was it significant that nobody quit in the previous game against Miami?

"I've said it before, that moment, that halftime, really determined how our season was going to go. We could either lay down and take it, or we could come back and fight back knowing that, sure it is going to be a tough task, but let's go out and fight and see what happens. To play hard, when we knew really that we didn't have a chance to win, I think that kind of showed everyone, hey let's stick together. Let's turn things around. I think we kind of made that decision right there. No matter what was being said about us, no matter what people from the outside thought, it only mattered about the people in this room. I think that's the biggest part. We've been able to do that, and now we need to continue that for however long this journey goes."

During the Monday meeting after the Miami game, how important was what Bill O'Brien said to the team?

"I think he did a great job at a low time reminding us that our goals were still intact. And I think he's done a great job coaching, the entire coaching staff with him. What I say to people in this room, I talk about those Monday morning meetings where it's the players and the coaches and everybody coming together from their end and believing in each other."

Is this the best feeling you've had after a football game ever?

"Yeah, for sure. Like I said, having gone to the playoffs but as a backup, sure you've contributed, but you weren't the one out there on the field. So to be the guy who's helping contribute, and to be able to win and come back in that locker room and put that hat on, you really feel like we're really part of it is something special."

Does the personal adversity you faced this season make the way the team finished more special?

"I think for me, my career has always had that adversity so to just stay the course the entire year and know that this was still an option on the table. We still had our goals and to fight back – not only me but T.J. [Yates] and Brandon [Weeden] stepping up and winning those games, that was huge. I think we couldn't be prouder as a quarterback unit, but like I said, it's the team. I think playing and everybody stepping up when they needed to and making those plays and playing together."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



How long did it take you to make your peace with Bill O'Brien's decision to change quarterbacks after the first game?

"I think for me, I was always just staying ready. I never knew when that opportunity would come. It came a few weeks later and eventually after the Colts game I was back. I've had a long history with him and we'll always be great friends. It was just one of those things that for me, dealing with that adversity, coming in every day and staying ready, and then having to come in and deal with the injuries and stuff like that, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Billy. My entire career – whether it was him scouting me at Michigan State, him telling me to sign with the Patriots when I went undrafted and then here signing me in Houston – I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him. Obviously, it was a tough time and you question your entire career at that point, but I had faith in him and I knew just to stay ready because you never knew when that opportunity was going to come again."

Did you ever let yourself get really mad at Bill O'Brien for making that call to not start you?

"Obviously, there's disappoint and anger, but I was able to channel that into coming in every day and getting better. Whether that was running the scout team or watching extra film and use that as motivation really know that when I get that next chance, don't let it go."

How much has the season been a swing on you emotionally?

"I think it's great. Like I said, it was our goal from day 1. Regardless of all the outside noise, the competition, Hard Knocks, I think it's always been our goal that even when we were at 2-5, Billy reminded us our goal was still there. It took a long haul back, but here we are standing as AFC South Champs and we get to host a playoff game. It's a testament to our team, our coaches that we're able to just block everything out and just focus on our jobs."

Does it matter to you which team you face in the playoffs?

"Definitely go home and watch those games and figure it out. So, right now, celebrate this win and when we figure out who we're playing, just get working on those guys."

CORNERBACK KAREEM JACKSON (Transcribed by Stephanie Weaver)

How great was this for the team and you personally?

"It think as a defense, you have to play with confidence. You can't go out there and be timid of anything that you do. As a team, we want to play with confidence. We work week in and week out to be confident in what we do on Sundays. Like I said, when it comes to Sunday, we definitely want to be the most confident group out there. As a team, offensively, defensively, special teams because we work that way throughout the week. For us to go out there and have that confidence, it definitely gives us a chance to play well."

Has the team shown that they deserve to be in the playoffs?

"Definitely. To me people can say what they want to say. At the end of the day, we put ourselves in the position to be in the playoffs. As a team, we are definitely proud of that. To be in this situation, we definitely won't take it for granted. We'll continue to work and go correct the things we need to correct for this game and continue to work next week."

Is the backend starting to play with a swagger?

