



## ***Oakland Raiders Transcript***

### **Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing**

#### **Q: How's it been so far?**

**Coach Downing:** "It's been great. It's been a wonderful opportunity. I'm very appreciative of the Raiders having faith in me and [Head Coach] Jack [Del Rio] having faith in me to give me this chance. It's been a lot of fun to dive in with the guys and have a little bit broader scope and be able to stop in different rooms and see the offense evolve."

#### **Q: Who have you taken pieces from in terms of your coaching style from previous coaching staffs you've been on?**

**Coach Downing:** "The biggest influence on my coaching style is probably Scott Linehan. He's really my mentor in this profession. I worked with him a long time, Minnesota, St. Louis and Detroit. So Scott and I remain very close, and it's probably where most of personality comes from as a coordinator. There's certainly been a lot of guys along the way that have really influenced me. Everybody knows [offensive line coach] Mike Tice gave me my first coaching contract. He's really helped instill certain beliefs about how an offense is run and a system is put together. I owe a lot to a lot of people along the way, and I'm very fortunate for that."

#### **Q: Have you started tinkering with the offense yet? How much has changed?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, we have most of the wrinkles ironed out, things we want to adjust. Now it's just putting them into action and practicing them on the turf in between the white lines. I think a good offense is ever evolving. I think you're finding ways to get better schematically, and I think the responsibility of a coaching staff is always looking for a way to tweak things so it best suits your personality and you're personnel. So it's constant adjustment, but for the most part, all the major tweaks are done."

#### **Q: What does Marshawn Lynch bring to an offense?**

**Coach Downing:** "It's awesome. I wouldn't say that because of him we're changing anything. It's just nice to have another piece added to the puzzle. We really like the young backs that we have, and we feel like Marshawn added to that group is really going to solidify our running back situation and give us a chance to put our best foot forward in the run game and in protection in passing."

#### **Q: What does it mean to have a guy like Marshawn, who doesn't normal participate in OTAs, around now?**

**Coach Downing:** "I think it's a testament to Marshawn as a whole. Yeah, he hadn't really been an offseason attendee, but he showed it's important to him to integrate himself, not only in the offense, but just in the locker room and with the coaching staff. So, it's been nice to have him around. He did a little bit more today and we're excited about where he's at. Just the type of person that he's been so far has been outstanding."

#### **Q: What are your early impressions of the type of person he is?**

**Coach Downing:** "He's a hard worker and he's a football junkie. He loves football and he loves talking ball. I've really enjoyed the conversations we've had up until this point. I think he brings a veteran savvy with a fun personality behind it that makes it a really good combination."

#### **Q: What do you think it means that some of the players say, 'They let us be us?' What is your approach to instilling that?**

**Coach Downing:** "I'm not sure what that means. I think the players we have in this building garner a certain respect. We have a great group of veterans and some really hard working young guys. I like taking feedback from them on ways we can adjust things. Earlier we were talking about adjustments to the system or little tweaks, sometimes it's their idea. There's no pride in authorship from me on how we're going to do things. If there's something that's better suited to our players, I want to hear about it. It's my job to digest that and be the filter or the funnel from all the broad scope ideas to see what fits our offense. As a whole, I just want our players to have



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confidence in what they're doing. I think you can play faster when you're confident. If you have a sense of ownership in the scheme, you're going to play even faster."

### **Q: Is there anything in Derek Carr's game that you can point to and want to see improve?**

**Coach Downing:** "I'll tell you the best thing about Derek, and I mean this sincerely, is that he wants to be great. He understands that to be great, it's always a learning process. It's always a growing process. For him, it could be something as a lead foot placement on an out-breaker to his left, and he wants to drill that and work it and work it because he happened to leave one ball inside a little bit in team period or something like that. For him, it's just consistency. It's taking those little details and refining them as much as he possibly can, so that when he has the perfect look, when he has the opportunity to attack a one-on-one, he's as accurate as he can be or get us in and out of the right place and the right situations."

### **Q: What does Jared Cook bring to the offense that you guys didn't have last year?**

**Coach Downing:** "Well I'll tell you, he's an impressive looking human being, isn't he? He's a big, long guy. Runs really well, stretches the field vertically inside. He's a matchup nightmare for linebackers and most safeties. He really brings a sense in the passing game of a mismatch that we can count on week in and week out. Beyond that, and kind of what I'm pleasantly surprised with, is he's a really good in line blockers as well. Jared's versatility is going to be something that we're able to feed on a little bit and use him in different packages. Pair him with other tight ends or other receivers. We're excited to see the volume he can handle."

