



Oakland Raiders Transcript

QB EJ Manuel

Q: Did you look at signing with other teams?

Manuel: “As far as going into free agency, I didn’t know where I’d end up. I knew I wanted to look at it more of a situation as far as being on a good team, being able to help the team however I can in whatever role that is. I just wanted to help. Obviously, with coach [Todd] Downing being the offensive coordinator here and having met [Head] Coach [Jack] Del Rio before in the years past, for me it was a no-brainer. This is a great team, a great franchise. I’m extremely excited to be a part of it.”

Q: What did Todd Downing mean to you?

Manuel: “He meant a lot. We first worked together in the Senior Bowl. Just from those conversations when I was 21, obviously not knowing what to expect from the NFL and the opportunity that lay ahead of me, just having that trust and that kind of open mode of communication relationship from him back then. Scott Linehan was the O.C. [offensive coordinator] at the time, but he was the quarterbacks coach. I was extremely happy when he signed on with us in Buffalo. I was really excited to work with him and learn from him and get some of his wisdom and knowledge. Obviously, that was cut short with the circumstances in Buffalo, but the fact that he was out here, he would still reach out and say, ‘How am I doing?’ It was never really more so about football. It was more so just about me as a person. That’s something that is very rare in this business. I was extremely happy for him when he got the offensive coordinator position. When he did call once free agency began and told me that they were interested, for me it was a no-brainer. That’s a situation you want. Especially as a quarterback and in my situation, trying to really change the perception of whatever I’ve gone through in Buffalo and all that kind of stuff. I know the player I can be and so does coach Downing. That’s what I’m excited about.”

Q: Are you coming in willing to compete for the backup job?

Manuel: “Right, correct.”

Q: Do you know Derek Carr at all? Have you spoken to him?

Manuel: “Yeah, I’ve met him before the games the two times we played them. Even from those short exchanges, he came off as a great guy. Obviously, he’s a great player. We watched him on tape a bunch because they played the same teams during the season. I used to even call or text Todd during the season the past two years and just ask him what he was doing as far as teaching Derek. What was he doing to help his game jump levels so quickly? I felt like he elevated his game so fast as a young guy. To have the consistency and such that he’s had, especially last year, in this league is very hard to do. However I can help him, I’m willing to do, but of course I’m here to compete for the number two job.”

Q: How appealing was it to be able to work with the Raiders’ offense?

Manuel: “Yeah, it was very appealing. Like I said, to be able to come to a team that came off a great season, making the playoffs and things like that, I just want to be an addition. I’m not an ego guy and all that kind of stuff. I’m not driven by that. Obviously, as a player you’re very prideful in yourself, but I’m about the team. I want the team to get better. I want to be here to help this franchise and team to be where they are in whatever role or capacity that is. That’s what I’m excited to do.”

Q: Did the experience in Buffalo make you better as a quarterback and person?

Manuel: “Yeah, most definitely. The ups and downs in Buffalo, obviously being young and getting an opportunity to start my rookie and my second year, just some of the things I’ve gone through will definitely help me moving forward. Not just in football, but in life. I think it definitely made me grow up extremely fast. Being on a team that all everyone talked about was making the playoffs, that was always on our minds and that’s still something we were never able to accomplish, but for me at least, I think it’s definitely made me a much harder person as far as the things I’ve gone through, the things that mentally I know I can deal with and still persevere. I think some people that went through what I went through, they may have just fallen by the wayside and just, ‘I’m going to



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quit.' I'm not a quitter, that's not in my vocabulary so, I'm going to continue to fight with everything I have and obviously getting the chance to be on a great chance like a team like Oakland is nothing but excitement for me."

Q: How do you look back on your experience when you were benched during your sophomore season and was that a surprising moment in your career?

Manuel: "Yeah, it was very surprising. You know, obviously being 2-2 and after losing to Houston, [former Bills Head] Coach [Doug] Marrone made the change and it was something I never dealt with as a competitor, as an athlete. So, it was definitely one of those things that I had to humble myself and understand that this could happen to anybody, you know what I mean? Of course, it wasn't something I was excited about or happy about, but it was what it was. This is a business and if a coach makes that kind of decision then that's what you have to deal with. You kind of just really have to dust yourself off and just keep fighting like I said. I think it's really put a sense of perseverance in me and I think moving forward, whether I'm the backup, whatever capacity I am here, I just want to help this team win. I know at the end of the day, as long as everybody is winning great things will happen to all the players. It was obviously a turbulent time in my life and in my career and it was only my second year. So, I'm just like wow. (*laughter*) Sometimes young guys continue to get a chance to grow and fight through those growing pains and I just wasn't afforded that opportunity. I just kind of had to roll with it and just keep rolling."

Q: Were you aware of the disagreement between the management and coaches in Buffalo regarding you playing?

Manuel: "Well, it was something I never really focused on to be real with you. I was more so concerned with playing. I didn't really know the politics of the coach didn't want me to play and management did. I didn't have time to really be concerned, and then I was young. So, a lot of the stuff I didn't even know these conversations were going on. I knew I was the starter and I was assuming like, 'Hey, this is my team. This is what we're going to do,' and obviously the chair kind of got pulled up behind me. So, it is what it is. But, I have nothing but great things to say about management. [General Manager] Doug Whaley was awesome, [Senior Vice President of Football Administration] Jim Overdorf was great, [President] Russ Brandon was awesome, the Pegula's have been great to me. So, I'm very, very appreciative of my time in Buffalo and my opportunities that I've had there, a bunch of learning opportunities and I had some great times too. I think sometimes that gets lost in translation. People want to talk about the negatives so much, we had some great times there, some great wins. I'll never forget my time in Buffalo, but I am looking forward and excited to my future here in Oakland."