



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "Good afternoon. I'd like to update our injuries but before I do, just sick to hear about [49ers QB] Jimmy Garoppolo. I wish him the best in his recovery. Hate hearing that. We have some injuries. Karl Joseph hurt his hamstring. I believe he played just a play or two, he got hurt chasing [Dolphins QB Ryan] Tannehill. He will be out this week I think. Our kicker Mike Nugent, although he kicked field goals very well, has injured his hip. We are concerned about his status for this week. [RT] Donald Penn got a concussion, we believe he will be okay. I shouldn't say he has a concussion, he has been checked out for concussion-like symptoms. He was unable to play much in the game. Tough loss. I was really proud of some things that we did. Really excited about some of the things we put on tape. Unfortunately, we have plenty to clean up. I'll answer any questions I can."

Q: Field position has been an issue all season... What have you made of your starting field position?

Coach Gruden: "It's been horrible. It's been the worst in football. By far the worst starting position in football. I think we had numerous penalties on special teams. It's a credit to our offense really, for moving the ball out of negative territory. We have to get more out of our return game and we have to minimize the penalties. Unfortunately, [WR/RS] Dwayne Harris was injured part of the game yesterday. The penalties are inexcusable. We have to clean them up and we have to get better field position for our offense or it will continue to be tough."

Q: On the interception Derek Carr threw in the end zone in the fourth quarter, is that a risk you want him taking on first down in that situation?

Coach Gruden: "Well, obviously it didn't work out. It worked out in the Dolphins favor. I thought we were too aggressive. I think at times he is trying too hard. We will talk about that extensively here in the next couple of hours, but I thought he played really good under some very tough circumstances. I think sometimes he needs to learn a little bit more patience and I think he will. I'm really excited about the way he has played and improved and mastered this offense. We are getting closer. That was a painful turnover. We will address that, and we will make the corrections."

Q: Only 44 or 45 defensive plays yesterday for your team. Still a lot to learn in those plays...?

Coach Gruden: "Not to interrupt...we had 38 minutes on offense. Really excited about the possession time. That's always something we have taken pride in. When you give up four plays for 196 yards and three touchdowns you aren't going to win football games like that. We gave up too many big plays but there were some great efforts. I thought are ability to stop the run and get off the field on third down was impressive. When you give up jet sweeps that go for 75-yard, 35-yard touchdowns, we've got to erase those. We got to clean that up immediately. I know [Browns WR] Jarvis Landry and the Cleveland Browns are looking at our film probably thinking, 'Let's try a few of those again this week.'"

Q: That how the league works right? You run something until a team demonstrates they can stop it?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah. If there is twenty-dollar bills being spit out of a teller down the street, you and I are going to get in line. We are going to stand in line and pick up twenties. The Rams got us, the Dolphins got us and I'm sure Cleveland is going to try and get us as well."



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Q: How incumbent is it on the coaching staff to make sure that the positives that you see are reinforced?

Coach Gruden: "I think our players understand how close we are offensively, and in certain aspects on defense they know we have some issues that we have to overcome. There is no question, you can't fool players. They know we have certain issues they have to overcome. Injuries now being another one. Fourth-and-one on the one-foot line, we have the ball first down at the twelve going in late. We are on the cusp of doing something great on the road in a very difficult place to play in September, let me tell you. Defensively we are three or four plays, that we just talked about, away from having a very good outing. Nobody cares right now. They want results. We want to win. I think the players see a lot of things to be confident about, but we know we got to finish football games much better."

Q: You talked a lot about trying to build something here. Is it difficult to be patient during the building process when the results aren't there?

Coach Gruden: "There's no doubt we are here to win and we want to win. We want to enjoy the process more than we are right now. We got a lot of new players, we got new systems, we've had some adversity. We are fighting. I think if you look at the tape you'll see a lot of great competitiveness. You'll see some guys that are giving you everything that they have...and you're seeing some improvement, which is important, but we still have a long way to go. It will be taxing, it will be pressing on some of our leaders to really step up and showcase it in times like this."

Q: When you have a veteran team, a lot of those guys are going to be in that win now mode. How do you kind of balance making sure that those guys understand that there may be a little building process?