### **Q: Does his presence just naturally make this team better equipped for more personnel than in years past?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, you know I think when you start accumulating talent on offense, you don't worry as much about how you're going to be in one personnel grouping or the other. You just look for ways to attack the defense."

### **Q: With Carr going into his fourth year, is more on his plate than ever and if so in what regard?**

**Coach Downing:** "I don't know that I would say more on his plate than ever. I think maybe there's a little more fluid stream of communication. I've been with Derek the last couple of years, so I kind of know how he thinks. I know what he likes and what he doesn't like. Sometimes it's just as easy as reading his body language. If he doesn't like a certain route combination versus a certain look we're getting, then I'll just steer clear from it. There's been a lot made about his ability to change things at the line of scrimmage and so on and so forth. To me, the quarterback is an extension of the play caller anyways. I think he and I having the relationship that we have and understanding each other and the way we think about football is probably about as dynamic as that analogy needs to get."

### **Q: Can you expect another substantial leap from Derek, who's already as good as he is now?**

**Coach Downing:** "I think I would be doing my job poorly if I didn't expect improvement out of every one of our players, not just Derek. To your question, Derek's growth and ascension as a quarterback is a tribute to his hard work. I can tell you that he's only upped his sense of urgency to put out the best version of himself. I would anticipate his hard work paying off."

### **Q: What did you see out there today from your offense?**

**Coach Downing:** "A little bit of Memorial Day hangover if you will. Certainly need to iron out a couple of things and get some rough patches smooth out. I like the effort and I think the attention to detail will come with everybody getting re-accumulated to being back in OTAs and not on a holiday weekend. Overall, I was pleased with their attention and effort."

### **Q: What are you seeing out of Connor Cook during his first full offseason program and do you think he benefited from his experience last year?**

**Coach Downing:** "He's such a pro and a guy that wants to do things right that the more he's around meetings, out at practice and understands what we're looking for in the system, he'll just continue to grow and grow. He's one of



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those guys that he wants you to paint a picture for him of how you want it done and then he's going to do his best to replicate that picture. We're excited about where he's at this offseason and expect a lot of fun things in the future."

**Q: Do you think being in his position last year helped?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, I think so. I think so. I think any experience in football gives you the ability to draw on those experiences and put your best foot forward."

**Q: What have you seen out of Cordarrelle Patterson so far? Are there ways you can use him that he hasn't been used in the past?**

**Coach Downing:** "He's a fun tool. I won't speak too much about how he was used in the past. That's somebody else's job, but I can tell you that we're going to have fun looking for ways to get him involved in the offense. He's a big strong, physical, dynamic with the ball in his hands type player, and we're excited to see what he can do for us."

**Q: How is Patterson as a downfield receiver?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, I've liked what I've seen so far. He's done a nice job."

**Q: What is your style that you've brought to the offense? How would you describe that?**

**Coach Downing:** "I don't know. I think I like to just look for matchups and try to exploit those matchups and let guys go win their one-on-one battles. I think that the roster that [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] and Jack have put together gives us the ability to kind of be a Swiss Army knife and use whatever tool we need to. I'm excited about creating those matchups against the Raiders' defense for a few more weeks here and into training camp, but then as we game plan as well."

**Q: Have you seen any difference in Amari Cooper this spring?**

**Coach Downing:** "I'll tell you what, he's coming to work with a purpose. He's really been impressive with the way he's attacked each day. He's working on the small things. Working on things that maybe hindered him as the season went on last year. I think that you're going to see an impressive version of Amari in 2017."

**Q: What did you make of his second half?**

**Coach Downing:** "To be honest with you, I was so focused on being a great quarterback coach at that point. I wasn't really analyzing his game. It'd be unfair for me to sit here and talk to you about the second half of the season for him last year."

**Q: How was your first week on social media?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, you can see I've had, what, two posts? That's about how much you can expect from me on that."

**Q: Why hasn't it clicked for EJ Manuel with past teams? How do you fix that?**

**Coach Downing:** "EJ is a good kid. I don't know if fix is the right word. Just polish a little bit, I think. He's certainly got a great skill set. He's a wonderful kid. He's very sharp. I think sometimes it's just a matter of getting a little change of scenery for someone and a breath of fresh air and they can kind of hit the reset button and start again. We're excited about where EJ's at."