"We believe in our backend. You've got to have something to you. You've got to have that swagger. It's like you've got to go out there, and you've got to expect not to give up anything. Like I said, we have that confidence in ourselves as a group. We are confident in what we can do as a group. We practice that way and for us, we just want to go out on Sundays and definitely play that way. It all starts with our communication. If we all are on the same page as a backend, we think we can definitely go out and be the best backend that's doing it."

If you were a Dancing with the Stars judge, how would you judge JJ's performance?

"We won, so I'd give him a 10. He's been working on it a couple years now. It's alright. He's almost there."

How important is it to have fun out there?

"It's very important. That's what it's about. This is our job, but at the end of the day, you've got to have fun. This is a game that we all grew up wanting to play as kids. Every guy in this locker room had this goal to get to this point. As a man and as a football player, it doesn't get any better than this. To go out on Sundays and play the game you love, it's a lot of fun. You've got to have fun out there. Week in, week out, every day you go to work, it's all about having fun."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



CORNERBACK JOHNATHAN JOSEPH (Transcribed by Edgar Veliz)

How did HC Bill O'Brien keep the team together and lead the team to consecutive winning seasons?

"He's a hell of a coach. I've been saying that since the day I first met him and talked football with him. I know he knows what he's doing. Sometimes, from the outside looking in it may not look that way for whatever reason. When your team is going through rough patches and things like that. Like I said again, that's what a strong leader and a coach that knows what he's doing does. He keeps his team together and blocks out the outside noise and continues to keep them fighting throughout the remainder of the season."

How much did this win and securing a playoff spot mean to you?

"It means a lot. Obviously with the circumstances coming into this game, we knew the chance that we could be in without this win. Us as a team, didn't want to go out there and play that type of ball game. We wanted to go out there and play a ball game and clinch it ourselves and carry this momentum over into the playoffs."

How did the defense contain the Jacksonville Jaguars' WRs Allen Robinson and Allen Hurns?

"We mixed it up, showed them a lot of different looks and guys rushed the passer really well. We played tight coverage also. We made plays when we had to make plays. Coach RAC (Defensive Coordinator Romeo Crennel) put us in situations to do those things all together. I think we played really well as a unit."

Describe the season you've had and how it feels to perform at this level this far into your career?

"It means a lot. You never know when the end is. So anytime you have a moment to be out there to play this game, you like to be playing at a high level. I think it's not just on me, it comes from the guys in the weight room, Coach Fitz (Craig Fitzgerald) and his staff and the guys in the training room preparing me and keeping me healthy and fresh throughout the season, and the coaching staff using me to the best of my skillset."

What do you think of the play of the defense and the eight sacks they collected today?

"It's big for those guys because they work hard all year long and sometimes they get really close to the quarterback and don't get the sack. They get a pressure and I know those guys love to get the sacks because that's what it is all about, getting to the quarterback, and I think that those guys doing that, that really helps us on the back end a lot also. So it goes hand-in-hand."

What did you think about the play of DE J.J. Watt and OLB Whitney Mercilus specifically?

"Words can't sum it up for those guys. They've been playing that way all year. Of course J.J. is J.J., but I think I'm really extremely happy for Mercilus to be playing the way he is, because he is getting better every time we're out there. I think it is only good for this defense to have those guys continue to get better and play the way they play because, like I said, we feed off those guys on the back end."

How much fun is it to experience the success you've experienced in the second half of the season?

"It is a good feeling, but you can't get complacent and hang your hat on that. When you start the season your first goal is to win your division and get into the playoffs. This is checking one of those goals off right now. We have plenty more football to play, you just have to take it one week at a time the way we did when we were back in that hole earlier in the season. You have to grind it out one week at a time."

What does it mean to bring the team back to the playoffs?

"It means a lot. Hats off to those guys upstairs for putting a great team together, keeping everyone together as a team - the coaching staff. I think hard work pays off. Sure, everyone is reaping off the benefits from it right now, but we have a lot of work to do moving forward. At the same time, you have to be really excited for what a team like us have went through in the past."

OLB WHITNEY MERCILUS (Transcribed by Stefan Nolet)

Did you sense Jacksonville quarterback Blake Bortles getting gun shy because of the pressure?

"Yeah, he started feeling the pressure, started getting a little jittery in the pocket. We had a plan, just coming in, make sure we could get to him and sack him a few times."

