



Oakland Raiders Transcript

General Manager Reggie McKenzie Pre-Draft Press Conference

Q: How different is the process this year with the new coaching staff?

McKenzie: "It's a collaborative effort. We're in this thing together. We're trying to get everybody's thoughts on all of these players. We're working together on this. That's just the way it is. That's the way we do it."

Q: Does the new coaching staff have different thoughts on trades, etc.? How has that been?

McKenzie: "It's going great. I got a feel for Coach [Jon] Gruden. We like the same type of players. All this coaching staff and scouts, we're just trying to get on the same page and get it together. That's what we're doing."

Q: What type of players do you and Gruden like?

McKenzie: "Raiders. The characteristics of that is just being good football players. It's not about height, weight, speed or where they come from. It's about who they are as players. Do they love playing football? All those types of characteristics that you truly like about football players."

Q: Has the structure changed in terms of how you and your staff present information?

McKenzie: "No, it's all about coming together and feeling each other out and getting all the information from the coaches. Getting the information from the scouts. Then we set the board. Guys, it's not rocket science. It really isn't. It's just trying to get a feel for a new system. New coaches, what they like and what they don't like. That's the process."

Q: You said in the past that you let the board talk to you. With Jon Gruden in the room, who's going to be doing the talking?

McKenzie: "The board will still be doing the talking. It really will."

Q: When you're drafting in the area that you are, do you pay a lot of attention to the top three picks?

McKenzie: "We pay attention to all of those picks. When you're picking in the top 10, you never know how it's going to fall. It's not like we're picking at 30. That's a big difference. We make it to where we know those type players because you can always move around in this draft."

Q: Are you hoping for four quarterbacks to be taken in the Top 10?

McKenzie: "I have no comment on that one. *(laughing)* It's going to fall the way it falls, but we we're going to always try to take the best player."

Q: Does the quarterback buzz improve the value of your pick?

McKenzie: "Usually it does because teams always want quarterbacks. If they feel good about quarterbacks, they want to try to get them. That's just the way the NFL is."

Q: What if the best player on the board when you pick is a quarterback?

McKenzie: "That may not be the best player on my board. Maybe on your board." *(laughing)*

Q: With being so active in free agency this year, how does that affect the draft process?

McKenzie: "It's always a situation where players come up, whether you need them or whether you want them, versus the best player. We just try to fill the roster up. If we saw a player out there that we could really go get, that's what we did this offseason. Whether it's to patch holes, we just wanted to bring in some good competition, some good players, some leadership. That's what we did. Now, going into this draft, that will play a part only from the standpoint of competition. We're not going to not get a position player because we signed a certain guy. If there's a player on our board that we really like, we're still going to try to get him."



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Q: Is there anything new you can share in regard to NaVorro Bowman?

McKenzie: "No, there's no change there. He's still a free agent."

Q: Do you expect Khalil Mack at the voluntary mini-camp next week? Have you heard from him?

McKenzie: "I have not. We've just been focusing on the draft and the coaching staff and focusing on these players that are here and getting ready for the mini-camp next week."

Q: Year to year, you here that some drafts are good overall drafts and some aren't. How would you rate this draft?

McKenzie: "We like the players in this draft, so we think we can upgrade our team throughout this draft and it remains to be seen. It's hard to evaluate the players, how good a draft is until a few years later. Let them play."

Q: As you evaluate your own position needs, do you feel like you know what you have in Gareon Conley and Obi Melifonwu at this point?

McKenzie: "No, because they haven't played. We have to get them out there, get them going. The coaches will get those guys going as soon as they're deemed ready to roll. We'll see what they've got."

Q: Do you anticipate Gareon Conley being able to participate in these OTAs?

McKenzie: "I have no update to where he is now because he is just now getting back into the flow. How soon they're going to let him go full speed, that's going to be determined."

Q: Do you plan on using the fifth-year option on Amari Cooper?

McKenzie: "With Amari, we're going to let this thing go into... Going into the draft now, that's what we're focused on, but we've been in contact with his agent. I don't want to put anything out there before... I don't want to put the cart before the horse, so to speak. But we like Amari."

Q: You've used three high picks over the last couple of years on defensive backs, would that make it harder for you to take a defensive back at No. 10 if that was the guy on your board who you thought was the best?

McKenzie: "No, it would not. It would not make it harder. We value defensive backs. As a matter of fact, we really value really good players. If that's going to be the best player on our board, we'll try to go get him."