Coach Gruden: "I think our guys understand it. I think our guys understand what we are doing. I think they are working very hard on the practice field. I think behind the scenes, Raider fans would be impressed. A foundation of practices, the work ethic, the attention to detail. Guys are working at it and I thought are conditioning was very good yesterday. As good as theirs or better. I'm proud of that, but we have to start putting some wins in the column and that's what Raiders fans want. That's what we want and that's what we are after."

Q: When you have a veteran team, how do you balance their win-now hopes and the building process?

Gruden: "I think our guys understand it. I think our guys understand what we're doing. I think they're working hard on the practice field. I think behind the scenes; Raider fans would be impressed. The foundation of practice is the work ethic, the attention to detail. Guys are working at it. I thought our conditioning was good yesterday, as good as theirs or better. Proud of that. We have to start putting some wins in the column. That's what Raiders fans want. That's what we want. That's what we're after."

Q: When you turn on the film, are you encourage by the direction of where things are headed?

Gruden: "I am. I think we need to clean up the turnover ratio, number one. I think when you throw for 80 percent basically in three games for almost 1,000 yards, that's as good as I've ever been associated with. There's some really good things. Us running the football, physical runs between the tackles with different kinds of backs, different kinds of personnel groupings and plays. We have to get better field position, we've talked about that. We have to eliminate the turnovers and eliminate the big plays on defense. It's easier said than done. We'll get back to work today and get ready for Cleveland."



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Q: When you break down the first half versus the second half, what do you find?

Gruden: "Stats say 37-3. That's not good. We failed on a fourth-and-1 play in Denver. We had a false start at the end of the game in Denver that really stymied us moving the football. We've turned the ball over in the redzone, like we did last week. We have to finish drives on offense, we have to finish them. We have to take better care of the football. Defensively, I know we have some injuries. Fatigue sets in. We've got to play better at closing time. That's something we'll continue to emphasize and might even try to be a little more creative in how we practice the final 10 or 12 minutes of games."

Q: What is the key there to playing better in the fourth quarter?

Gruden: "You can't press. To create an analogy, I've caddied for John Daly and I've caddied for some of the best. Some of these guys get on the 15th or 16th hole and they're in great shape, but the fairways get tighter. You swing a little faster. You try a little harder. It doesn't work out. We've got to take a deep breath and look forward to the moment. We have to apply pressure, not to say we feel pressure. We've got to continue to remain confident and poised and do our jobs individually, so we can do our job collectively. I think at times we have some guys trying to do too much. That's something we really have to solve quickly. We do have good enough players to finish."

Q: In terms of focusing on execution in the redzone, what's there to heighten?

Gruden: "It's a results business. We liked our redzone plan yesterday. We got Jordy [Nelson] for a score in the opening possession. We ran a shovel pass to [Jared] Cook that really should have walked in on third down. Our short-yardage offense on the goal-line wasn't good enough. Our pad level... we have to credit Miami. They're pretty stout upfront. Another time we got down there, we had an interception on first down. We think that it's very, very correctable. We have to take care of the ball and we have to come away with something down there."

Q: There was the third-and-2 when you connected with Keith Smith, similarly designed as the play from the week earlier. How much of that is a testament to your faith in Keith?

Gruden: "That was a good play. I liked that play when it went to Keith Smith, but the idea of the play was to get the ball to Lee Smith. We're not afraid to go to the Smith brothers in crunch time. We're going to have mistakes. Guys are going to have some snaps that are disappointing. We have a lot of confidence in Keith Smith and we're going to continue to go to him. He's what makes our two-back offense go."

Q: You have only one takeaway on defense...

Gruden: "It's been a problem here for awhile now. Didn't get them last year. It's a big reason why field position is what it is. Really a turnover is getting a three-and-out, too. Getting a three-and-out, getting the ball back immediately can almost be as good as a turnover. We need some of those and we need to get the ball back, whether we intercept it or strip it away. You were at training camp, you saw what we were trying to do before every, single practice. We've got to get more hats to the football. We've got to rip it out. That's winning football, winning the turnover battle. We're turning it over too many times. We're not getting it back enough. That's a big reason, if not the number one reason we're sitting where we are."