**Q: How open are you to meeting with players individually and getting their feedback on what they'd like to see from the offense?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, you know what, I like to do it kind of at practice. I think earlier you were mentioning my one-on-one with Marshawn. I like to kind of be a walk around guy that gets feedback during practice. Sometimes it might be a downtime during special teams period or it might be in pre-practice when they're stretching, but I



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certainly like to get every opportunity I can to get their feedback and make sure they feel like they have a voice. I tell the guys in the offensive meeting, there's a sliding scale to that. If you're a rookie and you've never taken a snap in the NFL, my attention span might not be that long, but if you're Donald Penn or Rodney Hudson or one of those guys, I'll listen."

**Q: Can you tell in the spring which rookies are going to be a player for the team or does it take until the preseason to get the full picture?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, it builds excitement. It builds excitement to see what they can do when we put pads on in training camp. I don't think out here in pajamas you can do too much on evaluating a guy's long-term contribution level. You certainly see somethings from a skill set standpoint that make you excited to see what they're going to do when we go to Napa and when we head to Arizona."

**Q: Have any of these rookies impressed you yet?**

**Coach Downing:** "I'll do this for you. I'll tell you that there's no one that's disappointed me. How about that?"

**Q: Are you guarding against tinkering too much with the offense?**

**Coach Downing:** "I think there's a certain amount of if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I think you're always, as I said earlier, always looking for ways to tweak things and kind of adjust them to best fit your personnel and personalities. We won't be doing whole sell changes. We talked about that. When I first got the job, we discussed that. There's certainly going to be every stone turned over to look for a way that we can do better."

### **QB Derek Carr**

**Q: Coach Downing said he thought there was a bit of an offensive Memorial Day hangover out there today. What did you think?**

**Carr:** "Just a little bit. I would say yeah. I think that as an offense we were still on our flights. It's not concerning. The things that we did today were just silly. Unacceptable, but silly. The first three days of this thing we've been hitting on all cylinders. Today, not so much. Look forward to getting to bed and getting back to it."

**Q: What does Todd bring to this offense?**

**Carr:** "What's really cool is he wants me to be an extension of him on the field. I'm still trying to work through how he wants me to do it, exactly how he wants it. I'm trying to do a better job of not doing too much with all the leeway he's given me. The first four days, even today, I'm catching myself doing a little too much. It's perfect learning. That's why I love OTAs. It's the perfect time to get those kinks ironed out. I had to tell him today sorry, I shouldn't have done that. He continues to encourage me and say, 'That's why we're doing it now.' It's great learning opportunity, but for him and I, it will be his brain doing all the work. That's my ultimate goal, is for every play that's run this season so be exactly what he wants. If we can get to that, which I'm confident we will by the time this summer is done and training camp, we should be rolling."

**Q: How integral is the relationship between quarterback and offensive coordinator?**

**Carr:** "It' is so crucial. It has to be so important. I've been blessed to have three amazing coordinators that cared about me and my growth and my input, in 'Oly' [former offensive coordinator Greg Olson], 'Mus' [former offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave] and T.D. T.D. has been like a big brother since I've met him. He's family. Him and I, we just really click. We think the same way. Whenever he has a thought or I have a thought, it's pretty much like, 'Yeah, that's what I was thinking, too.' He works so hard so I'm just trying not to screw it up. The more that we continue to sit together and talk and go through practices and have learning moments like today, the more we're going to flow and the easier it's going to be."



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**Q: All of the similarities you mention between you and Todd Downing, is that off the field as well?**

**Carr:** "Yeah, we play golf together. Everyone had fun with that one, with our guest that we had. We played golf, we talk about faith, we talk about politics, we talk about basketball, baseball, we talk about everything together. There's nothing that him and I don't step in to with each other. To have that off the field is cool, just to have a friend like that, let alone your offensive coordinator."

**Q: Is that something that happened quickly, that you clicked right away?**

**Carr:** "Whenever I meet somebody, they get 100 percent of my trust and everything right away. It's up to them to lose it, to be honest. I'm going to love, respect and honor everybody that's in my life. He's been nothing but the same. It was right away, we clicked. We had fun, we joked. But at the same time, there's an intensity that we work with. That's the same way that I approach it; I have a lot of fun out there with my teammates but the intensity in which I approach the game, I expect everything to be perfect all the time. He's the exact same way."