What does it mean to win the AFC South on your home field?



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



"It feels good. We were able to control our own destiny, and it feels good compared to last year. We're going to come into it, win the AFC South and, pretty much, keep rolling into the Playoffs."

What changed after starting 2-5 to finishing 7-2?

"Just changing our attitude. Just coming in, just grinding through it, just getting back to our basics and just trying to play complete football, complementary football: playing great on special teams, offense and defense."

What does it mean to get your first 10-plus sack season?

"It feels good, it feels good. It just means to me that I am the player I think I am, and just continue that on."

What does it mean to join DE J.J. Watt as the first 10-plus sack tandem in franchise history?

"I think it says a lot. It means we have guys that know how to get to the quarterback. Teams are going to be looking for that, of course, and all we have to do is just keep it going."

After starting 2-5, do you think winning the division was possible?

"Yeah. That's the thing, honestly it's about the guys who're in the locker room. That's it. We're the ones who have to keep believing. Everybody can count us out. Everybody thought we were out of it, especially when we went 2-5. We just came in every day and kept on grinding. We didn't give up. That's never in our heart at any one point in the season. We just came week to week ready to work, and we turned things around."

What does that moment feel like when you realize the opposing quarterback is getting gun shy?

"It's like a dog licking his chops for a steak. When you know that, you can get the guy a little rattled in the pocket, start scrambling around, and someone's going to come free and get a sack."

WR JAELEN STRONG (Transcribed by Stefan Nolet)

How does it feel to be a contributor on a playoff team?

"Just blessed and just doing my role as best as I can when they call on me to go out there and make the play."

What changed for you during the season?

"Nothing really changed. My mindset – I always had the mindset that I could be as great as I wanted to be, but it was just I had to take my team, ease myself into things. Slow things down and take the coaching, and take the coaching from the players on the field, too."

Do you feel comfortable on the field with the offense and what you're asked to do?

"Oh yeah, most definitely. Definitely, it's like night and day from the beginning of the season until now."

What was coach Bill O'Brien's message to the team after the 2-5 start?

"That it's a long season and anything is possible. We believed in ourselves when we were 2-5. Everybody else didn't. We believed in ourselves, and now we're here."

As a rookie, have the veterans told you to enjoy this moment?

"As a rookie, I just want to do what they tell me to do, do my job and work as hard as I can because I know there are guys that haven't been to the playoffs since I was probably like eight years old. That just goes to show how much hard work that they've done and we're doing."

DEFENSIVE END J.J. Watt (Transcribed by Rachel Jacob and Crystin Pactor)

What did the defense do to put this game in motion?

"I think we did a great job as a team. I think everybody was involved, it was offense, defense, special teams, I think it was the whole team, the way we've been doing it for most of the year, since the rough start. That's the way you win football games, that's the way you win division championships and that's how you get to the playoffs. We need to continue to play like we did today. I think (OLB) Whitney (Mercilus) deserves a whole lot of credit for the way he played."

What about the interior defensive line that helped you out?

"Yeah, it's a whole team effort. When guys like us get the big numbers it's because there are a lot of guys around us making us look good."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



How nice was it to have both hands today?

"Beautiful. You tell me. It was beautiful. I think for a little while there, people started to forget so today was a reminder of what it is like when I have both hands and it felt great and it's a credit to our doctors. I mean it has only really been three weeks since it happened so it's a credit to our doctors, our trainers, everybody for helping me to get back healthy and I just really enjoyed being able to play."

Were you in any pain?

"No, it felt great. It took a couple big hits, it really bounced back well. I don't think it was a problem so, yeah it's great."

Is your hand totally healed?

"No, no it's not totally healed. It is further along in the process than I think we expected it to be so I think that is why I am out of the club so early and like I said I think it is a credit to our trainers."

You didn't like to talk about the things you couldn't do when you had the club, but now that it is off, can you tell us what is easier?

"I don't like to make excuses. No matter what the situation is, you never make excuses. You just go out there and play. So I was never going to say it was hindering me or anything. I was just going to go out there and play, but I think you can see today, that it is much better with two than one."

After having been at 2 and 5 earlier in the year, what it's like to be back in the playoffs for the first time in a few years?

