



Oakland Raiders Transcript

First-Round Press Conference following the selection of WR Amari Cooper

General Manager Reggie McKenzie and Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Q: How much of a factor was Amari Cooper's college production in selecting him with this pick?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, I think it was a big part of the process, going through and looking at all the tape. Obviously the scouts have been on this player for a long time. He's had a very productive college career and coaches loved him, scouts loved him. It's good when you get a guy that there's a lot of respect for his body of work."

Q: How much activity did you get on the phones at No. 4 when there were a couple of top prospects still on the board?

McKenzie: "While we were on the clock, none. Leading up to it, a little bit."

Q: Were you guys always anticipating taking a receiver at No. 4? Or did things change maybe hearing things about Leonard Williams having some injury issues?

McKenzie: "'Coop' was on our board high from the start. It didn't matter about the position; it was about the player. We thought we had a chance to get a really good player and we were excited he was there."

Q: Bill Musgrave has talked about how he wants to run the ball so much. Does getting a guy like Amari, who could potentially be a game-breaker, does that change how you guys might want to approach things offensively?

Coach Del Rio: "No, I think I wouldn't mistake Bill's comments for the fact that we want to be explosive on offense. We're going to throw the ball. We have a good quarterback. We're just not only going to throw it and sling it around the lot. You have to have some speed and some playmaking ability on the outside. That certainly was a goal coming into this weekend, and that was a real fine football player that we added to the organization today."

Q: How important was it to get a receiver in this draft for Derek Carr?

McKenzie: "Very. It's very nice when it goes hand in hand. You get a chance to get a great player and he fits one of the needs, so it's great when that falls in place."

Q: What are some of the adjectives you could use with Amari Cooper as far as route running? How would you describe that, and how well does the offense that he played in at Alabama translate to the offense here?

McKenzie: "I'll talk about some of his skills and I'll let Jack talk about how he's going to use him in the offense. His skill set, he can run a route. It seems like he can do that with his eyes closed. He's exceptionally quick, he's fast and he understands the game. You can tell the guy's been playing football and playing that position all his life. You can tell that. He's an extremely hard worker and you don't hear any negatives about this guy, so it's no wonder he's as good as he is because the intangibles outside of his skill set are extremely high."

Q: Can you talk about him in terms of character? Did you ever meet with him in the pre-draft process? How did you find out what kind of person you were getting?

McKenzie: "For one, our scouts got so much research on him leading up to the combine and we met with him at the combine. Yes, we did."

Q: Cooper has been compared to great receivers like Reggie Wayne. Do you feel like that's a good comparison? Is there anyone he reminds you guys of?

Coach Del Rio: "I would just say that when you talk about this young man coming in at this level, as a draft prospect that has not played in the NFL yet, it's unusual when words like 'polished' are thrown out, but that's what you see. He has been lined up all across the board – outside, both sides, inside the slot, moving around, even lined up in the backfield some. So he's been exposed to a lot, been utilized a lot of different ways. He's run the entire route tree. They compete at Alabama, just competing in that conference in the time that he's had. The repetitions



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that he's had playing the position, running the route tree and doing all the things that he's done to develop himself, makes him a guy that has that label of being polished. That's why, he's earned it. It's rare when you find guys that come into the league and they have that kind of polish on them coming out. Typically, guys – they can't get off press [coverage] – they have something they haven't done. He has pretty much done all those things. He knows how to get off press. He knows how to attack defenses, find the soft spots and run the full complement of the route tree. So that sets him apart in terms of the rest of this class."

Q: How long ago did you decide this was the guy you were going to take? Was it as far back as the combine? There's been a report that you didn't bring him in here. Was that a decoy move?

McKenzie: "No, no decoy. We bring guys in whether it's a medical issue or whether it's a mental issue or whether it's, you know, just trying to get more information. We had all the information we needed to see. We looked at all the film that we needed to see and just spending a little time with him, we got to know the person. We talked to everybody who has been around him. We've got coaches on our staff who have been around him at Alabama. So we knew the kid, so there was no need to do anything decoys on that one. But we liked him as soon as we saw him on tape."

Q: So when did you decide he would be your pick if he was available at No. 4?

McKenzie: "After this process. We got the coaches involved after the combine, so that was a process. But in the personnel department, this guy was one of the top guys. So we said, hey, when you go through this process of the combine and the pro days and all the interviews, once that factors out, we knew he was going to be a top guy."

Q: Is there any concern that he is kind of maxed out, that he is about as good as he can get?

McKenzie: "No. I mean, you've got a guy that's the size he is and as fast as he is. It's a young kid. We hope we can get him even better." *(laughing)*

Coach Del Rio: "We have more to do. It's still a young man coming into the league. I'm just saying in relation to receivers that typically enter the league, there's typically a lot more work to get them up to speed with what it looks like, what it feels like to get off an NFL corner, to get off the press at the line, to run a route, to understand how to sink his hips and some of the nuances of creating separation that you're going to need to have at this level. So I think he just kind of comes in a little ahead of the curve in that regard compared to others at that position."

Q: How much concern was there that Cooper would be picked before your selection?

McKenzie: "It's always tense. When you're not first, there are always some tense moments if your guy is not going to be there."

Q: Have either of you heard from Derek Carr yet and got his reaction to getting a target like Cooper?

McKenzie: "No, not since we've made the pick."

Coach Del Rio: "Wait a minute. My phone is going off." *(laughter)*

McKenzie: "Just like all the players, they lobby for their guys, but Derek, he is one of those players that is happy [with] whoever we bring in. As long as he thinks they can help us, he's excited. I'm sure he's excited that he has another target."

Q: Coaches typically don't like to pencil in rookies as starters, but as polished as Cooper is, do you fully expect him to make contributions right from the start?

Coach Del Rio: "I think the way we like to do things is to come in and earn your role and compete. But the expectation level should be high for a young man that comes in that is selected that high in the draft. But he'll need to prove it on the field and earn it. That's how, really, it is with everybody. There certainly is a high expectation that goes along with somebody selected that high."



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Q: When you look at Amari Cooper and the conference he played in, the SEC, how much did that prepare him for the next level and attribute to polish that you talk about and that explosiveness?

Coach Del Rio: "I think that's all part of his development and where he is. One thing about him – you'll see that when he's here – you'll notice, I think, that he's very serious about football. He's very much businesslike in his approach. [He is] a fairly quiet, soft-spoken young man; mature. Football is important to him. He knows what it looks like to work and to prepare the way you need to prepare to pay well. Those things are all things that coaches, personnel people, we all appreciate those qualities."

Q: Reggie, did anything surprise in the three picks ahead of you?

McKenzie: "It really didn't. It really didn't. The talk of the possible trades, I was kind of looking forward to seeing if there would be a trade before we pick, but other than that, no."

Q: Can you take us into the war room at that moment, knowing that you had Leonard Williams, Cooper and Kevin White on the board? I'm sure you were all smiling from ear to ear with your options? Was it a tough choice, or was Cooper the guy?

