



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "I'll be happy to answer any questions I can. We have some beat up players and guys that are nicked up, but nothing official. I'll answer any questions I can."

Q: Do you see confidence growing in Karl Joseph?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, he's playing good. He's been a really good open field tackler. I think he's showing really good range. He's recognizing plays and he's making plays. That's exciting. He's getting better and better in this defense."

Q: For Joseph, how much of a factor is being comfortable out there and confident?

Coach Gruden: "You have to ask him that. I don't think he lacks confidence. He's a first-round draft choice. He has a lot of talent. I think he's taking advantage of his opportunities. He's healthy. He's been able to practice. I think his preparation has a lot to do with his performance. He's strung some really good weeks together for us."

Q: What did you make of the two punts in the first quarter to keep Tyreek Hill from returning them?

Coach Gruden: "Well that was the objective, not let him return the ball. We wanted to kick the ball out of bounds or near the sideline where we could pin him in the short side of the field. The first punt wasn't good enough, but it wasn't returned. Any time Tyreek Hill has no return yardage. I think the fans could return that first punt, but Johnny [Townsend] hit a good punt on the second one. We limited Hill, at least in the return game."

Q: What did you see from Justin Ellis in his first game back?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, he's rusty. I don't think he's 100 percent yet. Probably play shape is an area he's going to have to work himself into. Anytime you miss three months and you're a defensive tackle, that's tough. This short-term IR concept that they use now is neat to be able to bring a player back, but it's also challenging because a lot of time they're not in football shape. So I think that'll be the process he needs to go through here in the next couple of weeks."

Q: Is Maurice Hurst still dealing with an injury?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, we had a lot of guys beat up yesterday on the D-Line. I think Hurst is not 100 percent. Hopefully he can get himself ready for the Steelers. Shilique Calhoun suffered an injury, he came out of the game. Arden Key had a sore knee. So we have a number of D-Linemen that are sore today."

Q: Is Donald Penn closer in his return?

Coach Gruden: "I don't know. He came in the office last week. I think he's excited about where he is. Maybe we'll get him on the practice field at some point. I don't know that we'll see him this year. It is encourage to see him getting better and coming close to getting back on the grass."

Q: How has Penn been for Brandon Parker and Kolton Miller while he's been on IR this year?

Coach Gruden: "I think he's always been a steady influence on those guys. I really credit [Kelechi] Osemele and [Rodney] Hudson, Gabe Jackson the most. They're playing right there in the trenches with them. Both of those young tackles played well yesterday."

Q: What did you see from Dwayne Harris and his awareness on the situational kickoff?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, that was a great play. You don't see that very often. Good coaching by [Rich] Bisaccia. His experience showed there. He knew exactly what he was doing. I wouldn't advise that at home, that's quite a dangerous play around the 1-yard line. But a heads-up football play by a guy that knows what he's doing."



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Q: Do you think Rich Bisaccia could be a head coach in this league?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, I always felt that. I think he's got the leadership. He has work ethic. He has all the things you're looking for to be a great head coach. I'll be shocked if he doesn't get an opportunity."

Q: Do you think a misnomer, the fact that so few special teams coordinators get that opportunity?

Coach Gruden: "I think possibly so. I don't overthink things. I do think that usually the best guys get the jobs. He's one of the best guys I've ever coached with. I'd certainly recommend him to anybody."

Q: If Penn can't come back this season, what does his future look like?

Coach Gruden: "We'll talk about all those things at the end of the year. We've got too many other issues right now. We're just trying to win a football game. We got the Steelers coming to town. They're coming to town off a tough loss. I think they've lost two in a row. They have to have the game and we need to win a game."

Q: Any progress on Marshawn's [Lynch] rehab and return?

Coach Gruden: "I saw Marshawn a couple weeks ago. I think he's getting better, but he's rehabbing on his own. I know Rod Martin and our staff is keeping a close eye on him. I don't know if he'll be back this year either."

Q: What is the biggest challenge matching up against tight ends?

Coach Gruden: "Well, obviously, Indianapolis got the tight end going against us. [Travis] Kelce and [Patrick] Mahomes had a big day. A lot of that had to do with the scrambling ability of Mahomes. Some of the great plays that you will see scrambling, yesterday. We gave up too many big plays and we got to contain the quarterback, not let him get out of there and buy time. There's an old term called plaster, you got to plaster to your man. We got to do a better job hanging on to our coverage, no matter how long it is, and it's tough against a guy like Mahomes because he can throw strikes from any body position. It's hard to be more complimentary than we already have been."

Q: What has [Nicholas] Morrow shown to increase his playing time over the last few weeks?

Coach Gruden: "Well, we are just looking for some linebackers to step up here, be more consistent and be guys that we can hang our hat on here for the future. Marquel Lee started inside and he's playing outside now. We are giving [Jason] Cabinda a shot in the middle. [Tahir] Whitehead is leading our team in tackles. Nick Morrow has been an important part of our nickel package. We are just trying to see exactly what we have and seeing what kind of progress is being made. He does have talent, he did make some plays yesterday. You like to have a linebacker with that skill level, that can cover backs and potentially tight ends."

Q: Do you look ahead at all to the draft and where you guys are in the draft process right now, or are you just focused on winning each week?

