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Defensive Coordinator Paul Guenther

Q: Where have you seen Gareon Conley make strides in pass coverage since his rookie season?

Coach Guenther: "Just his technique and his understanding of leverage in coverage, both off and in press, and understanding where the ball is supposed to go based on the coverage. It's kind of how the quarterback is taught to look at it. If this guy is running this way and there is a safety there, there's a good chance the quarterback is not going to that side of the field. When you have a tough down or an easy down, he's come a long way, in that way."

Q: Have you seen him [Gareon] try to make strides in tackling and other areas he may not be as efficient in?

Coach Guenther: "Yeah, I mean, he struggled some in the beginning of the season. I think a lot of that had to do with his lower body strength, just coming off the recovery of his injury where he was more rehabbing early in the year. Now we get to work on strengthening the lower body and those type of things, becoming balanced and being in a good football position when he tackles. He's gotten better with that, obviously he struggled some in the beginning of the year on a couple of those plays, but he's gotten better."

Q: Was his [Gareon] deflection on the ball that was intercepted in the end zone a sign of the kind of plays he can make?

Coach Guenther: "Yeah. He was on top of the guy, got his head and eyes around, and understood where he was on the field and that there wasn't much room left. To have the awareness to tip it back in bounds where he knew the safety was going to be, and [Marcus] Gilchrist came over to make a great play and keep his feet in bounds."

Q: There is a lot of youth in the secondary group, is there confidence that these guys can develop into a pretty good group?

Coach Guenther: "Yeah, I got youth everywhere. Linebacker and defensive line, so hopefully they all continue to develop. Like I said, the more playing time they are getting right now, it's only going to bode well for them down the season. Any situation they are in; third downs, red zone, short yardage goal line, one minute. All those things when they are in a game and it's live and it's real football, it's going to pay dividends down the road."

Q: When you are watching film, are you looking for coachable moments to develop these young players?

Coach Guenther: "Every single second. Every single play in a game. Every single play in practice. Meetings and walk throughs. All of those things are opportunities. It's very different having a veteran team that's been together a long time, where you can kind of say, 'hey, they got this,' whereas every little inch along the way you got to make sure they are on top of the details and understand why we are making the calls and what they are supposed to do. Every minute of the day is like that for us right now."

Q: Is forcing [Patrick Mahomes] out of the pocket a good thing for your defense?

Coach Guenther: "Well, I mean, you are throwing off the timing of the play. Typically, in the passing game you have a three, five or seven-step drop where the depth of the route is tied into the depth of the drop of the quarterback. When you are getting him off his platform, certainly that ruins the timing, but at the same time the receiver breaks their routes off when he gets out of the pocket, so it's more we have to do a good job staying with our guy. Like I said, he does a good job of making throws, whether it's across his body or down field, going to his left or right where he can make throws on the move. He did that in college. I remember watching the defensive guys going against him in college. We played him in Cincinnati last year during the preseason and I was very impressed with him then. Obviously, he's done good as a starter in Kansas City. He's a good player. He's got a lot of arm strength, a lot like a shortstop, really. Turning two



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and throwing across his body, all those type of things. Throwing at different arm levels; side arm, over the top, three quarters. It's a good challenge for us, he's a good player."

Q: Does the pass rush from the outside have to be more disciplined now with a guy like Mahomes?

Coach Guenther: "Certainly, the pass rush always has to work together. We always have a plan every week with the coverage aspect and the rush aspect. With a guy who can move, he's not so much a pocket passer where you kind of know where he's going to be eight yards behind the center or wherever it may be. It has to be disciplined to keep him in there and obviously if he gets out we have to have a second level rush coming through to make sure we jam him up."

Q: How unique of a challenge is defending against Tyreek Hill?

Coach Guenther: "They do a lot of things with him. Reverses, jet sweeps, they move him around in the formations and he lines up at all three spots. It's not like they do just one thing with him. He lines up at the X, he lines up at the slot, or whatever it may be. They will move him around. Obviously, they got some of the other guys in there, [Sammy] Watkins and [Travis] Kelce and those guys, and the back is a good player. The games I've seen, he has broken a lot of tackles. We got to do a good job of tackling the catch and tackling the run in the open field."