"It means a lot to the guys in the room because it shows them that when you work hard, you stick together, you believe in each other, you can accomplish what you want to do. You don't listen to everybody else, you don't listen to predictions and things like that, you just go out and play your game, you work hard, you stick together and you can do great things."

Can you tell us about doing every dance that has been popular this past year after the sack?

"Yeah, I am just a big white guy trying to have some fun out there. I realize that they are very terrible, probably ended all of them at one time, but you know I'm having some fun out there. If people don't like it, they can do whatever sack dance they want when they get a sack in the NFL."

Did you think the defense rattled QB Blake Bortles?

"I think he is a very good quarterback. I think he's developed a long way and I think he is going to be good. I think we did a great job putting pressure on him. I think our DBs did a great job with coverage. I think upfront guys were always up in his face, so it's a very difficult task for him and you have to understand that when you evaluate what he has been doing."

How satisfying is it to come from 2 and 5 and accomplish what you have done?

"It's great. It's great for our team, great for our fans, it's great for our city. This is what we expect. We expect to win the division, expect to be in the playoffs. Now we go into the playoffs and we look forward to the opportunity and the challenge of having fun in the playoffs. We aren't satisfied with where we are right now. We expect to be where we are right now and we look forward to moving even farther forward."

I know you look to team first, but today you might have put the Defensive Player of the Year award away. How important is that to you?

"Yeah, I think it would mean a lot. I mean in my 5th year, to have three and join LT (Lawrence Taylor) I think it would be very cool. It's a testament to my teammates and my coaches for putting me in that position and for allowing me to go out there and play the way that I play. I think it would be pretty incredible. I would be very honored, but I also know that there is big team goals out there, so while that would be cool I also know that I want to help my team accomplish big things."

You now have tied for the second most 15 sack seasons in NFL history and you've joined Reggie White as the only player to have 15 sack seasons in three of your first five seasons. What do you think about those kinds of things?



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



"It's always an honor to be put in categories with Reggie. It's been incredible to have my name associated with his over the last couple of years and especially this year. My goal is to always go out there and try and do incredible things and just take advantage of every opportunity I get to play this game and play it to the best of my ability. It's humbling, it's an honor to be in that category and all I am trying to do is go out there and set the bar even higher, it's only my fifth year. And to be able to have the fun that I've had in five years has been great."

You have a lot of confidence in your teammates and your staff, but when you were 2 and 5 did you believe in your heart you could be where you are right now?

"Absolutely. That's why we are where we are. If I didn't believe we wouldn't be here. We're here because everybody in that locker room believed it. We're here because we came into this room every week and believed it. And we put in the work, put in the time to be where we are. So yes, we all did believe it."

Your thoughts on your offensive teammates with what they've been through this year and how they stuck together.

"Yeah, I think it's great. I think that going through all the quarterbacks, we've done that for two years now. Going through injuries and all the things they've had to go through and still going out there and finding a way. And that's a credit to our team, everybody on our team. Not just offense, defense, special teams, everybody. Because the amount of adversity we have had to fight through really put a damper on a lot of people and it will put you down. I think our team has done an unbelievable job staying as one, staying together. Going out there and working their butt off to put us in the situation that we're in."

What did you think of Whitney Mercilus today?

"Incredible. I think he played great. When he gets those opportunities to really let it loose, he's done it. I think he deserves all the praise he gets. I think that he is a fantastic pass rusher."

Your thoughts on seeing Duane Brown go out early in the game.

"I mean Duane's a guy that works extremely hard for our team. He's a leader on the offensive line. He's been in this organization for a very long time. It's such a terrible feeling to see a guy like that go down because you know how hard he works, you know how much it means to him. It's kind of a chance for us to rally around him. And you know go out there and say let's win this one for Duane. Let's go out there and make sure we make him proud because we know how badly he wishes to be out there with us."