McKenzie: "At this time, today, we kind of know who we like. So when Cooper was there, we were excited. We had an idea of kind of how it would go, but when Cooper was there, it wasn't a whole lot of debate, if that's what you're thinking."

Q: Maybe some cheering then?

McKenzie: "Yes."

Q: Is there anybody that this guy compares to in the league today? You mentioned a lot of his qualities. Is it something you've learned over the years, which qualities do translate to the pros?

Coach Del Rio: "I'm reluctant to throw out names like that. I think I'd like him to come in here and create a name for himself. I think when you're talking about guys that run good routes and catch the ball, that have speed and are able to separate and those types of things, there are a number of guys that do come to mind, but I don't really want to heap that on him. I don't think that's beneficial for him. I think the most important thing for him is to come in here and get ready to go to work, become a great teammate."



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Raiders First-Round Draft Pick WR Amari Cooper

Q: Considering the Raiders weren't one of the teams that brought you in for a visit, how shocked were you to hear your name called when they were on the clock?

Cooper: "I wasn't that shocked. I kind of knew they liked me."

Q: How did you get that feeling that they liked you?

Cooper: "Just talking to them at the combine."

Q: You were targeted 170-something times last year. As an NFL rookie, you might not be targeted that many times. Is that going to be frustrating for you?

Cooper: "No. I'm just going to work as hard as I can and whatever results yield from that, I'll be fine with it."

Q: People talk about how polished you are. What are some of the things that you think you still need to work on most?

Cooper: "Just being consistent in my performance. Looking the ball all the way through every single time, so that I can catch the ball as many times as it's thrown to me. High-pointing the ball every time. Just the small things to make me a better player."

Q: Do you know anything about Derek Carr?

Cooper: "From what I've heard, he's a really great, young quarterback. To be honest, I didn't watch many NFL games last year. What I've heard, he's a really good quarterback and I can't wait to build a rapport with him."

Q: How much did Lane Kiffin help you to develop to the player you are?

Cooper: "He wanted to see every player reach their fullest potential. He harped on the small things with me, like looking the ball all the way through and high-pointing the ball so that I can be the best player that I can be."

Q: How did you develop your approach? Where did that come from?

Cooper: "Just being diligent and conscientious as a receiver. Just trying to be the best I can be. I think for the most part, it's come because I've played this position all my life. Usually when you get a wide receiver at the college level, they haven't played wide receiver their whole life."

Q: How young were you when you started playing wide receiver?

Cooper: "Third grade. From the time I started playing football, I've always played the same position."

Q: How did you choose to play wide receiver in the third grade?

Cooper: "I didn't choose it. I wanted to play running back because when you're young, all teams really do is run the ball. We had two great running backs, one was the coach's son and the other one was really good, but they knew I was a great athlete, too, and they used me at receiver."

Q: One thing that you are better at than most prospects is your route-running. How much of that have you focused on?

Cooper: "I'm a wide receiver. There are only two ways you can get open at wide receiver, your releases and the top of your route. The whole route-running process is really important. I just focused on it and try to be the best that I can at it so I can create as much separation I can for my quarterback."

Q: Did you watch any specific wide receiver on film to pattern yourself after?

Cooper: "When I started playing wide receiver at a very young age, my coaches tried to teach me how to run a route. I was already good at it because I had been doing it already in my backyard, I just didn't know what the routes were called. I was pretty good at cutting so it came pretty natural and pretty easy."



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Q: What's your experience level with California and the Bay Area?

Cooper: "I've been there twice just recently. I went there for a Nike shoot and for [ESPN's] Sports Science. My first time being there was in the past month."

Q: So, in fourth or fifth grade, you're in your backyard running routes?

Cooper: "No it was before that. It was when I was like five or six before I started playing organized football. Me and my friends were in the backyard just playing football."

Q: So you'd just run the routes and they'd throw to you?

Cooper: "Yeah, we would just play against each other. We'd try to guard each other. We had to find ways to get open, that's what I mean when I say I was already running routes. I was just finding ways to get open. When I had to run a slant route or a comeback route, which the coach called it, I was already familiar with running and getting open so it came easy."

Q: Would you say it was perfecting your route running that led to your breakout season last year?

Cooper: "It was a combination of different things. I think my mindset is probably the most important thing. Being able to stay positive through whatever injury I had or whatever situation I was going through and focusing on the best player I can be and the best teammate I can be."

Q: What drew you to football as a kid?

Cooper: "Probably this place called The Barnyard, it was my after school program."



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WR Amari Cooper Introductory Press Conference

WR Amari Cooper, General Manager Reggie McKenzie and Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Q: Have you had the chance to speak with Derek Carr yet?

Cooper: "Yes. He called me after I got drafted last night."

Q: What kind of things did you guys discuss?

Cooper: "He was just saying that we have to put in a lot of work and he's ready to go to work. I agree with him."

Q: Have you had any discussions yet about what they are going to use you for? What do you think you bring to this organization?

Cooper: "I haven't had any of those conversations yet, but I'm just ready to go in, put in the work, and I think I'll be a playmaker for this team."

Q: This team hasn't had a 1,000-yard receiver in 10 years. Do you think you can be the guy to break that drought?

Cooper: "Hopefully."

Q: What do you think it's going to take?

Cooper: "A combination of things: a great team, guys who want the best for each other, a great quarterback and a lot of hard work."

Q: Take me through the phone call when you first talked to these guys sitting next to you. What was that experience like for you, especially for it to happen so early on in the draft?

Cooper: "Yeah, I was elated, really happy. Just excited to be a part of the organization. And that's pretty much it."

Q: Do you feel that your athletic ability might be undervalued a little as people talk about all the intangibles?

Cooper: "Not really. I think I've been playing receiver for so long that, you know, I learned how to run the routes at an early age. So I think it's a compliment to my game."

Q: How does playing in the SEC translate to the NFL?

Cooper: "I really can't answer that because I've never played in the NFL, but I know that there's a lot of talent in the SEC and I know that there's a lot of talent in the NFL so I guess it will translate well."

Q: Coach Jack Del Rio talked about how serious-minded you are about football. Are you jumping up and down inside a little more? Or is this the way your personality is in terms of taking things really seriously?

Cooper: "Exactly, yeah."

Q: What's the story behind you not having a driver's license? Is that true?

Cooper: "No I have one. I got one in college this past summer."

Q: I heard someone mention after you were drafted that you weren't low maintenance, you were no maintenance. Where does that come from?

Cooper: "I'm really not sure. It's just how I've always been. It's really hard for me to answer that question I'm sorry."

Q: What do you know about the history of this Raiders organization?

Cooper: "I know a little bit about the receivers that were here. I know Jerry Rice was here for a little while, Tim Brown, Fred Biletnikoff, and so that's what I was interested in."



