



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing

Q: Did you see a lot that you liked from the running game in the first half this past week?

Coach Downing: "Yeah. We really ran the ball efficiently in the first half. It was something that we were hoping to be able to stick with and the game situation just took us out of it."

Q: What do you think has been the key in Marshawn Lynch's success in the last few quarters?

Coach Downing: "He's really been reenergized and refocused. He's running the ball well. I think he had something like 11 carries in the first half or something like that. We were trying to get him rocking and rolling. I'm pleased with where he's at. Hoping to be able to feed him a little bit more."

Q: Have you looked to manage his carries this season?

Coach Downing: "No. I haven't really put a rep count or anything like that. We just have a rotation with the backs. Try to feed who's producing."

Q: He had 18 carries in the first game and hasn't ran it that much since.

Coach Downing: "Yeah we've had a pretty good split in carries and some of the rotation games that we've had. Then we've had some game situations that's taken us out of the run game a little bit earlier than we wanted, so we haven't had the run count that we've been hoping for."

Q: How would you assess how the offensive line has been playing this season?

Coach Downing: "I think that they've continue to improve. I think they've gotten a little more comfortable with some of the schemes that we're asking them to execute, a little bit better in adjustments throughout the course of the season. I think they're trending upwards and excited about riding them in the second half."

Q: How do you fix receiver drops?

Coach Downing: "I've had that question a lot. It's something that is a little bit of a fine line. There's a confidence element that's involved with drops and catching the football. It's certainly something that we want to continue to look for ways to improve on. We've identified, [wide receivers] coach [Rob] Moore has identified and myself, the problematic areas or maybe routes that have multiple drops with the concepts. So, we're really harping on those. Then just getting extra work with the jugs machine. As many balls as you can catch as a wide receiver, that is your craft. That's your trade so you constantly need to be working on it and look to improve it."

Q: Do you think drops get in a receivers' head?

Coach Downing: "I think that can happen. I think that can happen. I know that when I play golf and I'm pushing the ball right off the tee a lot, I tend to think about it every time I stand over the ball. It's something that you have to continually work to remind yourself that you're a professional ball catcher, that you're here for a reason, and I think that those guys are getting their problematic areas fixed."

Q: What are some of the things that you picked up from working with Bill Musgrave for two years? What is it that you learned from him that you admire?

Coach Downing: "He's a very detailed guy. He likes to simplify and let the guys go execute. That was certainly something that I respected about the way he went through a game plan process. If there was something that wasn't working itself out through the course of the practice week, we'd eliminate it or not run it on Sunday. Definitely picked that up. He has a broad scope understanding of offense. Being a quarterback as he is, or a former quarterback as he is, he's not just a pass game guy. He has a good understand of the run game and a good respect for the guys upfront being able to move the line of scrimmage. Definitely something that I admire and wanted to emulate."



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Q: Is his knowledge of your offense a help to their defense or is it a little overrated?

Coach Downing: "I think it's a little overrated. With how quick the ball gets snapped, even if you hear a term, you have to react in a moment with the ball being snapped. Certainly, signals and co-words and things like that we have to be very cognizant of, but in terms of line calls or cadence, things like that don't really play in as much of a factor as I think some people make it out to be."

Q: In what area have you seen the most growth over the season for the offensive line?

Coach Downing: "I think we're getting a little more comfortable with our aiming points and double teams. Really moving the line of scrimmage. Really moving the down lineman. Getting up to that second level through the double team as opposed to coming off a little bit earlier. Some of the outside schemes we're running, we're running more. So, they're getting more consistency and that's something I hope to do is provide them opportunities to get better at a scheme as opposed to getting chased out of something. They really have been doing a nice job with their combination blocks and understanding that placement and footwork and all that stuff, so it's been good."

Q: The game really flipped last week after half time. What does that do to your call sheet?

