



## Oakland Raiders Transcript

### Head Coach Jon Gruden

**Opening statement:** "We had a couple of men that we signed, Jacquies Smith and Kony Ealy, defensive ends. I think you saw Bruce Irvin signed with Atlanta. We wish Bruce the best. I'll answer any questions I can. I think Kolton Miller will give it a shot today on the practice field. We're encouraged by some of the progress that he has made."

**Q: What went into the decision with Irvin?**

**Coach Gruden:** "Yeah, we talked about it already. We wish Bruce the very best. He's a good player. He's reunited with his old coach in his old system and we certainly wish him the best."

**Q: What do you see from Smith and Ealy?**

**Coach Gruden:** "Well they're interesting. Jacquies Smith played for a couple of different teams. You know Kony Ealy has had production in some big moments. They're both young players that are healthy, that have size, that have some position versatility that can play on the tight end on first down or third down. We'll see where they are this week. We certainly can use their help."

**Q: How are Eddie Vanderdoes and Justin Ellis coming along?**

**Coach Gruden:** "I think Eddie Vanderdoes is doing very well. I don't know that he'll be up this week, but Arizona is a legitimate target for him. I think Ellis could be back next week. I don't think he'll practice this week. Both of those guys are getting close."

**Q: Chargers are playing very good football right now. Is there something you can take away from the last time you played them?**

**Coach Gruden:** "We liked what we did the last time. Obviously, they had a couple of big plays offensively. They were able to sustain drives. I think we only had three possessions in the entire second half. Obviously a bad call by me on first-and-goal at the 1 [-yard line]. We had two false starts on third-and-2. We had a false start on first-and-goal at the 5. We had some critical errors that are inexcusable that really hurt us, but we competed hard. We played some good football against the Chargers. We do recognize what you just said, they're playing really good on both sides. They're playing physical. They're running the ball extremely well. [Philip] Rivers has great command of the system. Defensively they're physical, man. They're a good football team."

**Q: Is Rivers playing at a higher level now than he has been?**

**Coach Gruden:** "I think they've improved their team tremendously. It's taken some time. He took some beatings there for a while. [Russell] Okung is healthy. He's playing good football. He's back. The two guards that they drafted, I mean they've added some good players to their front. They fortified their offense. They were able to run the ball. They have a good, creative scheme. Two distinctly different backs. They have some guys that can really raise hell on the outside now. [Tyrell] Williams is healthy. Keenan Allen has been a good player. They have balance. The great thing I think they have going for them is they're playing good defense. They're giving Rivers the ball back time and time again. It'll be a great test for us."

**Q: Arden Key said you talked to the rookies asking more from them.**

**Coach Gruden:** "That was part of the message. Obviously, the big part of the message is what a big part of this organization they will become and they are. They must handle that responsibility and take advantage of it. We have five linemen that are starting and playing a lot of football. We have a nickel corner in Nick Nelson and [Jason] Cabinda, a linebacker, that are going to play critical snaps for us. We have a kicker, a punter and a snapper that are rookies. I think at the halfway point you make some key points to them with all the coaches in there so we're all on the same page. I want them to be a united group that's learning



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from the 1-7 start how hard this business is and how painful it is on all of us. I want them to be a part of solution and the big picture, not only this week, but for years to come.”

**Q: How would you assess the way the rookies have played?**

**Coach Gruden:** “I think you have to go over each guy individually. I don’t know that now is the time to do that. I think they’ve all had some moments and they’ve all had some difficulties. There have been injuries to Miller, there have been injuries to [Brandon] Parker, injuries to [P.J.] Hall that have slowed our progress. There has been some inconsistency that’s part of this business. There’s a lot of growing pains. I’ve always said, my opinion anyway, second year players show the most improvement. We’re seeing Gareon Conley really for the first time. There’s a number of guys that are making some gains, but we need to see more here in the second half.”

**Q: How has the pressure affected Derek Carr?**

**Coach Gruden:** “No doubt it affects him. It affects any quarterback. Just talked about Rivers. You get an offensive line that’s healthy and playing great, it makes everybody’s job a lot easier. I’m not going to make any excuses. I think Derek is doing some good things. It does make things difficult when you have the amount of injuries that we have had. I just got a nice call from my brother, he lost all his linemen the other day, too. Got eight games left, we have to continue to coach hard and find a way to improve.”

**Q: Do you feel like going forward you need to adjust your offense to make sure Carr isn’t taking hits like he did against San Francisco?**

**Coach Gruden:** “Well, we have adjusted. We throw the quick gain. We try to move the pocket. Try to get help where help is needed. But when you’re down 24-3 and you’re trying to get back in the game, the best way to do it is throwing the football. We have to do a better job as a team. I think in seven out of eight games, we haven’t had one drive start in positive field position. Field position has been almost horrific to use a mild word. We have to get better field position. We have to get more opportunities. We have to call better plays, certainly, but we are trying to do everything we can to get help where help is needed.”