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Q: Were you competitive at all throughout this process as far as being the first receiver taken?

Cooper: "Yeah, of course I wanted to be the first receiver taken, just because it's been a dream of mine for so long. But I also understand that it really doesn't matter, because what matters is what you do once you get to the NFL."

Q: Everybody talks about your route-running ability. Where does that come from? How long have you been playing receiver? Do you pride yourself on being a good route runner and a technician?

Cooper: "Yes, I've been playing receiver since I first started playing football in the second or third grade. I think that's kind of rare, because usually when you're really young, the best athletes usually play running back because you run the ball more when you're younger. I think it was an advantage to me to be playing receiver for a long time and I think that's where my route-running ability comes from."

Q: You played really well in big games in college, rising to the occasion in terms of pressure moments. How does your serious approach help when you're in the spotlight?

Cooper: "I just treat practice as if it's a game. I try to visualize me running those routes in practice like I'm running them in the game, so I just take practice really serious. That's it."

Q: Have you had a chance to think about what number you're going to be wearing?

Cooper: "Yes, number 19."

Q: Former Raiders wide receiver Tim Brown was pretty much lobbying for you to come to the Raiders prior to the draft. Has he reached out to you?

Cooper: "He hasn't reached out to me yet."

Q: When you were at Alabama, what were some of the football values you learned from Head Coach Nick Saban?

Cooper: "He wanted us to work hard. He wanted guys of high character. He wanted us to be diligent in our approach to watching film, taking practice really serious. He believes that if you practice well, you'll play well."

Q: Coach, how will Cooper's personality fit into the locker room and the values you like to see in a football player?

Del Rio: "I think that mindset that he brings in is one that we are building here in terms of understanding the correlation between practice and the performance that you give during practice, and how that translates to performance on the field on game days. Having a healthy appreciation of that is a good thing and one that we're working very hard to develop, make sure guys understand that."

Q: You mentioned how you were running routes when you were a kid. Were you always thinking NFL at that point? Was that the main dream you had growing up?

Cooper: "Yes."

Q: Was there a specific receiver you would emulate?

Cooper: "I liked Randy Moss growing up."

Q: Do you have any experience here in the Bay Area? What do you think about living in this part of the country?

Cooper: "This is my third time coming here in the past month. I came here for [ESPN's] Sports Science and a video shoot for Nike."

Q: What does it mean to be playing on the same team Fred Biletnikoff, whose award you won last year for being the top college receiver, used to?

Cooper: "It's a huge honor. I just want to be a great receiver like he was."



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Q: Reggie, what has your schedule been like since last night? How late were you here last night?

McKenzie: "I was here until about midnight. I couldn't sleep. This is the fun part, putting this team together. We have two more picks today. We'll try to add some more good players for Amari here."



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Raiders Second-Round Draft Pick DE Mario Edwards Jr.

Q: Did you grow up a Cowboys fan because of your dad? Who did you root for growing up?

Edwards Jr.: "I definitely was a Cowboys fan because my dad played, but I'm excited that Oakland chose me."

Q: Were you in the same recruiting class as Menelik Watson at Florida State? Did you come in together?

Edwards Jr.: "No we didn't come in together. Menelik came and had one year left. He was older than me."

Q: Did you guys overlap one year?

Edwards Jr.: "Yeah we were there one year. I was there with him one year."

Q: How much do you weigh right now? I had read that you are about 272 ppund, at least it was that way at your pro day.

Edwards Jr.: "Right. I'm at 277 right now."

Q: Were you surprised that the Raiders called? Did you know that they were in on you? Was there interest expressed at the combine?

Edwards Jr.: "My first time I had talked to them was yesterday and then I talked to them again this morning and then my agent called me about 4 or 5 minutes before they were on the clock and let me know I was moving out West."

Q: Are you excited to be reunited with Raiders linebackers coach Sal Sunseri?

Edwards Jr.: "Definitely man, my two years when he was there were great. I learned so much from him and we developed a great relationship and now to go back and play under him again is definitely an honor."

Q: What's the weight range that you feel comfortable playing at, because I know you've played different positions?

Edwards Jr.: "Talking to them, they like me at the 280-285 weight range, so that's pretty easy to stay at."

Q: Do they want you as an end then at that weight?

Edwards Jr.: "They want me as a Leo and to rush and then mismatch on the inside and do things like that as well."

Q: Did you get caught up in all the pre-draft criticisms about your effort, desire and weight and how do you answer all those criticisms?

Edwards Jr.: "Not really. If they really understood that coming into FSU there was never a set weight for me to be at. The whole motto or the whole goal was as long as you can run and do what we ask you to do I don't care what your weight is. And I've even asked [Florida State Head] Coach Jimbo [Fisher] to what was just too high of a weight and he replied, if you're 310, 312 then they have to deal with you being at 310, 312. Don't worry about the weight just play. It was never a structured weight for me to be at. Then again it was in my sophomore year when we were playing just two quarters and we were done when I was 280-287 and then I also have where my following junior year I'm 310 and I'm playing 70-75 plays a game. We played 14 games and out of eight or nine of them I didn't step foot off the field. Even if I was 277 right now, nobody can go 100 percent 77 plays straight and be effective. If they really understood how it was set up and that there was really no weight limit for me, then they would understand how things turned out."

Q: When you come out of high school as a top recruit, do you think that the bar is set so high that if you statically fall anywhere short of that then you are going to hear about it?

Edwards Jr.: "I mean that's just the world that we live in today. I feel like if I would have controlled my weight my three years that I could have lived up to what my rankings were. However I can't put myself behind the eight ball. I took full responsibility for that. I understand how it works."



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Q: What do you think of this role, as the Leo position can have a bunch of different responsibilities?

Edwards Jr.: "I'm excited to play anything, honestly. Whatever they want me to play, whatever fits best. I'm not just focusing on one specific thing, whether it's pass rushing or anything like that. I'm trying to be a complete player. I'm trying to go out there and be great in the run and be great in the pass and go out there and contribute to the team."

Q: You've played in a lot of big college games at Florida State. What kind of an advantage, if any, does that give you over some other prospects?

Edwards Jr.: "We may have played a few other better players, but I was [inaudible]. I don't think it gives me any advantage over anyone else, because now if they've made it to the NFL, that means that they're good as well. Every game, every week is going to be like a national championship game, because now it's the cream of the crop. Everybody is good. Everybody is great. Everybody is big, strong and fast, so now you have to go separate yourself from them."

Q: What was the scene like when you got the news today? Where were you and who was with you?

Edwards Jr.: "I was in Ocean Springs, Miss., with my grandma there, my aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, immediate family. Man, it was great. My whole house shook when they called me name on TV. We were definitely excited."

Q: How many people do you think were there total?

Edwards Jr.: "Maybe about 20 to 22 people. Not many."

Q: Your dad said you were a little overconfident coming out of high school. Do you think that was true?