**Q: What do you think of Marshawn Lynch as a teammate?**

**Carr:** "I had talked to him for a total of like 10 seconds before he showed up here, which is when we played Seattle, I talked to him then, and those kinds of things. So I didn't know anything about him. Once he showed up, he's shown that he's a loyal, faithful person. I know for a fact he has my back no matter what. As a quarterback with a running back, it's the same thing I had with Latavius [Murray], same thing I had with 'D-Mac' [Darren McFadden] and M.J.D. [Maurice Jones-Drew], I knew they had my back. It's the same thing with him and the younger backs. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have my back. Right away, I could just feel it from him. There was no feeling-out process or anything. I just knew. He's told me multiple times that he does. To have that as a quarterback is big because he's the last line of defense picking up blitzes, he's the one fighting for extra yards to move the chains for us. He's just a loyal guy. I think that as long as you're just you and you're not a fake person, I don't see how he would have a problem with anybody."

**Q: Have you seen his funny side yet?**

**Carr:** "Oh yeah. He's definitely made a lot of jokes towards me, especially about some bad throws that I've had. That's just how he is. He likes to talk trash and things like that, but at the same time it's kind of like the big brother thing, like no one else better do it because he'll take care of it, kind of thing. We like to jab at each other and make fun, poke fun, I've been having fun with him, he's learning the new system so I like to make fun of him when he doesn't know stuff. We're having a good time and he's been nothing but loyal, and a good teammate."

**Q: Are you excited to see what Jared Cook can do for this offense?**

**Carr:** "He would have had a big touchdown today if he didn't get tackled down the seam. I say that because it's exciting that we have a couple of tight ends that can stretch like that. That puts so much stress on a defense if they get a linebacker matched up on him or a safety who is more of a tackling type guy. That's a troublesome thing for a defensive coordinator. With a guy like Jared that can stretch the field vertically like that, it's going to lead to more single coverage outside for 'Coop' [Amari Cooper] and 'Crab' [Michael Crabtree]. It's going to lead to more one-on-ones for Seth [Roberts]. The possibilities are endless when you add a guy at that position that has that much speed vertically. The things you can do with him really put a lot of stress on the defense."

**Q: When Jared came to visit, what did you learn about him as a person?**

**Carr:** "He's very competitive. He's very laid back, cool dude. He just wants to do the route how I want it done. 'How do you want me to do this, what angle do you want me to take on this?' all those things. It makes my job easy, especially because he's really fast so I can miss a little bit and he can make it look right. When we sat there and watched film and I talked to him about the different things that he can do for us and help us, it didn't feel like it was a recruiting thing, it felt more like we're just getting ready for the season, if that puts it into perspective."



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**Q: As you mature in the league, do you find that there is more you can have on your plate? How has that changed as you've grown?**

**Carr:** "My rookie year, it was the same way it is right now with coach Downing, just go out there and put us in a good play. I could go from a run to a pass to a playaction to a naked to a screen, change the formation completely, anything. Obviously I'm not going to give T.D. too many headaches yet, but there are little things that when you learn, you get experience by playing all these football games. I know what beats this coverage, so let's do that. Why wait? Why turn it on on Monday and say, 'Man, I wish we would have done that a couple hours ago.' That's the big thing. I've said this before but I have to slow down. I have to step back and make sure I'm not doing too much. If I do too much, it's going to hurt everybody. I have to be consistent in the way that I do those kinds of things and I have to do it in such a way that it's what coach Downing wants. If I just go out there and do what I want, we're going to be horrible. I have to honor his position and do exactly what he wants that way we're going in the same direction."

**Q: From Year 1 to Year 2, your improvement was pretty substantial, and then your improvement from year two to year three, you improved to an MVP candidate. How realistic is it to think from three to four you can do it again?**

**Carr:** "I hope so. I don't put measurements on it like stats and things, but from a decision-making standpoint, from a poised and comfort standpoint, playing the game with more knowledge, more wisdom, from that standpoint I hope I grow every single year. I really do. I hope I get better every year. I hope from Year 3 to Year 4, crazy saying that, I'm getting old, but to think that there is still more out there because there is. Like today, instead of putting the ball here I can put it here. I know I can because I've done it before. I need to get to where I can do it every time. Ninety-nine out of 100 isn't good enough. There's always room to improve and I'm going to work to try to improve that. Numbers and awards can be what it is, but I just want to make sure that every day I'm coming out here and working my tail off so I do get better. The ultimate goal is winning the Super Bowl. Once we do that, I'm sure I'll find something I did wrong that season and fix it."