POSTGAME QUOTES FROM JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

HEAD COACH GUS BRADLEY

QB BLAKE BORTLES

G A.J. CANN

WR ALLEN HURNS

OT LUKE JOECKEL

WR ALLEN ROBINSON

HEAD COACH GUS BRADLEY (Transcribed by Ellie Pardee, Crystin Pactor and Christina Johns)

Opening statement:

"Not the way we wanted to finish this season. To come out - great atmosphere - I know they were amped up and really felt like we came in ready to go. Had our opportunities, but a lot of turnovers, pressure on the quarterback, a very disruptive front. Give a lot of credit to Houston and their front. They cause issues. We said some of these guys have the ability to disrupt the game and they did, but I think it's a chance for us to go back. Here's a team that won our division, and kind of is a measuring stick of where we're at, what we need to do. I think that's what we will do."

Offense and defense combined, was this your worst game of the year?

"Well I don't know all the stats. I know they had quite a few yards. I think there was times, their offense, we got some third down stops, we got some opportunities. Like I said, we had a chance to go in there and keep it a one-possession game. Defensively, I think the points, you know they did a good job keeping the points down as much as we could to give us a shot. That part I was pleased about, but overall what do you say? We fumbled the ball. We



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



had, what, three fumbles I think, they got two of them, and the four interceptions and the couple of red-zone opportunities they had on offense we didn't get stops."

Eight sacks, how disappointing was that tonight?

"They're disruptive, and they did a nice job with some of their things up front. They tried to get one-on-one matchups, even when we tried to match protect or try to chip off the edge. They did some things that tried to force some one-on-ones, especially when we were down and we had to try to get some longer throws in, so give them credit."

Do these last two weeks convince you that maybe you have a little longer way to go to get this franchise where you want it?

"No, you know what, I think – I'm not going to take away some of the things we did, I'd say for example offensively. There's a lot of good things that took place. I think this, you know against Houston, going up against them and seeing some of the things that they do, I think you'd see a revised game plan and what we need to do now and how we need to attack it. Those things can happen within the game, so just because of this game, I don't want to take away some of the things we've done well. We do have some work to do now. We do have some work to do."

Would you revise your game plan in hindsight?

"That's what I said – let's take a look at the tape."

Is there anything that comes to mind that you didn't like that was called?

"No, no nothing call-wise, just some of the situations where we look at some of the things brought up, maybe look at more match protection. No, you limit yourself to two-man, three-man routes when you do that, so I'm not saying that is the answer, but we've got to be able to protect."

Third down you were 1-11 at one point today, where you just putting yourself in too-long situations?

"Yeah, when you've got longer distances now you get a chance for them to amp up their rush, and put it with the points. When you're down in the game in long distance they can pin their ears back. Their rush is disruptive. They've got very good rushers, and that's what it can do. It can allow tight coverage, allow them to double team when they get a lead and do some things to try to take it away."

Once again a slow start, what happened?

"Yeah we took the ball. We took the ball to see if that would have any impact. I think it's just, we just need to continue to get better. That's a good team that we faced, a really good defensive team, so I think it gives us a measuring stick where we're at, where a team that won our division is at, and the work that needs to be done. That's how we'll approach it."

Did you expect LTs Luke Joeckel and Sam Young to be in it more than they were?

"Well I think I'll be able to give you a better answer tomorrow once we look at the tape and go through it. Like I said, if you're behind in the game and they can pin their ears back, I mean that's one of the most talented rushers in the game and for many years. He can be disruptive."

What was your message to the guys in the locker room?

"I told them that we'll talk more tomorrow, you know, just appreciate their efforts and appreciate what they bring every day and what they brought today, and it didn't work out but we'll go more into the details tomorrow."

Last year you made a change at offensive coordinator after the season, do you have any coaching changes planned now?

"I think whatever we do or don't do we'll decide that this week, or look at it, but until we get a chance to visit and look at the film, then we'll come together as a staff."

What's been RB Denard Robinson's issue the last three weeks?

"Well some of it was the exchange between the quarterback and that was last week, but I think it's a valuable lesson for him. I think he's cleaned up a lot of it, but you can't have one on occasion. You can't have one, you fumble on the 45 yard line, it leaves a short field and those are tough situations so, I think you just got to keep developing that mindset and take care of the ball, understand it's an aggressive defense that's going after it. That's why taking care of the ball is so important. He's got to learn that and learn that quick."

After the growth from the team this year, are you surprised to finish 1-5?