Edwards Jr.: "I could say some of that was true. Coming out, No. 1 in in the nation and all that stuff, you have people saying you're this and that, and all you've got to do is this and this and that. You kind of relax and take the foot off the pedal a little bit. But now, knowing that was the wrong thing to do, because once you get comfortable, as my dad said, you either get worse or you get better. There's no in between. Me taking my foot off the gas pedal definitely caused me to gain weight and become worse. I just say that me getting a little too comfortable and complacent with where I was ranked kind of had its toll on me coming in overweight."

Q: When did that light come on for you, when you realized you weren't giving it what you needed to?

Edwards Jr.: "I would kind of say it came on when I first started in the Orange Bowl my freshman year. Coming into my sophomore year, I played at 280 to 287. Then my junior year, I came in at 310. I would say probably my freshman year. I got up to 310, but I was still a 500-plus squatter, 450-plus bencher, and still running 17 or 18 miles per hour. So it wasn't that I couldn't perform, I just couldn't perform for a long time."

Q: A lot of scouts think you helped yourself at your pro day. Did it feel like that to you?

Edwards Jr.: "Definitely. I felt like I had a decent enough grade coming out and I knew that if I could do great in my – first of all, getting my weight down and controlling it for a long period of time, from Oregon until now standing in the 270-280 range – then on top of my combine and pro day workout, I felt like I could have helped myself tremendously in the draft."



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Raiders Third-Round Draft Pick TE Clive Walford

Q: Did you have any expectations about where you would fall in the draft? Were you surprised either in a good way or a bad way?

Walford: "I really didn't have any preference. I thought was going to go more in the second but that didn't work out. I'm not tripping. It is what it is."

Q: Have you had any contact with the Raiders in the pre-draft process?

Walford: "Yeah at the combine and at the Senior Bowl. I talked to the Raiders a lot."

Q: What would you say your strengths are as a player?

Walford: "I can hop for the ball. I'm a great pass catcher. I'm a great run blocker. I'm just a dual-threat tight end."

Q: Are there NFL tight ends who you have followed or who you might model yourself after at all?

Walford: "Yeah of course. Rob Gronkowski from the Patriots."

Q: Why would you say that your senior season went so well? You were obviously pretty productive.

Walford: "Just maturity, and becoming a legitimate leader and just focusing more."

Q: Who have you talked to here with the Raiders so far?

Walford: "I talked to the offensive coordinator [Bill Musgrave], the GM [Reggie McKenzie], and I think the tight ends coach [Bobby Johnson], if I'm not mistaken."

Q: What did Bill Musgrave tell you about your role here?

Walford: "He really didn't say anything about my role. He just asked me if I'm ready to be a Raider, and I told him I'm ready."

Q: Do you see the role of the tight end as diminishing in the NFL, or do you think you can be on the field for a lot of snaps?

Walford: "I mean, I don't know. I'm going to go out to Oakland and just compete. I'm not looking to go start right away. I'm going out there to learn from the veterans and take some of their advice, but you know I'm going to compete at the same time. If I win that starting spot, then that's all on God."

Q: How much special teams background do you have?

Walford: "I played kick return in college. I played punt block. I played field goal."

Q: Miami has a pretty good tradition of tight ends. Is that what attracted you to go there?

Walford: "We've got a great line of them, from Bubba Franks, Jimmy Graham, Greg Olsen, Kellen Winslow, you name them. That's what we do, we build tight ends. Standish Dobard is up next, a young tight end coming out of Miami."



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Day 2 Press Conference Following the Third Round

General Manager Reggie McKenzie

Q: Mario Edwards Jr. didn't have a ton of sacks in college. What do you like about him as a pass rusher at this level?

McKenzie: "Number one: Mario is a good football player. He's big, strong, physical, good feel for the game. His deal is he definitely can play the run and he can pressure the quarterback. He's not the speed rusher, but he is a good pass rusher, so we're expecting him to do a lot of things for us."

Q: Are you at all concerned about his weight fluctuating?

McKenzie: "Well once we get him in here and get him with our strength and conditioning coach and our coaches to determine what his weight will be, we expect him to be a pro and be at that weight. Guys when they come in in college, they are young and they figure they can play at any weight. When you're a gifted athlete like that you have a tendency to, if you can get by with it, so be it. We'll have a weight for him so we don't expect it to be an issue."

Q: How much did you rely on Sal Sunseri's evaluation of Mario to make your decision?

McKenzie: "It's a lot on the person. We spent a lot of time with him, but coach was with him for two years while he's going through college life. He sees him in the meeting rooms. He sees him around his teammates, travelling, so he knows the kid throughout. Yes we are going to get as much information as we can and what good not having his coach in the building and not getting information, so we relied on what he could give us from his character standpoint."

Q: From some of the outside reports there was a lot of concern about his effort level and desire. Is any of that stuff a concern to you at all?

McKenzie: "It's not going to be a concern. Not a concern. You can critique any play and beat a kid up a little bit of everything, but in the end we think Mario is going to be a really good player for us."

Q: Was Randy Gregory on your board at that point?

McKenzie: "Well I'm not going to talk about my board, who's on it, who's off, so I'm going to stay away from that one."

Q: Clive Walford had the meniscus injury, but will he need to be held back at all to start out?

McKenzie: "No, our medical people cleared him totally."

Q: Can you talk about Walford's skillset and his ability to be a dual-threat tight end?

McKenzie: "Yeah, we saw Clive as a complete tight end. He's not only a receiver or a blocker-only type guy. He's a guy that's big and strong enough to pound it versus the D-linemen, and he can flex out and run the routes and be that pass receiver. He's pretty much the total package when you're looking at a complete tight end. We didn't think he was one dimensional."

Q: From the outside looking in, heading into the draft, this team needed weapons for Derek Carr and at least one pass rusher. You were able to address those needs in the first three rounds. Was that something you went aggressively toward?

McKenzie: "Both, really. It played out pretty good. Some of the guys start falling off the board that you'd like to take, but we're not the only team drafting. That's just the way that goes. We don't just pinpoint certain areas. We felt like we needed more than just those [two] that you mentioned. We still need some more players, so hopefully we can finish that up tomorrow. We're just trying to add some really good football players."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Q: We asked Walford for a comparison and he said Rob Gronkowski. Do you have any comparisons for him?

McKenzie: "What about Raymond Chester?" *(laughing)*

Q: Walford has some special teams experience, so do you expect him to start out helping on special teams? As a third-round pick, do you hope he'll be beyond special teams?

McKenzie: "Nobody is beyond special teams, especially as a rookie."

Q: In terms of having those dual-threat tight ends, does that fit with your offensive scheme? Does having versatile players help what you try to do schematically, especially when playing up-tempo?

McKenzie: "No question. You want your players to be as versatile as possible, so that will help. And I like to say, you don't want a whole bunch of one-dimensional players on the field. It's always, 'The more you can do.'"



