



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening Statement: "Good afternoon. Just real quick, the injury update. Gareon Conley is in the protocol and [we're] concerned about him. We'll hopefully find more information regarding his status for this game later in the next couple days. I'll be happy to answer any questions I can."

Q: What is your schedule going to be like this week?

Coach Gruden: "With the extra day and the holiday coming, we'll use today to focus on the Kansas City Chiefs. Tuesday and Wednesday we will work on the Broncos. We'll get the players back tomorrow and we'll start practicing for Denver on Thursday. So, we'll give the players an extra day to recover. We're excited to finish the season."

Q: When you brought in Darren Waller, what made you comfortable bringing him in, given his past?

Coach Gruden: "Well, like a lot of people, they get a second chance. They have some issues that can be resolved and will be resolved. I'm confident that this is a young man, this is a great kid that is really going to flourish here, not only on the field but off. He's a great kid, you'll meet him and get to know him yourself. He has some qualities that this football team needs."

Q: How long did you have the tight end end-around in your playbook?

Coach Gruden: "*(laughter)* I don't know. We're trying every way we can to make a first down right now. Wait until you see this week."

Q: What is your confidence level that you will get either of your two starting guards back?

Coach Gruden: "Hope so. We are very hopeful that [Kelechi Osemele] 'K.O.' can come back and be our left guard, although you have to be realistic, not just hopeful. This is a serious toe injury that is hard for him to maneuver on. Gabe Jackson is suffering from a very legitimate elbow injury and it's hard to block people when you can't extend your arm. We're concerned, obviously. But, I will say this. Chaz Green and Denzelle Good – on a short notice – they did do some good things yesterday."

Q: What did you make of where the technique flaws were for Kolton Miller in yesterday's game?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, he had a couple pass sets that were uncommon for him and we have to fix that fast, especially this week with Von [Miller] and [Bradley] Chubb coming to town. He was isolated in some tough one-on-one situations like he always is. There were a couple pass sets that I'm sure he wants back and we have to continue to work with him on the practice field and become a lot more consistent in that aspect."

Q: Is he of the personality type that can take moments that have not gone well and apply them immediately?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, he does. For a rookie, he's been able to handle the peaks and valleys of his rookie season very well. He's had some really good games. He's had some games where he's had his eyes opened. He's not the first rookie left tackle that has gone through this. We'd like to see him finish with some authority and we have to help him do that with a much better protection plan than I called yesterday."

Q: What has been Kolton Miller's biggest improvement over the season?

Coach Gruden: "Look, he's improved in one-on-one pass protection and he's improved in the running game. He's handled a lot of audibles. He's played next to five different left guards. He's been mentally tough and physically tough. Those are the two qualities that I admire the most. He's battled through some legitimate injuries. He's seen Melvin Ingram, Dee Ford, Justin Houston and Von Miller. He's seen some great players, but he's been mentally tough and physically tough. He hasn't missed practice. He's in to football and has got a huge upside."



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Q: Are there any tricks and strategies for young guys that have never been through an entire NFL season before?

Coach Gruden: "I don't know. I know some guys have really struggled to do that. They really have. Four pre-season games, 16 regular season games and hopefully at some point you get yourself in the postseason. A lot of it is, I think, [offensive line coach] Tom Cable. It's the position coach, it's the training staff, it's the strength staff, it's everybody servicing the player properly. Encouraging them, pushing them, listening to them, caring about them and loving them. I think it's a combination of all that. It's a real big transition. Unfortunately, we got a lot of young guys that are playing a lot of snaps, making the transition together."

Q: How much of a collective toll have the injuries on the offensive line taken on Derek Carr?

Coach Gruden: "I think Derek has played great. Somebody told me he had 3,700 yards and 68 percent completions in 13 games. That's astonishing. With three new guards, losing a right tackle, a feature back, three top receivers. The guy is a hell of a player. The guy is a great quarterback. We are very pleased and proud of what he has done. We know we got to get better around him, and that we will."

Q: How has Carr withstood all this physically?

Coach Gruden: "I think he's hanging in there. No question, I am sure he is sore. He knows he is carrying us right now on offense. That's what a franchise quarterback is paid to do, but we are doing everything we can to support him, to try and put him in position to audible at the line of scrimmage, fix problems, and move the football and ultimately win games. He really has had us in position to win a lot of these games. It's a credit to him."

Q: Is Carr fully fluent in your offense now?

Coach Gruden: "He is fully fluent. Yes, he is. He is more fluent than I am. I mean he is playing great football. I think he will tell you. I can't speak for him, but I think he's really excited about where we are heading and his confidence level is very, very high right now."