**Q: There was a big emphasis on special teams in the offseason. How much more do they need to do to create field position?**

**Coach Gruden:** “I think to a degree. I think Dwayne Harris hasn’t had a lot of opportunities. To be honest with you, he hasn’t had many opportunities to return a kick. We haven’t forced enough punts to give him many opportunities to do that either. Johnny Townsend has had his ups and downs. We have talked about that. We need all three phases to play better football together. If that happens, you’ll see the improvement that we’re all waiting for.”

### QB Derek Carr

**Q: Have you spoken to the team in mass since the midway point of the season to deliver a message or anything of the sort?**

**Carr:** “Not like a players-only meeting, it’s not like that at all. It’s not that kind of feeling or anything like that. I have – absolutely (talked to the guys) – groups of guys and obviously I like to call guys on our off days and text them and things like that. We get together – a group of us leaders – we get together every week and talk about some stuff. It hasn’t been like a players-only type of meeting, but yeah, we’ve definitely had some good conversations.”

**Q: Is there anything you can take away from the previous Chargers game?**

**Carr:** “Yeah, absolutely. There’s always something you can take. I’ll say it this way, the best thing about this league is experience. The more you play a team, the more you play an individual, you start seeing stuff that other people just don’t see about those guys. Especially for our young guys, playing a team a second time,



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going over the same kind of calls or checks or things like that with little tweaks here and there and all of that, all that stuff matters. It definitely helps. So, you go back to your notes and you remember some things that you put down, obviously without giving away too much, but yeah, you have notes that, 'okay yeah that was that, so it carries over.' Five years into this thing, that stuff always helps."

**Q: What have you seen from their defense at this point in the season?**

**Carr:** "Very physical. They love to run to the ball, hit, they want to impose their will. Just like last time, when you turn the tape on that's what you see. Same thing. They have great players, they're a great team and they're playing well with each other. It shows."

**Q: How have the injuries on the offense line limited what you are able to do offensively?**

**Carr:** "I mean, you definitely have to adjust some things, right? There's certain things you wish we could do. There's certain checks that you would love to get to but you just can't for certain reasons. That makes it hard, but there's no excuse. Whatever we do or call, we have to execute it. You go out there and do your best. We tried to do that as we've dealt with these injuries and certain things. Hopefully you'd think that we can put something together that we can do this or that. Get some more out of some guys and we'll be good."

**Q: How fine is that line? You have to have complete trust in your offensive line. But, when it's so beat up, there's a fine line between having trust and having to run for your life?**

**Carr:** "It's hard, there's sometimes it's gotten that way and it's not a knock on those guys. They're trying their tail off. We have some young guys trying to play, we have our veteran guys who dominate and they're great players, but we have some young guys that are just getting their feet wet against the best players in the world. It's not easy for them. For me, I've always been one, I try to make it seven-on-seven as much as you can. There's never a time where you're ever looking down, you just try and feel things, move and make throws. You try and do it and as it's happening you don't notice it until you turn the film on like, 'Oh, we can maybe adjust this or adjust that' kind of a thing."

**Q: You haven't had to deal with this that much during your first four years in the NFL, as your offensive line has been healthy. Do you lean on your brother at all during this time?**

**Carr:** "Oh man, it's not that bad. (*laughter*) It's not that bad, my guys are awesome. The thing about him is there were times where they would have the right guys blocked, they just physically couldn't do it. At least our guys fight, we have that going for us. He did mess with me a little bit, but no, it's not like, 'Oh man, how do you deal with this or that?' It's not like that at all."

**Q: This is an unprecedented amount of pressure other teams are bringing at you the last few weeks. Is it taking any toll physically or mentally?**

**Carr:** "Oh, definitely physically. That's a given. I'm always honest with you. I always tell you the truth. Definitely physically, but mentally no. I mean Coach Gruden is as hard on me as anybody. Even when that stuff is happening we go to the end of games and make sure, 'Alright, how was your footwork? Okay, it's good.' Making sure that those things are still good, 'How was this read? How was your step on this? How's your eyes?' All that stuff. As long as that stuff stays good that's how you know mentally everything is good. Just physically you take a beating and you got to keep going though. It is what it is."

**Q: How hard is it to get the young guys to buy in that this tough stretch will eventually pass?**

**Carr:** "It's hard for young guys because they don't know anything else. I think we've talked about it a couple times, the fear of the unknown. They don't know any better. They haven't won many games in the NFL. They don't know what it's like, what it takes, the kind of guys it takes, the comradery it takes. They don't know that yet, so they just have to go based off our word. We have a great group of guys that listen. We have a lot of young guys. This is probably the most young guys I've seen ask questions to the older guys. They want to do better. It's not like they want to go out there and hurt the team or anything like



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that. We are having, I think, an unprecedented amount of young guys play. That obviously makes it a struggle and makes it tougher, but it's not like they are giving in or giving up. They are asking questions, saying, 'Okay I saw that, but how do I defend this? How do I do this better? How do I do that?' Those are the kinds of things you want to see rather than old guys just telling the young guys, 'Nah, forget it man. You are costing us games.' That's not happening here and if it was Coach Gruden would address it and it wouldn't happen anymore."