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Fourth-Round Draft Pick G Jon Feliciano

Q: Where are you? What's the scene like when you got the news?

Feliciano: "I'm at my boy's house in Davie, Fla. I got my family here along with my high school basketball coach, my high school football coaches. We went berserk when we heard my name."

Q: We're just finding out some of your back story. You've been through so much. What does it mean to you to maybe be able to help your family with an NFL contract?

Feliciano: "Yeah growing up there was a lot of just extra stuff that I had to go through and everyone here at this house right now at this party helped me get through it. That's why I wanted them around me and to be able to get drafted in the fourth round by such a great organization. It's a blessing and I'm so happy."

Q: Did you have much contact with the Raiders before? Did you know that they were interested? It seems like a lot of the players didn't know and wound up being surprised.

Feliciano: "No, actually me and [offensive line] coach [Mike] Tice, we kicked it off at the combine. He was a great guy and I had a real good time talking with him. This is one of the top spots for me I wanted to go. To hear my name called by them is just unbelievable."

Q: This team needs a starting right guard. Does that excite you that there is going to be some competition right away and that you may be able to contribute early on?

Feliciano: "Of course. That's all you want coming in is an opportunity to compete and get better. We have that there at the Raiders and I know everyone is going to go in there and compete and try to get better and that's going to be awesome."

Q: Did you play on the right side or the left side at Miami?

Feliciano: "Both. I had time at right guard, right tackle, left tackle, left guard and center sometimes, so I can do whatever."

Q: Where are you most comfortable?

Feliciano: "I played left guard most of my career, but moving over to right guard is not a big deal."

Q: Raiders are big with offensive line with position versatility. That sounds like something that is right up your alley.

Feliciano: "That's something that I pride myself in, being able to play all five positions. It's going to help me here with the Raiders."

Q: You said the Raiders were one of the teams you were hoping you might end up with. How come?

Feliciano: "Just because my relationship with coach Tice. He's a great guy. Me and him really hit it off at the combine. They have [defensive line coach] Jethro Franklin on their staff and I was with him for four years at Miami, so just being able to be with people that I know. Plus, Clive [Walford] just got drafted there yesterday. I know it's going to be so amazing to be able to play with him again."

Q: Have you gotten a chance to talk with him already?

Feliciano: "I haven't yet. I tried to call him but he's probably just as busy as I am right now."

Q: Have they told you that right guard is pretty much where they have you planned for?

Feliciano: "No, they haven't really said anything. They just said to be ready and just enjoy the moment right now."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Q: At what point did you feel the NFL was a real possibility for you?

Feliciano: "Growing up I always dreamt of playing in the NFL. Probably when I got to college it became feasible to follow my dreams and play in the NFL."

Q: What is your weight at right now and what do you think is ideal for you?

Feliciano: "Right now I'm at 325, 327. That will probably be my plan weight."

Q: I know Mike Tice likes big, tough guys. Is that what he told you?

Feliciano: "I fit what Raiders players are supposed to be like. It's awesome for me to come to the Raiders."

Q: What do we need to know about Clive Walford?

Feliciano: "He's tough and he's going to bring it every day. I think he's going to score a lot of touchdowns for us."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Fifth-Round Draft Pick LB Ben Heeney

Q: When did you get the idea the Raiders were interested in you?

Heeney: "Not even, man. That caught me so off guard. I had no idea, but I couldn't be happier. So happy. No one has really been in contact with me from the Raiders, so it's kind of caught me off guard. I guess that's when the best things happen, when you don't expect them."

Q: What do you know about this team and this defense?

Heeney: "I don't know much, to be honest with you. I know that Sal Sunseri is the linebackers coach. I'm very excited to work with him. I know [defensive coordinator] Ken Norton, [Jr.] is just an amazing coach, the defensive coordinator. I just can't wait to get up there and try to prove myself and become one of the guys."

Q: Where do you see yourself fitting best in a 4-3 defense?

Heeney: "I think I can play anything. I think I can play Mike, Will – I really think I can play anything and be productive and be a guy that you guys can count on. More than anything, I'm ready to come in and pave my way on special teams and try to be a guy is a four[-unit] special teams starter. I think I can start on every special team right away and eventually work my way up and become a contributing factor on defense."

Q: The fourth-round pick, Jon Feliciano, said he can play all five positions across the offensive line. You can play all three linebacker positions. Did the Raiders tell you they like your position versatility?

Heeney: "Yeah, definitely. That's what they said when they first called me. I got off the phone with the GM [Reggie McKenzie], and he just said he's been watching me and he and Jack Del Rio have been talking, and they really like everything I bring to the table. I just couldn't be more excited. I'm just really excited to see, when I get up there, how everything is up there."

Q: Now that you've been drafted, is it everything you thought it was going to be?

Heeney: "Man, it's everything and more. This is what I've been working toward since I was in third grade, man. Just having my family and friends around me when it happened, it was so special. Everyone started crying and it's just what I've been working toward since I was in third grade and started playing football. Never in a million years did I think I would be an Oakland Raider, but I couldn't be more happy to be one."

Q: From your high school stats, it looks like you were a pretty accomplished running back. Is that what you thought you were going to be later in your career?

Heeney: "I actually thought I'd be a running back in college. I grew up playing running back and also I played defense, but I would get like five touchdowns a game, four touchdowns a game. I was a very good running back, so I thought that was kind of the path I would take, but I got to college and they saw me more as just an athlete and I eventually wound up as just a linebacker, and now that's what I'm playing. I think I'm just very versatile."

Q: Did your dad and two uncles all play baseball at Kansas? Did you ever have baseball aspirations?

Heeney: "Yeah, actually, as a little kid, baseball was my best sport – baseball and football. My dad and everyone else always thought I had a chance to play in the major leagues for baseball. It's always been between baseball and football, but football is my number one love. I like hitting people. I'm excited to be a part of the Raider defense. Man, I'm so excited."

Q: How did that transition from running back to linebacker take place?

Heeney: "I think they just kind of saw me as an athlete. I'm from Kansas and they already had a bunch of running back, so they recruited me as an athlete-slash-outside linebacker. They thought I'd play like Sam or like a nickel back almost, but it's just the pieces fell where they fell and I was the best guy for the job at middle linebacker and I became a three-year starter at linebacker. Yeah, man, I just kind of fell into it, I guess."



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Q: How much outside linebacker have you played at Kansas?

Heeney: "Zero. I've played middle linebacker for three years."

Q: Were you a Chiefs fan growing up?

Heeney: "Yeah, man, I was, but I'm not anymore."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Fifth-Round Draft Pick LB Neiron Ball

Q: Did you know that the Raiders were interested?

Ball: "Yes, I used to talk with the linebackers coach [Sal Sunseri] and the special teams coach [Brad Seely] all the time."

Q: Talk about what it means to be drafted after all that you've been through.

Ball: "Man, it means a lot. It's definitely a dream come true and man, I just feel like I'm just so blessed. I can't really explain the feeling that I'm going through right now."