Q: Do you think last week was a step in the right direction for the defense?

Coach Guenther: "I always look at points, but yes and no. We gave up some plays that we shouldn't have given up. The one to the tight end and obviously one there in the red zone. We were way too off in coverage. I always said, 'hey, sometimes teams are going to make plays and move the ball down the field, but once we get into the red zone that's where we got to be really good and on it.' Aside from a couple plays I thought they did good. Obviously, it was a unique offense and not one you face every week. That's all we are looking for, is to take steps in the right direction. To get the ball back to our offense, to try and limit the score. The yards this day and age in the NFL, you look at the things every week and there's 450, 495 and all those things. Limit the score and get the ball back to the offense so they can possess it."

Q: With the offensive yards being up across the league, is there an emphasis on big defensive plays like strips and takeaways?

Coach Guenther: "Once they get into the red zone you try to hold them to three points if you can. Obviously, the yardage, and I don't know what the difference is from last year to this year is, but there's probably a big jump in the yards per game for the higher offenses. I always said if we give up a play or they are trying to drive it down in the red zone, we got to tighten up and really do a good job of understanding what they do in the red area, so we can limit the points. If they've earned three down there, let's not give them seven."

Offensive Coordinator Greg Olson

Opening statement: "First of all, big shout out to Jared Cook for winning the Ed Block Courage Award. It's a tremendous honor. Everyone in the organization, we're really proud of him to receive that honor. So shout out to Jared."

Q: How have you seen Jared exemplify what that award means?

Coach Olson: "He's a very resilient player to go through this season as he as and continue to come to practice and prepare the way he prepares. Credit to him. I know it's an award that's voted on by his teammates, so certainly he's gained the respect from his teammates in that regard and the way he's comeback and competed this season."



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Q: The play late in the fourth quarter when the game was already decided against the Chargers when he stiff armed the cornerback, does that say something about him?

Coach Olson: "Yeah, he's a tremendous competitor. That's showed through every week. The guy, like a lot of the players, hates to lose. Really he hates to lose more than he likes to win. Those are the kinds of guys you're looking for."

Q: Derek Carr has gone six games without throwing a pick. Yesterday he said that early on in Jon Gruden's offense he was pressing too much. Did anyone sit down and talk to him about that or did he realize on his own?

Coach Olson: "I think a little bit of both. I think there's a comfort level that you get within a system. He's learning this system for the first time, so he has a little bit better feel for what throws that he can or should try to make and which ones he shouldn't try to make. Also getting a feel for the players. There is a fine line there. We want him to be aggressive. There's a big difference between being aggressive and being careless with the football. We're always emphasizing to him to be aggressive in that position. If you want to be a great one in this league, then there are some tight throws that you're going to have to make. We just can't be careless with the football. I think through experience for him and probably coaching as well. I think Brian Callahan, obviously Coach Gruden and myself, spend a lot of time with him in terms of the decision-making process."

Q: What kind of impact has the change in the receiver core had on you as a coach and play caller?

Coach Olson: "Well we've always said in this league, it's a production business here. There are a lot of teams that have had to play with rookies at key positions. We've had to do that. Yet our expectations and our standards are not going to change and will not change. We'll pound that into the players. We emphasize that on a daily basis. We will continue to have high expectations as we finish out these last five games. We'll have higher expectations moving forward."

Q: Has it forced you to alter your playcalling at all?

Coach Olson: "Yes, certainly. You're trying to find the strengths and the weaknesses of each player. Certainly with the idea of what are we going to do to help our quarterback win this football game? To help him more than anything and allow us to get the ball in the hands of our play makers. But we have to be aware of what those weaknesses are offensively in terms of our personnel and how do we help those players."