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



“Well yeah that’s disappointing. We have a chance to go into the last five games or six games and had some opportunities there, and we didn’t finish like we wanted to and the results didn’t come up like we hoped to. I think we’ve got to sit back after the season and look and say, ‘now who are we, and where are we in this journey that we’re on, and the truth, and what do we need to do?’ There are some things that we can do coaching wise. There’s things we can do scheme wise. There’s things we can do to get better personnel wise, and we know the truth. I think when you play a game like this, it shows some of the truth. Now obviously there’s things that if we played them again there’s things we would correct and it could be different. I don’t want to be irrational and jump to that, but I think that you’ve got to find the truth where we’re at and be able to evaluate where we’re at.”

What did you think you were at this point?

“Well, I think that special teams wise, I liked how we’ve developed. I think that we’ve really done a nice job. I think there’s a part of the season where we struggled a little bit, but I like how we finished. I think that when you have a lot of different personnel, and I thought the guys played pretty well special teams wise. Offensively, I like the progress we’ve made. I think we wanted to be more of an explosive team. I think we made great progress in that area. I’m not going to let one game define that when we see a lot of really good things taking place. I really love our quarterback, the receiving group, and a lot of those guys in the position groups. That’s heading on the right side. Defensively, I think that we’ve got some good players. I think that we can elevate some of the guys in the group through competition and I think that we can even be tighter on scheme things and looking at things, how can we do things to even tighten it up even more. There are some inconsistencies defensively. Just like today, we had opportunities for interception and we missed it. Those things, I think as a team we’ve got to understand how important those things are.”

Had LCB Peyton Thompson not gotten hurt would he have continued to play at nickel?

“Yes. We had a dime and a quarter group where he was in just for matchup reasons.”

Does losing close games the last two weeks change your view on things?

“No, not at all. I think that every game is different, and you go into these situations and what we do have to learn is the precision that I’ve mentioned for the last five weeks or six weeks. Matchups are important that we’ve really got to take care of those things. I don’t think that this game, ‘Oh no, we’re a lot further behind.’ No, it was one game, and we had some turnovers and they got some pressure on us. So, we have to look at how we want to set up protections and be more efficient with them, but not to take away from a lot of the good things that took place.”

QUARTERBACK BLAKE BORTLES (Transcribed by Laci Theriot)

How much does that performance stain on a progressing year?

“As much as that performance stains, it’s been a progressing year. Yeah, but it’s the end of the year. I don’t know about that. I guess it’s good we can look at it and figure out how to fix it and do different things. I think this is definitely tough. We don’t want to play again like that, but I think it’s important that we don’t forget the things we did better. I think there were a lot of strides made, and I think there is still a lot of room to grow. Obviously, we didn’t finish the game the way we wanted to, but I think there were some good things done throughout the year. Now we get a chance to reflect on that, and figure out how to fix different things and make adjustments and take into account the things we did well.”

Can you use this as a measuring stick having finished the season against the AFC South champions? Is this a silver lining reminder on how far you and your teammates have to go to go to where they are?

“I don’t think so. I was there when played them earlier this year. We played well. I played poorly. As a team, we played well, and we moved the ball. I think this is just one of those games where they played pretty well and we didn’t. There is not a whole lot of things to say other than they pretty much flat out beat us in every phase of the game. I thought our defense did a good job. They gave us some opportunities, we just couldn’t get rolling really on any phase of offense.”

Your pass record, will you appreciate in a couple of days?

“Yeah I don’t know, maybe. Right now it’s pretty pointless. I think it’s a cool stat to have. I think that anytime personal or team wise that you are able to break you records, it’s encouraging.”

On what Coach Gus Bradley said just now about protection and less guys out on the field, is that a 20/20?

“If you want to play in the fire, you keep guys in and they drop everybody, then you’ve got three guys running routes and they’ve got eight guys covering them. It’s one of those things you have to play with and figure out. I thought we



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



had a good plan, you know, obviously, we didn't execute it. It's back to the drawing board. As I said earlier, it is a team we play twice a year, so we need to figure out ways to beat them and be successful against them."

Would you call this game a slow start offensively?

"Definitely. I don't know if I'd call this one a slow start as much as just I'd call it a slow game. The whole thing was pretty bad. Definitely, the past couple games, it seems like the second half of the season, we started slow in almost every game. It's good now that we have a lot time to find different ways to fix it and grow things."