Q: Besides the obvious serious surgery you had early in your career, you've gone through some other physical issues. Do you feel like you've put all that behind you? Are you ready to go on? Do you feel like all the physical issues are now in your past?

Ball: "Oh yes sir of course. I think I moved on. I think I got over all of those injuries. Man, those things are in the past but they made me better."

Q: Are you fully recovered from the knee surgery now?

Ball: "Yes, sir."

Q: It seems like a lot of the guys the Raiders have picked today, they've liked them because they are versatile. An offensive lineman that can play all five positions, the earlier linebacker plays all three positions. Where do you think you fit in the best? Are you similar in that regard? You can play different areas?

Ball: "Man, I'm trying to fit in wherever the coaches need me and whatever puts us in the best situations to win football games, but I feel like I'm best at planting the ball, covering and pass rushing."

Q: Did you have any special teams experience?

Ball: "Oh, yes sir. I played special teams throughout my whole career at Florida."

Q: Who are you watching the draft with and who were you with when you found out the news?

Ball: "I was with my family – my brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles."

Q: How extensive was the whole offseason process? I'm sure the medical part of it, all the teams wanting to know how you were. Did you go through lots of physicals and things like that?

Ball: "Yes, sir. I went through a lot of stuff, especially at the combine. I was in the hospital like getting X-rays and MRIs for a long period of time and I was just ready for it to be over because I knew I was fine."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Sixth-Round Draft Pick DE Max Valles

Q: Were you surprised or did you have a lot of contact with the Raiders before this?

Valles: "They only real contact was that I had a formal with them at the combine and got the call right before my name got announced on TV. That was it."

Q: Apparently they are projecting you as defensive end. Is that what you figured going into the draft?

Valles: "Outside [linebacker] or defensive end. I'm comfortable playing both so it's whatever they need me at."

Q: What are the things you need to work on most?

Valles: "Just working on a backup pass rush move, if one doesn't work. I've been working on that a lot this offseason. Overall just becoming a more physical player. Coming from college to the NFL, it's going to be a much more physical game so I just have to step it up a notch."

Q: You had two years of eligibility left. Was that a big surprise back there that you left school?

Valles: "Kind of both. I felt comfortable playing at the next level. It worked out."

Q: Was it a tough decision or something you felt pretty strongly about?

Valles: "I felt pretty strong about it."

Q: Did you seek any outside advice on your decision to go pro?

Valles: "I talked to my coach and my family about it. Everybody felt that I was ready. Second in the ACC in sacks, All-ACC, I felt like it was time."

Q: Did you play a lot of special teams?

Valles: "Yes, my freshman year I played core-four [special teams units]. They took me off special teams before camp my sophomore year. Figuring my athletic ability and being a linebacker my first couple years, I know I'm going to have to start on special teams."

Q: I saw that Eli Harold got picked by the 49ers. Is that cool having a teammate close by?

Valles: "That is right in the Bay? I didn't even think about that!"

Q: Have you been out here before?

Valles: "I've never been to California in my life."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Seventh-Round Draft Pick T Anthony Morris

Q: Have you played more on one side than the other, and has it been strictly tackle? Where have you played on the line in college?

Morris: "I played right and left tackle. I'm versatile. I can move inside if need be. Wherever I need to be at, I'm ready to go to work."

Q: What is your weight at right now? What do you think is an ideal weight for you?

Morris: "Right now, I weight 317. I think about 315 is the idea."

Q: Did you know the Raiders were interested? Did you have conversations with them?

Morris: "Yes, on my visit I had talked to General Manager Reggie McKenzie. We had a good talk, he said some positive things, so I kind of expected it."

Q: You came out here?

Morris: "Yes, sir."

Q: Had you ever been out to California before?

Morris: "My visit to Oakland was actually my first time being in California."

Q: Do you think being from a smaller conference and school will make it any tougher for you to get accustomed to the NFL?

Morris: "I don't think it will make it any tougher, because I went against some good people [inaudible], a lot better than what it was a couple of years ago. I have the technique and athleticism to play in the pros."

Q: You became a full-time starter as a senior. What was it that happened that caused you to become the full-time starter?

Morris: "Before, I had to get a scope of my knee, so going into my junior year, I was kind of behind with rehab and stuff, because the surgery was so close to the season. I didn't show back up until about midseason of my junior year."

Q: What can you tell us about your meeting with Reggie McKenzie that left you so encouraged about the Raiders?

Morris: "He gave me a nickname." *(laughing)*

Q: What was the nickname?

Morris: "Big Mo.'" *(laughing)*

Q: Did the Raiders talk to you at all about their blocking scheme and how you might fit?

Morris: "I talked to the O-line coach [Mike Tice] and their assistant O-line coach [Tim Holt]. We talked a lot about the blocking scheme and stuff, and the pass scheme. It's very similar to what I was doing in college."

Q: How would you describe the college scheme? Was it a power scheme? Did you do a lot of lateral movement?

Morris: "It was more of a zone concept. We had a few power plays."

Q: You feel you have the quickness to play that at the next level?

Morris: "Yes, sir."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Seventh-Round Draft Pick WR Andre Debose

Q: Did you have any expectations in the draft?

Debose: "I just came into the draft hoping to get an opportunity. I didn't have any expectations. I was hoping for the best the whole time."

Q: What was your contact with the Raiders before the draft?

Debose: "We kept in contact a lot. I had a private workout with them earlier in the process. I talked to the special teams coach a lot throughout the process. We were definitely keeping in touch."

Q: Is returning where you think you can make your impact in the NFL?

Debose: "I think I can make my impact a lot on the return game."

Q: There has been a wide open spot for that here for a few years. Are you equally adept at kickoffs and punts?

Debose: "Yes, sir. I am. I like both equally."

Q: Was it tough not getting invited to the combine?

Debose: "It was a hard thing to deal with. I knew that the combine doesn't make or break you. If a team likes you, they like you. I didn't let it bother me too much."

Q: A lot of ups and downs with the team at Florida with coaching changes. How much did teams ask you about not playing in the final bowl game and about the direction of your college career?

Debose: "A lot of teams would bring up that question and I would bring up what really went down. They understood it, knowing what I've been through at Florida with all the coaching changes and not really being involved with the offense. They understood me totally with my decision about the bowl game."

Q: What can you tell us about not going to the bowl game?

Debose: "I can tell you that it was just a decision between me and the interim head coach, D.J. Durkin, and we came to a mutual agreement. It was nothing disciplinary or anything like that. It was a decision I made and I was ready to live with whatever came with that decision."

Q: What was your official 40-yard-dash time?

Debose: "4.35."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Raiders Seventh-Round Draft Pick DB Dexter McDonald

Q: Were you starting to resign yourself to the fact that maybe you'd be going the free agency route?