Coach Gruden: "No, we don't look ahead right now. We are looking at the Pittsburgh Steelers, that's all we are doing. I'm really proud of our team. We fought back yesterday and made it 33-30 in the fourth quarter. We got them third-and-five, we get a stop and we jump offsides. We gave Kansas City too many mulligans. We fumbled the ball to them three times. We had a fourth-and-one called back, and we gave them first downs by jumping offsides. We are not looking ahead to nothing except the Pittsburgh Steelers. I can assure you that, at least on our side of the building."

Q: Was that 49ers game in any way kind of a watershed moment where the team says, 'hey, we got to start enjoying ourselves again.' Was there anything like that going on?

Coach Gruden: "I don't think we enjoyed that night. Let me tell you that. That was a bad night for us. We lost a lot of our lineman that night, on the short week. Thursday Night Football is tough. You can look at the scores of all those games, the visiting team doesn't play very well. I even saw the New Orleans Saints



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struggle on the road Thursday night. I think it's tough, man. I don't like Thursday Night Football, personally, but that's for another day."

Q: How have you seen Marcell Ateman grow since getting more playing time?

Coach Gruden: "I think he's getting confident. Game speed too. You get acclimated to the game speed the more you play. It's his third start now. I thought he had a couple chances yesterday to make some signature plays I would like to see him make, but he did make the big touchdown reception to make it 33-30. It's kind of neat seeing these young guys gaining confidence. I think the more they play, the more they get truly acclimated to the speed of this game. It's a lot faster than what they are used to, but he's getting more and more comfortable. He played two positions yesterday and he helped us out. We did some good things offensively."

Q: What does getting this experience do for Marcell to make a jump in year two of his career?

Coach Gruden: "It gives him, I think, confidence to know that he can play. Sometimes you are a rookie and you think you can play in the NFL, but you really don't know until you get a chance to go out there and play. I think he's gaining that confidence. I think he's also, in his own mind, got to try take over and try to earn this job. This is an opportunity for him to win a job and he knows he's got to play better in these next four weeks to do that. We will see if Martavis [Bryant] can play again this year. I'm not quite sure, but if he doesn't we will keep sending 88 out there."

Q: Have you seen progress in the last few weeks and what do you attribute that to?

Gruden: "I think the offensive line has gotten healthy. I think that helps. I think we're healthier up front. Derek has played good football. I think that's a great combination. When you're healthy upfront and you've got some continuity with your linemen, you're able to pass-protect and block better. It has an effect on every phase of your offense. Derek has been hot. He's been playing well. He's really picking up the system well. He made some great audibles yesterday. He made some great throws. I'm excited about that."

Q: He was able to get the ball downfield more yesterday. Does that come with having a healthy offensive line?

Gruden: "Yeah, I think that was the gameplan a little. We wanted to be aggressive at times with certain matchups we felt. I think it's a combination of that and a lot of things."

Q: You did some exotic things on offense to get Jordy involved.

Gruden: "Yeah, he is getting healthier. We have a lot of plays, as you know, we are accused of that by some people. We have a lot of plays. When the players are healthy, it's a lot more fun to use some of the plays. Hopefully, like I said, Martavis Bryant can start using some of his plays because they're getting stale in my office."

Q: It didn't seem like Derek was getting hit that much. Are you pleased about the pass blocking overall?

Gruden: "I was. I thought Kolton Miller did a great job. Dee Ford is really coming on as an edge-rusher in this league. Justin Houston can rush. Bob Sutton has a good blitz package. I thought we picked up a couple nice blitzes. I thought the group collectively did a nice job. There are a couple there that we'd like to get back, but overall, it's getting better. I'm excited about it."

Q: It was Fadol Brown's first game in a few weeks. He had a few penalties. What did you make of that?

Gruden: "We can't do that. We can't have penalties. You can't fumble the ball and you can't do those things and win in this league. I appreciate his effort. I've always appreciated his effort. He loves to play, he loves to compete, but he's had some penalties. I think he had two yesterday. You have to watch the ball. You can't see or hear too much, you have to watch the ball. That hurt us yesterday."



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Q: Have you seen a growth in Derek's decision-making this year?

Gruden: "I thought he was going to make that throw. He's really good at uncovering scramble drills. He's had a lot of touchdowns in this league from Aaron Rodgers on those scramble drills. I thought Jordy uncovered, three-man rush, Derek had plenty of time. I think Derek would tell you that's maybe the one throw he'd like to have back from yesterday. Derek is seeing the field good, he really is. The more he plays with Jordy at full speed, that will be a nice combination for us."

Q: Are you starting to see Derek evolve in the 'know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em' situation?

Gruden: "I think so. I think it all helps when he gets some good looks in the pocket like he did yesterday. His preparation is excellent. His recognition is really good. He's got a very fast mind and a really quick release. He can be really accurate if protected and that's a combination we like."

Q: Do you have a sense of how close Martavis is?

Gruden: "I have no sense, common sense or sense on Bryant. I lack sense. I threw a challenge flag with seven seconds left yesterday. I knew exactly what I was doing, by the way. It wasn't a very sensible thing to do but I wanted to challenge Al Riveron in New York City to look at it because I have people in the press box telling me that's not a catch. Seeing plays overturned by somebody you can't even see, I thought with three timeouts and seven seconds left I'd use one of my timeouts by giving Al a little extra time to look at that play. I knew exactly what I was doing."