Q: Do you see the roughing the passer on Mo Hurst and an earlier sack by the Dolphins that wasn't called. Do you see a big difference between them?

Gruden: "Did you? Officiating is tough sometimes. We have a pass interference penalty called against us that cost us potentially the game in Denver. We had a penalty yesterday that really enabled a drive to



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continue and they ended up scoring on that drive. Chucky will come out. They're trying to get it right, too."

Q: How do you look at the way you've coached these three games?

Gruden: "I'm not a lot different than what I was the last time I was here. I wish the results on the win column was better. I'm encouraged by the staff we have, by the environment we're creating and the direction we're heading. I'm excited about it. We have a lot of work to do. We have a ways to go. I am seeing progress. I think Derek Carr is magnificent in this offense. I think we're going to be a balanced team that can possess the ball the make big plays. I really believe that. I think defensively we're still finding ourselves. Special teams, we've lost our long snapper, we've lost our kicker now. We've lost two kickers, our long snapper and my returner at times. It's been a challenge. Yesterday we lost our right tackle. I'm not going to give myself a report card right now. I'm just trying to get better and trying to provide good positive, optimistic feedback to our football players. We'll continue to compete."

Q: Could you sense that yesterday was going to be a big day for Jordy Nelson? Do you think it'll kick start him a little bit?

Coach Gruden: "Well we've had three different receivers have over 100 yards in three games. Ball distribution is not going to be one that I think people are going to predict. We're just not playing that kind of football. This week it might [Jared] Cook. Next week it might be [Amari] Cooper. Who knows. It might be somebody else against Cleveland. He's played well. He's done unbelievably things for us behind the scenes. He's helping our quarterback as well, I think, with some of his experiences. To make a long story short, it was good to see yesterday. Really good to see."

Q: What are you doing if Mike Nugent can't go?

Coach Gruden: "I don't know. We'll be trying out numerous people. Trying to find the best available kicker possible. [Assistant Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator] Rich Bisaccia, I know [General Manager] Reggie McKenzie were up there working on getting some flights organized right now."

Q: Can you sense outside negativity piling on?

Coach Gruden: "Can I sense outside negativity piling on who, me? (*laughing*). No. I mean it's justifiable. I have a pretty good idea of what this business is all about. But I'm also realistic. I'm also very optimistic. I'm going to continue to work hard. I think I have as good a coaching staff as there is in football. The results will happen. It might not happen this week. It might not happen this month, next month, but we're going to get results here and we're going to get this Oakland Raider football team back on track. We just have to prove it."

Q: Is it difficult of weighing the long-term view with your competitive nature of wanting to win every week?

Coach Gruden: "It's hard. I mean it's hard to trade one of your best players. One of the best players on a franchise. It's hard. It's hard on the players. We didn't get anything for him that's going to help us out this year. Justin Ellis hasn't played. We have a lot of guys on the defensive line that are out. We have had to replace basically the entire secondary, some of the linebackers and we're in the process of putting the pieces back together. That'll be exciting. But right now we just have to continue to get ready for each game individually. Right now it's Cleveland. They're a football team that's emerging. They've



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drafted a lot of good, young players. It's starting to show on film. [Baker] Mayfield is the real deal. This young man can play."

Q: Were you hoping to get him on your QB Camp?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, if we don't start winning some games, maybe I can. (*laughing*). You know what I mean? Maybe I can."

Q: Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie was rotated more. Was that part of the plan?

Coach Gruden: "Well he's a good player and it was a hot day. We wanted to try to reward our best players. He has not only learned the defense, he's made plays behind the scenes here on the practice field. He has history in this league. He's been a turnover magnet. He has a number of interceptions. He almost got one against the Rams. It was batted down. He was going to take it to the house, I think. He was close yesterday. He's helped us on special teams. He's earned the right to get on the field more. It'll be interesting when [Daryl] Worley comes back, what we do at the corner position. We've had some good snaps. We've had some inconsistent snaps. We have to get better.'