McDonald: "I wouldn't say I resigned myself. I always have my faith. I was just hoping that the right team picked me up. Luckily I was blessed enough that it was the Raiders, who I had already visited with and fit my scheme and technique in college with perfectly. I would say it worked out perfectly."

Q: Why do you think you fit them perfectly?

McDonald: "I think it works perfectly because I'm an aggressive corner. I like to use my hands and press and it just fits right in to the Raiders defensive scheme."

Q: When did you visit with them?

McDonald: "The Raiders were the first team I visited with when I first started going on my pre-draft visits. It's been such a crazy journey, I couldn't tell you the exact date, but I visited with them. We went to the practice complex and I got to meet with the coaches and whatnot."

Q: Did you come away from that meeting thinking it was the right place?

McDonald: "Definitely. I felt like after I got to meet the great coaching staff and got a chance to feel out the coaches and have them feel me out, I felt it was a place I could go play at and have a great chance of making myself a future in the NFL."

Q: Is it true that you're related to Brandon Rush of the Warriors?

McDonald: "Yes, sir. That is true. We're cousins through marriage. My uncle married his auntie. We've known each other since about the fifth grade."

Q: Have you thought about the fact that if you both stick around awhile, you'd be playing your games right door to one another?

McDonald: "No sir. It honestly hadn't even crossed my mind. This all just happened so fast, it's still just hitting me. I'm blessed to have the opportunity, like I said, to be a Raider. That hadn't crossed my mind until just not actually."

Q: On your Twitter, it says underrated. Why would you describe yourself that way?

McDonald: "I believe I am underrated. The fact that I went in the seventh round. My last two years at [Kansas], I got 30 PBUs [passes broken up], four interceptions, two taken back [for touchdowns]. I think everything I have to offer, my size, my physicality, my speed, I feel like I'm underrated. That's definitely a chip that I feel like I'll carry on my shoulder throughout my NFL career."

Q: There are a lot of young cornerbacks and a lot of room for people to perform and move upward with the Raiders. That aside, what's it going to be like to have a guy like Charles Woodson to bounce things off of?

McDonald: "It's an amazing opportunity that I have ahead of me. I have a Hall of Fame coach, a soon-to-be Hall of Fame player, it's amazing. For a player like me to be around that type of experience, you can't help but to be a sponge and soak up as much knowledge as possible and try to use it to your advantage to make yourself a better player."

Q: Did you do much special teams work at Kansas?

McDonald: "I didn't play my last two years because we didn't have much depth and [Kansas assistant head coach/defensive coordinator/defensive backs] coach Dave Campo didn't feel comfortable with me playing special teams since we lacked depth at our position. I played special teams, every special teams position, when I was a redshirt freshman and my sophomore season."



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Q: Is it going to be nice to come here and have a familiar face in Ben Heeney joining you here?

McDonald: "It's going to be awesome. I couldn't believe the fact that I get to be next to a fellow Jayhawk. It's going to be amazing. It's going to be great for us to have the relationship we already had and be able to be away from home but still have a guy that I know I trust and have a great relationship with."

Q: Have you heard from him yet?

McDonald: "Actually he just text me and told me to give him a call. He's pretty busy. We'll probably talk a little later."

Q: Sometime in your college career you dropped 15 pounds. How much faster as a corner were you when you came back to that?

McDonald: "I was always fast. I ran a 4.37 this year and before then I was running the high 4.4's. It might have helped me some. I think it just helped me be able to run with the faster wide receivers and not have so much weight on me; be able to move quicker."

Q: Being from Kansas City, did you grow up a Chiefs fan?

McDonald: "No, sir. I wasn't a Chiefs fan. I grew up playing basketball my whole life so football wasn't really one of my main focuses. My mother is from Kansas City so she was a Chiefs fan."



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Day 3 Press Conference Following the Third Round

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Coach Del Rio Opening Statement: "I just wanted to touch on a couple of points before we open up and take questions. I think, for us, we're still busy right now as the draft is coming to a close. We're getting into the college free agent process, and that's an important time as well. Every year when I was a head coach, and I know each of the last couple of years with [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] here, free agents have made the team and have contributed, so this is an important time as well. This has been a very productive offseason. Our free agency was sound and solid and we acquired some really good players, strengthened our team, made it more competitive, and then we feel like we come out of this draft weekend feeling good about the work that went into it and the way it laid out for us and the fact we were able to acquire some really good players that are excited to be Raiders. It was a good process and we had a good weekend. I think on top of that, when you look at the facility upgrades and some of the things that we've got going on right now, it's a great time to be a Raider, so I'm excited to be leading the franchise. I think you saw early in this draft, it was big, versatile, smart, tough guys. As the draft went on, we hit an area where we ended up being – three consecutive linebackers went off, one that's probably going to play defensive end. As we got to the later part of the draft, including some of those linebackers, depth and specials teams value come into play. We drafted a returner late. Really, a lot of the targets that we went into in terms of needs matched up in certain areas with the value of the board, and that's how we put together our draft weekend. But I think it was a very strong effort and I'm really pleased with the way the coaching staff and the scouting staff worked together and had a strong performance."

Q: What did you like about the linebackers Ben Heeney and Neiron Ball? Is Ball a possibility at strong safety, or strictly as a linebacker?

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, Neiron is a linebacker, a very versatile linebacker who can really play on the line or off the ball. He's in the 235- to 240-pound range. He's probably built similarly to Ray-Ray Armstrong in terms of his length and size and speed. And Heeney's a real productive player, a smart guy, a tough guy, a fast guy. We feel like he can come in and impact special teams, for sure, right away, but we'll allow – all these guys will get a chance to come in here and compete and earn their way. We won't put a lid on them."

Q: Trading down twice in the fourth round, were you guys looking for some extra picks or was that just how the board played out?

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, I would say that there was an opportunity to move down and we saw some depth in the board and took advantage of that opportunity to slide down a little bit and pick up some picks."

Q: How did you guys balance staying true to your draft board and taking the best available player, while simultaneously filling your needs?

Coach Del Rio: "You have to realize when you come into it, you can't always fulfill every need that you maybe go into – or every person on the wish list – but I thought, for the most part, we were disciplined in terms of staying with value and working the board from that standpoint. Yeah, I think there's always that question: 'Are you addressing need?' You certainly have to at some point, but are you taking value? And I think in particular, early, I think we had great value early, and then as it goes on in the draft cycle and you start working where there are many people across the board, then it certainly makes sense to address needs specifically."

Q: You drafted a couple of kids with pretty significant life issues in their background – serious illnesses, poverty when they were young, things like that. I know you're trying to find talent, not good stories, but does that kind of perseverance make an impact on you?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, I think it can. I think one of the things that we covet is guys that have grit, guys that have a chip on their shoulder, something to prove. There is some purpose to them and why they go about things and why



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they attack things and all of that. I know there are some unique stories, some very touching stories. We didn't seek those out, but we are aware of several of those stories."

