



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “Good day of camp. Good to get out there and starting to get two more guys healthy and able to join us today, which is good to see. Good competition across the board, and I thought we got a lot of real productive work here. [We are] putting them in different situations here, as you saw at the end, four-minute, two-minute. Those situations that you come in are so much a part of our league and being able to play well in those situations at the end, we’ll get a lot of work here in this camp and then into our training camp as well. Anyways, questions?”

Q: How is Mario Edwards Jr. looking so far?

Coach Del Rio: “Looks like he’s been working hard. We know that he’s been working hard with [head strength and conditioning coach] Joe [Gomes] and doing the things he can do and he was able to join us today. It’s good to have him back.”

Q: Should they read into Connor Cook playing with the second string today?

Coach Del Rio: “No, nothing really other than we’re working our guys. There are a lot of different combinations this year and making sure we give guys exposure. So no, I wouldn’t read too much into any particular position, moving around and getting time. Obviously, all the quarterbacks need to work and be in different situations. That will be part of how we go through the rest of the mini-camp and all through training camp.”

Q: Were you practicing for the season while yelling at the officials during the Warriors game last night? (laughter)

Coach Del Rio: “I was there supporting the Warriors. (laughter) Great crowd last night. Really a good ball game, just didn’t finish the way the Warriors wanted it to. But, the crowd was tremendous and I know we’ll bounce back and find a way and get them in Game 6 hopefully. Definitely supporting, that’s all I was doing. A lot of passionate support for the guys (laughter).”

Q: What are you hoping to see with the transition from OTA’s to mini-camp?

Coach Del Rio: “We’ve been working a while on some of the fundamentals that we’re looking for, so you want to see some of that, some of the growth in terms of system, understanding with the guys playing fast. I think when you look at our team right now, what I’m liking is how fast we’re playing. I feel like we’ve added team speed but we’re playing fast. We’re playing with more confidence and that’s critical. So, something we’re looking to develop, to play faster and faster, play smart and under control, be tough. But, that speed is really showing up.”

Q: What are your first impressions of James Cowser?

Coach Del Rio: “Cowser is a guy, you know, he was productive in college. I really had a high grade of him, a high evaluation of him coming out. He’s just come in here and worked really hard. He’s been impressive in the fact that he’s a good learner, he understands what we’re asking of him, what we want him to do, what we want him to be able to do, whether it’s special teams or defense as his role. He’s very conscientious. He’s done a nice job so far impressing us with the way he has attacked his work.”

Q: Does having a physical offensive line set the tone for the whole team?

Coach Del Rio: “It does. It’s a big physical group. We want to make sure that... This time of year is hard with the shorts. We want to be controlled and take care of each other. When we start putting the pads on, we’ll be able to really build at what we’re looking for in that group. Really feel like we should be able to surge with that group of men up front. They kind of lead the way, create some running room, create a nice pocket for Derek [Carr]. Those are things we’re looking to do. It all starts with our guys up front. I feel like we have a good group.”



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Q: How important is the chemistry between Derek Carr and Amari Cooper, two guys who are young growing together?

Coach Del Rio: "It's awesome to see. It's a big part of what we want to be about is developing our players. You're exactly right. Now it's [their] second year together. Derek's third year and Amari's second. Derek's third, Amari's second year, but their second year together. I think you see a comfort and understand of where each other is going to be. What they can count on from each other. We want to continue to develop that, push hard for that. You saw some nice example today where they were connecting and it looked really good."

Q: How much is it going to help Amari going against Sean Smith in practice?

Coach Del Rio: "It'll be great for us – great competition. We got that throughout. Not only within the group, but again, across the board from guys you're competing against in practice every day. I think it's awesome. Sean is a really good addition for our secondary. Those guys are playing confident. They're communicating well. Obviously, Amari is going to be a tough challenge for any DB."

Q: How would you describe Reggie Nelson and Karl Joseph's progress?

Coach Del Rio: "They're doing what they can. Everybody is doing what they can right now. They're all working really hard in the classroom. When we have walk-throughs and things, we're doing what we can. Those guys that are mending are doing just that. They're working hard to get back. The guys that are out here, we're going to do what we can with them, you know? It's one of those situations where we know we have really fortified the back end, even though we haven't been able to work them at full speed together just yet. It'll be critical that we enter camp in shape and ready to roll, that we've taken full advantage of this time where they're together in the classroom, they're talking ball, they're making their checks, they're communicating. Then training camp will be critical."

Q: What's the next step for Mario Edwards Jr.?

Coach Del Rio: "The sky's the limit. He's a really talented player. He has a lot of passion. He's super athletic. For such a big man, big powerful guy, he's very athletic. The sky's the limit. I know he's excited to be back."

DE Mario Edwards Jr.

Q: How did it feel to be back?

Edwards Jr.: "It feels great to be back with the team out there. Working hard with the guys and ready for the next day."

Q: How difficult has the whole process been with the injury?

Edwards Jr.: "Not really difficult. I was just doing what I could do. Once I was able to come back, I was ready."

Q: Were you confident that you would get to being fully cleared or was it tough to deal with mentally?