How much did you grow this year and how much can do this offseason to improve?

I think it will be a huge offseason. I think, obviously, its our first opportunity as a unit, as an offense to have a system, so we will sit down and get things together and figure out who is going to be where and figure out how to get everyone at one place and one time to work together to try to continue to grow and get better."

GUARD A.J. CANN (Transcribed by Lance Jaramillo)

Did they have more energy because they had the playoffs on the line?

"It might have seemed that way being they had home field advantage. They win, they clinch our division. They probably did have a little energy coming into the game, a little momentum."

Was there a discussion on the sideline on what to do to counter the defensive line?

"There wasn't much we could say. We just kept telling each other, 'keep fighting, keep battling and find a way.'"

Is it difficult to feel that this team got better because of the way the season ended?

"No, because I honestly couldn't say what you just said. We actually got better and coaches even said so and even last year's stats show that we got better from last year."

Is this locker room angry?

"You can see the emotion the way this game ended."

WIDE RECEIVER ALLEN HURNS (Transcribed by Carla Hartman)

How tough was this game offensively?

"It was very tough, very unacceptable that we hadn't scored and had a very tough time moving the ball. Like I said, it's unacceptable. I think everyone that is going to be here next year, has to remember this feeling."

What is your take away from this season?

"This year has been ups and downs but we haven't played on a consistent level. Even in games we did win, we probably started slow and they finished good. If you want to be a good teammate overall, you have got to play good football."

Will this performance today motivate you in the offseason?

"Most definitely, I hope everyone takes this into consideration. Like I said it is unacceptable. We have to remember this feeling going into the next season."

How far has QB Blake Bortles come this season?

"You can really see how far he has progressed. He has really taken ownership of the offensive, getting guys lined up and everything. His numbers say it as well. It just says a lot about Coach (Greg) Olson (Offensive Coordinator). He has done a tremendous job with offense just taking ownership and letting guys do a lot of different things. I feel like we still have a long way to go."

OT LUKE JOECKEL (Transcribed by Francisco Casillas)

How tough is it to go out on this note?

"It doesn't feel good at all."

Anything you can put your finger on this week or was it just a tough match up or not enough preparation?

"I don't think preparation had anything to do with it. We'll go back and look at tape."



HOUSTON TEXANS vs. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS



What will your offseason focus be going into next year?

"You know, keep working on technique. I think the big thing is keep the football techniques going throughout the entire offseason really. You know you're not going full speed against guys, but you can really perfect some things, get bigger and stronger going into every offseason."

Today was tough but you made a lot of progress this year, what do you take away from this season with what you were able to accomplish?

"It's hard to look back at that right now. I just kind of have this sick feeling from this game. Next week go back, look through tape, look through the season and all that kind of stuff. Go into the offseason seeing that, but right now, just not a good feeling."

WIDE RECEIVER ALLEN ROBINSON (Transcribed by Lance Jaramillo)

Do you go in to the offseason feeling some momentum about what you guys were able to do this year, or do the last two weeks wipe that out?

"A little bit of both, but I know for us we definitely have to look back and reflect on the things that we did well this year. I know for us, from last year to this year, we came a long way, so I know for us, we've got to just continue to build on it. I think after everything that we can look back at and say, 'man, because we had a lot of progress this year.' We just have to review some of the things we did this year and wipe out some of the things we didn't do so well and hone in as we go into OTAs and things like that and just continue to do what we can do."

Will you look to get the other guys involved in the offseason workouts like this year with QB Blake Bortles and WR Allen Hurns?

"For sure. I think a lot of guys were involved with us as well. I don't think you should just credit us three. It was a real team effort. You saw for us with the (offensive) line giving Blake time, running backs being able to help us out as far as the play action and things like that, so it was a real team effort. We had a pretty large group of guys stay back last year so we've got to just continue to build on that."

How do you assess QB Blake Bortles in his second season as quarterback?

"I don't think us in this room ever doubted him or anything like that. Coming in as a rookie there were a lot of things thrown at him, even for me as well, you know. Looking at where I came from last year to this year, so having so many rookies and stuff like that as far as quarterback and skill positions, we knew we were going to take our lumps, but the key as it was, we were able to get that experience last year and be able to progress this year."