Q: When you took Amari Cooper, you got a receiver that can do just about everything. Your tight end is also both a blocker and receiver. Today, all of the linebackers and offensive linemen you took said they could play any of the positions in their unit. Are you seeking out that kind of versatility, and how valuable is it?

Coach Del Rio: "We do. I think each of them kind of have a different story. I think with the tight end, Clive [Walford], he's a complete tight end. Are you a blocking tight end or a receiving tight end? We think he's both. He can do both. In terms of Jon [Feliciano] and his offensive line experience, he's played center, he's played guard, he's played tackle. So yeah, that's great versatility. Certainly, that weighs into it as part of the process. These guys are capable of being more than just a guy that's limited to one specific role, one specific situation where he can thrive. That helped them in terms of their status with us."

Q: You took Anthony Morris out of Tennessee State and Dexter McDonald of Kansas. What did you see from them?

Coach Del Rio: "Anthony, a big athletic guy, I had him in for a visit. We feel like he has room to grow and develop. Being taken late like that, coming from a small school, there's a lot of development ability there. We feel like if we get our hands on him, then we could potentially help him grow into something bigger and better. He may have an opportunity to really develop into a real player. So you take shots on guys later in the draft like that, that you think have upside and have the ability to develop and we'll work hard at that. In terms of Dexter, he's a talented corner that, you know, there's some reasons that he needed up sliding a little bit in terms of where his talent is and where he was picked. There's a little bit of a gap there, so it'll be up to him to make sure that he comes in, he's a good teammate, he practices hard, he does the right things and he approaches things the right way to give himself a chance to be his best, because when he's at his best, doing the things he should do, he's a pretty good football player."

Q: You guys didn't take a defensive back until the seventh round. Is that a vote of confidence in the guys you already have on the team?

Coach Del Rio: "I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't also say that I don't want to give them a vote of confidence, but I think for us, we wanted to make it competitive at a lot of different spots. We are going through the college free agent process right now and we will be adding some players at those positions, and they will be given a chance to compete. We want to make it a really competitive roster. We want there to be genuine competition. We did the best we could to do that. We definitely feel like we strengthened ourselves this weekend and look forward to getting our hands on these guys and getting to work."

Q: What do you see as Max Valles' potential and what did you like about him in his two years at school?

Coach Del Rio: "He was a guy that I think had nine or 10 sacks this year. He's got a little bit of production in a major conference. He's got some size and ability off the edge. We just felt like at that point in the draft, he was somebody we were willing to take a shot on and get a good look at and give him an opportunity to come in here and compete and see if he can do something off the edge of our defense. Obviously, if you're still involved down low like that, there is a reason that you slid down the board. We'll try and help him grow through some of those things and become a kind of player that can help us."

Q: Were there any particular positions that you had a few guys that you really liked that never worked out in the areas that you wanted to address?

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, I think if you had just given us the first nine players in the draft, we would have been fine. Just call it a day. *(laughter)* It just doesn't work that way. We grade a lot of these players. You go through the work and the tape in the evaluation process and all the background checks, all the character checks, all the different things that you do to get prepared for this weekend. There are some really talented that you watch go by, watch somebody else take them and put them on their team. We feel good about the process, the way it worked out for



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us. Certainly, you don't get every player that you go into the weekend saying, 'Boy, it would be great if we could somehow manage to get that guy.' But we like the guys that we did get."

Q: With Andre Debose, he didn't travel with his team to the bowl game last year. Was that a red flag for you guys?

Coach Del Rio: "All of those kinds of things are talked about, discussed and worked through. So, we did that and the guys that we have joining our football team, we're comfortable with."

Q: It seemed like the Southeast scout won a lot of the arguments with a lot of Florida guys in the draft. Can you talk a little bit about the scouting process? It also seems like a lot of the selections had connections to Sal Sunseri. How much did you rely on him and his knowledge?

Coach Del Rio: "[College scout] Zack [Crockett] was a popular scout up there. *(laughter)* That's a piece of it. He and [defensive line coach] Jethro [Franklin]. Jethro was at Miami, Sal was at Florida State. We have players from both programs and certainly they [coached] and recruited a lot of those young men as well. That's a part of it. We're obviously tied in when you have a couple of guys that are straight out of the college ranks. The recruiting and the relationships with the players, relationships with coaches, the ability to get really good, detailed information and those things are all there. So, we utilize that. But, it just worked out where we had some really good players come out of the area they had just left. Sal wasn't running the draft board up there." *(laughter)*

Q: As young men coming from a college program, how does it feel to have Joe Gomes and his staff to work close with them and make that leap to the next level successful?

Coach Del Rio: "I feel great about the entire staff. Having Joe Gomes and his staff come in has been a very important part of the process, what we have underway here, in terms of nutrition, in terms of the facilities and the weight room and what we're doing with those guys, the routines, the things that we're exposing them to and the different things we're doing with the training and the conditioning, the body composition – all of those things. He has taken that to another level. I think all of our guys will benefit from that, so he has done a great job. I feel really good about the coaching staff. [Special teams coordinator] Brady Seely is an excellent special teams coach and [offensive coordinator] Bill Musgrave and the offensive staff, [defensive coordinator] Kenny Norton, [Jr.] and the defensive staff, I feel like we'll be able to develop some of our own players – some of the guys that are here, that were here, being in a competitive environment. We feel like we will develop a couple of guys that are here to be better and then along with adding some players along through free agency and through the draft, we expect to be a much better football team."

Q: Mario Edwards Jr. had said you guys told him he might play the Leo position. What type of role do you envision for him?

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, I'm not sure which of our coaches got carried away with disclosing what we're going to do with him before I could tell him to button it up. *(laughing)* We'll address that. We're going to get him here and plug him in and let him learn to play defensive end, defensive tackle, Leo, closed end, whatever it is we decide makes the most sense for us and for him. We think he's a really good football player. We're looking forward to getting our hands on him and getting to work."

Q: Do you look at the character more when a guy has had some adversity in his past, projecting what kind of player he will be more than what they were in college?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, I think you look at both. I think you're looking for productivity; it's not a bad thing. You have a guy like Amari with excellent production, and so that's a positive. Then you have some guys that didn't maybe put up the kind of numbers that you know they're capable of, so you're looking at other factors. So I think we look at the whole package. We look at these guys in a total package. What do they bring? Character, playing time, the tape is always really important, the workouts are important, the background checks and all the work that goes into putting our board together – it's all a part of the process. Like I said, we feel really good about the young men that are joining us."



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Q: Now that the draft is complete, analysts will go back and grade every team. What grade would you give yourself and your staff?

Coach Del Rio: "I'm more worried about how we grade out in September when we start playing games. Right now, I know it was a good, solid effort. I think we've had a lot of good solid efforts and we're just trying to put together one day after another, make it a great day one day after another. This is, I think, an excellent weekend for us and just one step along the way in this process of building this organization back where it belongs."