Q: Going into this draft, do you have any more of a sense of urgency to bring in a class where numerous players will contribute?

McKenzie: "What we want to do is just bring in some good players, really good football players. We're not going to beat up on some of these guys who physically were not able to get out there and play. Hopefully some of these guys from the past drafts, we can get them out there, keep them healthy and see what they can do. Hopefully this is the year. Even the guys we draft this year, we have no idea if they can make it through OTAs or training camp and preseason healthy. You just hope and pray they can be there for us and see what they can do during the season. We're hopeful that we can stay healthy and let the guys play."

Q: How does having all those late-round picks help in terms of trading during the draft?

McKenzie: "Teams always want picks, especially when they don't have any in those later rounds. It would help. If we would like to move up, we can use that as trade bait."

Q: You probably won't be able to be as active post-draft with undrafted rookies as you were last year. How has that impacted your top-30 visits in terms of scheduling or how can it impact trying to sign those guys?

McKenzie: "It didn't impact the 30 visits at all, but what we're going to do is we will evaluate all of those free agents after the draft and if we feel like we can upgrade, we will. So, that's not going to hinder us from trying to sign some players. We're just going to have to compare, you know, to what we have. We're going to bring in the best 90. We only have X amount of spots. We may have to create some."



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Q: Do you see the Khalil Mack situation as being tied to Aaron Donald?

McKenzie: "No, we look at Khalil as his own situation. We're not looking at anybody else. We're just focusing on our guy."

Q: Is there a position in this draft you think is especially deep or one that is better than in recent years?

McKenzie: "Yes."

Q: Which one?

McKenzie: "Next question." *(laughter)*

Q: What went into the decision to releasing Marquette King? Was it strictly money related?

McKenzie: "I'm not going to get into details of that. But, his contract was pretty steep."

Q: With only one punter on the roster right now, is that one position you might look to address in the draft with some of the later picks?

McKenzie: "We're looking to bring competition with free agents that are out there now. We're not just going to think about drafting a guy. There's some punters out there."

Q: Would you rule out drafting Kahlil McKenzie?

McKenzie: "No, I will not. You guys will make it harder on me, but no. *(laughter)* Our coaches like him, so we'll figure out where he goes in the draft."

Q: Did you do an extensive background check and talk to his mother?

McKenzie: "Yes I did, extensively. She wouldn't tell me anything though." *(laughter)*

Q: Do you view him as a defensive or an offensive lineman?

McKenzie: "I'll tell you what, I've been trying to get him to play offensive line for a long time. I don't know, he has the talent to do both. We will give him a shot."

Q: What have you learned about Gruden and the way he works?

McKenzie: "Oh man, he's a bowling ball of butcher knives. *(laughter)* He's great. I love the fire, I love the enthusiasm. We can talk football all day and watch film. I mean, it's been really good. I'm excited to watch him on the grass and get out there and watch practice. It's fun. That's what I expected. He's going to make it fun and not just for his players and coaches but it's fun being around him and I like that."

Q: What's been your observation of the new strength and conditioning crew?

McKenzie: "This strength and conditioning staff has been great. Great guys and lady. Kelsey [Martinez] is great. All those guys. They get after it. They're getting these players going. It's fun to see. They've got a plan and they are putting the pedal to the metal with it, getting these players going. It's fun to watch."

Q: On the schedule, did you guys not want to be on the East Coast before London? Did you make a request for that?

McKenzie: "We would have liked to have been home. We would have tried to make it as close to a regular work week as possible. We requested to try to stay here and then just fly out."

Q: You plan to practice here in Oakland that week?

McKenzie: "We plan to. We plan to not make it as hard. We want to keep it pretty simple for the players and go through a normal routine as much as possible."



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Q: What do you think of the schedule overall?

McKenzie: "That's the way it is. We're excited. To open up on Monday Night, being at home, it's going to be a good one. I think the schedule has worked out pretty good. In the long run, we got a few TV games which is good for the players and it's good for Raider Nation. They can watch us on that forum. We're excited for this schedule. We'll see how it is in the end with the cold weather, but that's not going to be a problem."

Q: I'm sure it hurts you to see what's going on with Aldon Smith. As you reflect back, is there anything more the team could have done for him? Generally, what's the role of a team in that way?

McKenzie: "It's hard. Aldon really tried and we tried, but once you get into the program and you have to send him away, there's only so much we can do as far as getting our hands on him. Pray for the best for Aldon."