**Q: We haven't had a chance to talk to you since it was reported, but where are you in the contract talks?**

**Carr:** "Let me see what I can tell you. *(laughing)* There's nothing new to report right now. I'm hoping those things pick up here real soon which we're expecting anyway. They've been talking to Tim, my agent, and things like that. That should get going real soon, I would hope. Once training camp hits, I'm all football. I'm not going to distract my teammates and you guys are going to want to know and all that, but trust me, if it's not done by training camp, we won't be talking about it. I'm focused on football. Again, I just want to win. All that stuff is fun and cool and all that and it has to happen because it's a business, but I have so many things I want to work on and I don't want to distract my teammates. Khalil [Mack] had to answer questions about it on SportsCenter the other day and that bugs the heck out of me because there's no reason he should have to talk about that. Hopefully it'll just get done, which both sides keep saying it's going to get done. I'm not worried about it, to let you know that. Once camp hits, I don't want to be a distraction. I've made it very clear that I want to be a Raider for my entire career. I don't want to play for anybody else. They know that. They've told me how bad they want me, so we'll see."

**Q: To clarify, if it wasn't done when training camp started, you're playing out that last year of this contract?**

**Carr:** "Yeah, I wouldn't even answer my phone. The money isn't the thing that drives me. If it was, it shouldn't be standing here, to be honest. What drives me is making sure I'm giving everything I have with my abilities and making sure we win. I don't want anything distracting my thought process at all. That's not a job or anything like that, it's just me saying I'm not going to deal with anything that's not helping me just focus on winning."



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### **TE Jared Cook**

#### **Q: What has it been like working with Derek Carr thus far?**

**Cook:** "It's awesome, man. Great quarterback, great skills, great leader, excited to be in the huddle with him. Very communicative. Tells you exactly how he wants routes, tells you how he wants to run them and talks to you if something goes AWOL a little bit."

#### **Q: Do you see some of the characteristics in Carr that you saw while playing with Aaron Rodgers?**

**Cook:** "Yeah, absolutely. Ball placement, able to read coverages on the move, able to read defenders positions on the receiver and able to put the ball where it needs to be for completion ratings and success as an offense."

#### **Q: Do you see a lot of opportunities in this scheme as a tight end?**

**Cook:** "Yeah, it's exciting. That was one huge reason why I wanted to come here after I visited, is because the way that they utilize the tight end and the way that they do read the offense. It's been efficient for everybody in the tight end meeting rooms as well as every other position on how we run our complementary routes off of each other. So, I like it and I think it will be beneficial for us."

#### **Q: What is this tight ends group like in comparison to your former teams?**

**Cook:** "It's a lot more talent across the board. It's a lot more talent in that room. We got six guys that can go and line up and play right now I think. It's competition every day and it's also kind of a love-hate type of thing. We all look out for each other but at the same time, we're all doing what we can to make the team."

#### **Q: How important is it for you to be known as an all-around player and not just a guy who catches passes?**

**Cook:** "It's important but I don't really trip, you know? All that outside noise is just that – it's just noise. If somebody's saying that, they're evaluating the film or maybe even not evaluating the film, but they're going off their own basis and that doesn't really matter. I'm just here to play football and do what I can to help my team. As long as they're happy upstairs, I'm cool with it."

#### **Q: Do you take pride to be a good in-line blocker?**

**Cook:** "Absolutely. You should take pride in everything you do. You should take pride in everything and attack it in the same enthusiasm and mentality and that's full-steam ahead, head on. So, absolutely I take pride in that."

#### **Q: Can you talk about the similarities between Rodgers and Carr in the film room?**

**Cook:** "They know the offense and that's really important for a quarterback, especially a young quarterback is to know the moving pieces of what's going on around you. Number two would probably be ball placement and the way that the pass comes out is also imperative for your receivers to kind of have that rapport with you and know how you're going to throw the ball in certain situations away from a defender. And he does a really good job with that, especially being such a young quarterback. I've played with older guys and they don't know how to have that right touch to get the ball to the position where the receiver needs it. D.C. has that down."

#### **Q: What's been your first impressions of Amari Cooper and Michael Crabtree?**

**Cook:** "Oh, they're cool as a fan, great guys. 'Crab' is hilarious. Great receivers, powerful receivers. 'Coop' is very impressive down the field and right off the line. Great feet, great hands. It's going to be fun playing with those guys."