Q: A lot of times when you come out of training camp you know which plays your receivers are comfortable with. With the core changing as much as it has do you find yourself having to learn these things in games?

Coach Olson: "Well I think each week on a week to week basis depending on who of those wide receivers we've had that have been up. The one consistent has been Jared Cook. He's been very consistent for us. But we've made changes at running backs. We've made changes on the offensive line at the right tackle position. There are changes that are made. Each week we go into the game plan looking at who are our players, what's the matchup going to be across from them, how do we exploit that matchup, which is the best matchup that we have in terms of our skill players, and what's the best way to exploit that matchup. It does change it's just because we have changes within the offense, it makes it a little bit more difficult that way."

Q: What do you hope to see from Darren Waller?

Coach Olson: "He had a good day yesterday. We had a chance to look at him yesterday. We thought he did some good things on the show team. We threw him in there a little bit with our 1's and 2's. He played in the offense. We just wanted to get a feel for him more than anything. We had a chance to look at what he had done in Baltimore. There was some game tape that we got the chance to look at before we made the acquisition. So we had a chance to see some of the routes that he ran. Again, right now it's getting a



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feel for what routes he runs best. How he is out in space. We did some things with him out in space, again, like we do with Jared. How does he fit in a Jared Cook type of role. That's what we're looking at him right now as how does he fit in that role."

Q: Are you starting to see Doug Martin as a guy who still has the potential to be the lead back now that he's been getting the reps?

Coach Olson: "Yeah, we're still excited about Doug Martin. We liked his running style. We feel like he can continue to be a feature back. Certainly a complimentary back in our scheme. He doesn't play every down back right now because we feel so good about Jalen [Richard], but he is a strong running back. We like what we've seen."

Q: What are your impressions on Martavis Bryant?

Coach Olson: "I think his attitude has been good. It's just the reliability aspect. He's been injured. There's been different reasons why he's had to miss some games. For us, it's more about accountability, reliability for a player like that. We still think he has tremendous skills. Just more on a consistent basis."

Q: Do you expect him back this year?

Coach Olson: "Yeah, oh yeah. Yes."

Q: It looked like Carr took more shots downfield against Baltimore in the second half. Was that a reflection on how the game was going at that point or was that you guys opening up?

Coach Olson: "Again, opening up. We'd like to hit some of those. We had two offensive pass interference calls and we missed a couple of the deep throws. He threw so beautiful balls. It was unfortunate on the pass interference calls. We'd like to see more of that. Certainly we had some shot plays designed down the field and if they are there, then the more he's able to see those looks, the more he's able to take those shots."

Q: You guys have had to relocate a few practices in the last few weeks. What makes it efficient for you to do that?

Coach Olson: "We found, really they've been very productive, to be honest with you. We've been able to get a lot of plays and work done in a controlled indoor environment with reducing the risk of possible injury on the field or last week, air quality. We feel like we've got a tremendous amount of work done when we did it, so that's kind of what makes the decision a little bit easier when you look at the amount of work that we got when we were there during the poor air quality practices. It allows our players to...We got a good practice yesterday, a full speed practice outdoors. We saw the weather report and saw that it might be raining heavy today, so we got a lot of good work in yesterday, but with the thought in mind that we might be indoors today. I think it'll be business as usual for the players and for the coaching staff and we'll get a lot of work done."

Q: Brandon Parker talked about how he gets upset when he has a few bad plays in bunches. Is that common for rookies and as a coach how do you get him out of that mode?

Coach Olson: "Yeah, I think it's certainly common amongst players that are just getting their first starts. Whether it be a rookie or a second-year player that's just starting to get his first start. A lot of it comes down to confidence. We look at those plays that came back-to-back, a big part of it was fundamental sets for him. He lost a little bit of confidence on the first play, so now he wasn't as aware of his pass set. Again, it's all about experience. The only way you learn from that is experience. With that player, we believe he has the right mindset. That he's going to come back, and he will come back. This is all going to be a great experience for him in terms of moving forward as the right tackle."