Q: Why was it the right move at this time to let the practice squad players travel to Cincinnati with the team? What role did Frostee [Rucker] have in that?

Coach Gruden: "Frostee has a role in everything. He's got a role in what we eat the day before the game and who comes on the plane with us, but honestly most of our practice squad guys have been with us for the entire season. I wanted to reward them. I wanted them to get a feel for what it is like on the road. They are really a part of this team. I think it should be mandatory, in a lot of ways, that they are able to do it every week. Maybe that is a process we will dabble in in the future."

Q: Why aren't the practice squad players on the sideline for home games?

Coach Gruden: "Well, injured players and people in general, you try and restrict who has access to the sidelines. It's a very tight area. I like to keep it pretty exclusive to the men that are playing. I think it's fair to them. I think it's their showtime and it's their game. I don't like having a lot of people down there, unless you are a movie star or unless you are somebody that's really famous. I'm just kidding."

Q: Is there any favorite memory you have about the Oakland Coliseum?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, I got a lot. I am really sensitive about hearing that. It's going to be a great atmosphere Monday Night, on Christmas Eve, the Denver Broncos coming to town. I get excited thinking about it. Just raging in the Black Hole. Rocking and raging down there after the Steelers game, after a lot of wins over the years. Seeing a lot of the old highlights of the great Raiders teams. I get excited and I get emotional about it. Hopefully, we get it all resolved where we can continue to play here."

Q: What is it about the place that makes it so special?



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Coach Gruden: “It’s a real football stadium. It’s dirt, grass. It has tradition. It’s where some of the best games in history of football have been played. It’s where some of the best players in the history of the world played football games at. You’re walking around before the Steeler game and you see Franco Harris and Lester Hayes and you think about some of the battles that they had at that place. Reggie Jackson lighting the torch. There’s a lot of things that happened in that stadium. Next question, I don’t want to start crying about a stadium (*laughing*).”

Q: As intensely focused as you are, will Monday night be weird knowing it could be the last game?

Coach Gruden: “It would be weird. I remember when I was the offensive coordinator of the Philadelphia Eagles, we played the last Eagle Cowboy game in the old Texas stadium. I remember sitting in the locker room looking around thinking, ‘Man, there were some real good coaches and players that played in here.’ I like the old stadiums. I like the traditional joints to be honest with you. I’m also excited about the future of the Raiders. It’s a sentimental time.”

Q: What you just talked about with all the great players that have come before, is that an emotion you can tap into this week when talking with the players?

Coach Gruden: “Maybe a little bit – certainly will talk about it. At the same time, we’re having to address some areas on our team that are very, very important. Who are the guards going to be? How are we going to move the football? How are we going to function? What’s Gareon Conley’s status? We have to deal with the day to day aspect of preparing for the game. Maybe the night before the game we’ll sauce up a video for the guys to get them a true respect of where they’re playing again?”

Q: You mentioned that you were going to talk to Donald Penn this weekend. Do you have a better sense of if he will return or not?

Coach Gruden: “You know what? I have. I think Donald is wide open. He wants to play. As you know, how many lineman are you going to have up. There is a chance that he could be up this week. We’ll address that here in the next couple of days. There’s a clock when you get a guy off the injured reserve. You get a couple of weeks to look at him. Our clock is about to expire. We’ll talk to [Head Athletic Trainer] Rod Martin and we’ll talk to Donald. We’ll put our heads together and determine that here in the next 48 hours.”

Q: Do you have any childhood games of watching teams play in the Coliseum in the 1970’s?

Coach Gruden: “Well I was a Browns fan growing up. Usually the Steelers and the Raiders eliminated the Browns in the playoffs. You remember The Snake [Ken Stabler], the Clarence Davis play against the Dolphins. Several games that stick in your mind, certainly. Some of the old highlights that I’ve seen. But I stick to the 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2018 version of the Raiders. Those are the games that I think of because I was there for them.”

Q: What has Frostee Rucker meant for this team on the field and off the field?

Coach Gruden: “Well, he’s meant a lot. We’ve had a lot of turnover on the defensive line. Particularly at the end position. He’s been a father figure, an older brother figure to a lot of these young guys. He’s been a leader. He’s been a captain. He’s been a guy on the practice field, in the meeting rooms, on the plane, on the way home that has helped us through some dark moments and I think really showed the way to these young guys. How to be a pro and what to expect in their second year. We’re thankful for him. We’re going to expect more from him here in the next two weeks.”