Edwards Jr.: "Nah, I wasn't [worried]. We knew exactly what it was, and I was ready. I was just doing everything with the training staff to get back to where I needed to be so I could come out here and practice today."

Q: What was the actual problem?

Edwards Jr.: "Just a sprain in my neck. After that, it was just doing everything that was caused that I needed to do to get it right."

Q: What was it like in the first days after you got hurt?

Edwards Jr.: "It was fine. I just did exactly what the doctors told me to do and started working out ASAP, really. Within the next week or two, I was working out again."



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Q: Do you expect to be in pads at training camp?

Edwards Jr.: "Yeah, I'll be good."

Q: When you ran off the field after the injury, did you know it was hurt right away?

Edwards Jr.: "I just knew something didn't feel right. I didn't know exactly what it was, it just didn't feel right."

Q: You were having such a successful rookie year. What was it like to have that cut short?

Edwards Jr.: "I mean anytime anyone is having a good season and anything like that, it's always devastating. I know what work I have to put in this year to pick up where I left off. So that's what I'm focusing on now."

Q: How excited are you with all the additions to the defense?

Edwards Jr.: "I'm definitely excited. With the new players that we got from the draft, from the new players that we got from other teams, this is going to be a great defensive line. I'm just trying to go in and contribute as much as I can."

Q: How do you build on last year?

Edwards Jr.: "Really just working hard. My think is just starting fast. As long as I'm in shape and I can run around, everything else will take care of itself."

Q: Did you recover faster than you expected?

Edwards Jr.: "I don't know, man. I just put my nose down and did what they asked me to do, kept praying, kept my faith and I'm here today. I'm out here playing."

Q: Did you have to go through a bunch of different tests to make sure that you were still OK?

Edwards Jr.: "No, there weren't any tests. I just worked with the training staff, did everything I could do. Then when I was good to come back on the field and do everything, they allowed me to."

Q: Were you out there before today?

Edwards Jr.: "This is my first day completely out in a full practice."

Q: Is it nice to get your feet wet before training camp starts?

Edwards Jr.: "Definitely, just to get back into the feel. The different blocks and schemes and things like that is always engraved. It's about to be offseason for us. The training that I do from now until training camp is going to really determine my season."

Q: Are you excited for the role that they're going to have you doing this year?

Edwards Jr.: "I'm definitely excited about that. They've been using me in as many areas as they want to use me in and just me being able to contribute in any way I can possibly."

Q: How does the addition of Bruce Irvin help the defense and help you?

Edwards Jr.: "We have another great pass rusher. So it's like having two [Khalil] Macks to say."

LB Malcolm Smith

Q: Have you already taped Family Feud?

Smith: "Yeah, we did it in April, I believe."



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Q: So you can't tell us anything regarding the result?

Smith: "Can't give you any information. *(laughter)* It's a great show, tune in."

Q: How was the Mexico experience?

Smith: "It was great. We have a strong fan base down there. It's going to be great to see how the game turns out."

Q: What do you think about the moves the team has made to build the defense in the offseason?

Smith: "I think we have improved talent-wise. I think we have improved from a football IQ standpoint, just bringing guys along and the guys we brought in are experienced and smart. We should be a lot better. I expect us to be a lot better."

Q: Is it good to be back with Bruce Irvin?

Smith: "Oh yeah, it's always good to be with my dawg."

Q: What does Irvin bring to the defense?

Smith: "I mean, obviously a lot of speed and a lot of athleticism, but hunger on third down rushing the quarterback. He's got stuff he wants to prove and I'm happy to see him here."

Q: What does it mean to see Mario Edwards Jr. back at practice?

Smith: "That's big time. He's worked hard to get back to where he is and getting the favor of the doctors and stuff. It was good to see him and he'll have a great year, I expect."

Q: Can you talk about playing next to Ben Heeney last year and how he has evolved?

Smith: "He's definitely grown a lot. This offseason has been big for him. Last year as a rookie, trying to just figure out your way and now he's trying to figure out how to make plays and be a real factor for everybody. He's communicating well and he's open. We're spending a lot of time together off the field and in the building, so it will be good for us."

Q: How different does this atmosphere feel after being here for a year now?

Smith: "I mean, obviously we have a nice building, things have grown a little bit. It's just another step in our development. When I came here, I didn't look at this thing as a one year at a time, it's kind of a process and you have to go through that as a group."

Q: What's the difference in the feel with coaches and players having been with them for a year now?

Smith: "You're just a little further along. You have an understanding with your coaches a little better. You have expectations from them, they know what to expect from you and how you learn, stuff like that. So, it's good for us."

Q: Is there anything you would say the secondary does that allows for the front seven to do better?

Smith: "A lot of times, if I'm not blitzing, I consider myself part of the secondary. So, we need to be able to cover and give those guys time up front to get to the quarterback. Same thing for us, we need them to get there as soon as possible. It all goes hand in hand."

Q: What is the next step for Khalil Mack?

Smith: "Just consistency, continued growth. You saw how dominant he can be. Teams are going to plan for that and we have to grow as a group around him to be able to free him up to make even more plays. We're trying to raise our level to his and he's trying to take his to the next level."