**Q: You lost two team captains in a short span. That can change the dynamic in the locker room. Do you guys have to account for those leadership losses?**

**Carr:** "Yeah, absolutely we have to. I think the leaders we have now have to step up. I think some guys that are in that kind of I'm young but I'm not young anymore, they have to step up especially for their side of the ball. That's two guys on defense. I love Derrick [Johnson] and I love Bruce [Irvin]. They would say a lot. They helped those guys. A lot of those guys, as Coach Gruden would say, 'they have to grow up quickly' to really be that voice and that person to stand up when things aren't going right and feel free to address it vocally. I think a lot of that has to do with the young guys maybe sometimes pulling back because they think, 'I didn't make this play or make that play so I can't say anything.' That's not the case at all. We all make mistakes. The more of those guys that are in between that can step up and help take on that burden or that leadership role will help going forward, especially for the young guys."

**Q: When you see a series of guys that have been here with you for a few years leave, do you feel like personally you have an understanding of what the team/organization is trying to accomplish?**

**Carr:** "I mean, I understand. It's tough, it hurts and it's hard. No one pays me to care about my feelings or any of our feelings. As friends...I have a lot of friends that have been cut or traded, not just this year but for five years. That's always hard. You look around and Coop [Amari Cooper] is not sitting behind me in the offensive meeting anymore and Khalil [Mack] is not sitting next to me in a team meeting. I go to Bruce's [Bruce Irvin] locker and it is not Bruce's anymore. Guys that I am still really close with, that I still talk with, I even talked to this morning...That they aren't there, absolutely it's different. Absolutely it's something that's not normal to me because I used to come in everyday and see them. We'd have our jokes and all those things right. Going forward my job is to take whatever our owner, GM and head coach say and relay the message. Just do my best, that's my job. My job is to go out there and complete passes, lead my guys the best that I can and that's my job. That's what I am here to do."

**Q: Is there something about Philip Rivers game you really admire?**

**Carr:** "I love how competitive Philip is. I really do, and he knows that. I talk to him before games, after games and all that. Like I said, I admire everything except I am not trying to catch him in the amount of kids, so he can have that one."

**Q: Guys who have played for as long as he has and taken such a toll on their body...**

**Carr:** "Obviously quarterbacks get way too much credit and way too much blame already, but I think we don't give enough credit to guys who have played that long. I'll say it this way, the hardest part mentally going through a season is the days leading up to the game. Sunday is fun, man. You cut it loose and you give it everything you have. Having to recover, ice tub, wake up early to get treatment, the lift, to lift heavy when everything hurts, that's when those guys don't get enough credit. Here I am at five years, I'm fine. I'm good. I'll keep doing this and I'm good. But, those guys that are in their 15<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> season, we don't give them enough credit to mentally be that strong. It's awesome."

**Q: If you look back to your 2014 experience, you had to grow up really fast. Do you think you're a better leader for that experience?**

**Carr:** "Absolutely. I'll say this, there are one of two things that's going to happen and I think y'all know the answer. We're going to keep going through a crappy situation and I'm going to quit on working hard, or I'm not. I think you guys know me by now. I'm going to work my tail off almost to a stupid point, to where my



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body hurts even more. To where my mind is tired and all those things. Doing that my rookie year, even last year. Last year was hard. Doing it this year. You definitely have things to pull from to show these rookies that I've been there, I've done this. A lot of our guys have been through certain situations in our lives. At the end of the day, if you just show up and do your job and do it the right way you'll stick around. You'll play as long as you want to. You'll be in this league for a long time and it'll be a lot of fun. You definitely have things to pull from and I think we've got a good, young group that is obviously learning on the fly. That's hard for veterans, having a lot of rookies learning on the fly. At the same time, it's our job to show them the way and that's what we're going to do."

### **Q: Where do you go from 1-7 moving forward?**

**Carr:** "Hopefully 16-0. It's hard, man. I hate losing. I may not be someone that is seen on TV yelling all the time or getting angry but this stuff hurts. I'm probably one of the most competitive people you'll ever meet. I want to dunk on my nephews. I'll block my two-year-old's shot to make it hard on them. I hate losing. I hate it with everything in me. I hate losing more than anything. I work my tail off to make sure that our city, our fans, our team, our coaches can enjoy winning. Sitting here at 1-7 sucks but nothing in me is going to stop until I see the other side of it. Trust me, I used to say it, I'm going to see the other side of it. When is it going to come? I don't know. I wish I knew because it would make it easier on my heart. I do know that I will see the other side of it and I can't wait. You'll be more thankful for it then after going through this stuff."

### **Q: Do you feel like you understand the messaging you're getting from Coach Gruden?**

**Carr:** "Yes, Coach Gruden is very clear to our team. He stands in front of team meeting and says what he says to us as players. We understand what he's saying. We understand the message he's giving. Him and I talk every morning, at night when I'm at home. We're on the same page. It's a hard time right now, but I do know this: we're not going to stop fighting. I'm not trying to lose anything. Every time I take the field, all of our teammates know that no. 4 is trying to win. That will never change."