Coach Downing: "It really was a tough turn and change in dynamic. We're driving down and it's 14-0 and we have chance to make it 14-7. I think Seth [Roberts] caught that ball on the 2- or 3-yard line. You're kind of staying in phase. I think we had more runs than we did passes in the first half. We were really moving that line of scrimmage and pounding that rock and staying efficient in the pass game. Then next time we possess the ball, you're looking at the clock thinking, 'Alright I might get five, maybe six more possessions out of this game and we need at least three scores.' It certainly changes the approach. It limits the call sheet a little bit in terms of what you can run and what will be affective. Running a hard playaction pass in the fourth quarter of that game wouldn't make a whole lot of sense because you're not going to get much movement from the linebackers or down safeties. It definitely affects the way you call the game a little bit, but we have to do our best with every opportunity that we get offensively. We look forward to improving that in the last six games."

Q: On the fourth-and-1 play, it seemed like an opportunity to get Lynch involved.

Coach Downing: "Yeah that's my fault. I should've gotten Marshawn in there. I should've tagged him in the personnel grouping. In that situation, we would normally have him in there. I think he had run it a couple of times previously to that and was getting a little bit of a breather, so we plugged 'Maze' [Jamize Olawale] who's our second short yardage back in there. But you can pin that on me, I should've had him in there."

Q: Does Musgrave's play calling philosophy kind of rub off on you when you worked under him for so long?

Coach Downing: "I think there are elements of it. I won't say personality traits but maybe nuances of the game that you naturally talk to through as a coordinator and quarterback coach. So, those experiences are kind of lived through the other coordinator. We were together for two years. I have some other influences that probably shape my play calling more than that."

Q: Seth Roberts had a rough game on Sunday. What have you seen from him in terms of a rebound?

Coach Downing: "Through your coaching career, you run into players that you know are giving it everything they got. Seth is a professional and works his tail off. Yeah, he had a rough day at the office, but it wasn't for lack of trying or focus or preparation. I don't mean to simplify it for those that are as frustrated as we are about it, but sometimes bad days happen. Seth is an extremely hard worker who will bounce back from it. He's focused and purposely working hard this week so that he can bounce back with a strong performance against Denver. We have all the faith in the world in Seth."



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Assistant Head Coach – Defense John Pagano

Q: Jack Del Rio said he wanted the guys to play faster. How do you make that happen?

Coach Pagano: “I think the one thing we’re trying to truly establish – I think the main thing is – and you’ve got to do it in a couple of days is you have to play with confidence. You have to have that ability of going out there, knowing your assignment and playing faster. It’s not to say that there have been times where we’ve simplified things, but taking the thinking out of the game and making them react is, I think, most important. Going out there and playing fast and that’s doing the little extra things, the attention to details of studying and getting those things processed. See ball, go get ball.”

Q: How is this defense going to look different, if at all, under you?

Coach Pagano: “We just have to go out and we have to play better. We have to coach better. We have to do a lot of things different. We have to create turnovers. I think that’s the biggest thing missing from any defense. You have to get off the field on third down. We have to go out there, we have to affect the quarterback and make him uncomfortable. I think when those things happen, that gives you that confidence to keep doing the things that you want to do differently. We’re going to go out there, we’re going to play hard. The one thing I’ve always stressed and always been about is technique, fundamentals and unbelievable effort. I think those three things can get you home.”

Q: You’ve coached against Bill Musgrave before. In this particular week, do you have to scout the scheme and his tendencies at the same time?

Coach Pagano: “Yeah, you have to look at all those things I think. You’re human to the fact that we’ve gone against each other before. There are certain things. You always have to understand what he’s about and what little things pop into my head from seeing him, but you still have to go based off of what you’re seeing right now, the film that you’re seeing, the plays you’re going off of. You have to be prepared for everything. He does a great job and he always has those guys ready to play and there is always going to be something new.”

Q: A lot of these players were tight with Ken Norton, Jr. How do you deal with that part of it?

Coach Pagano: “It’s tough. It’s tough in this business. I told the guys that the one thing about this business that I’ve always felt and some coaches a long time ago told me: We’re all on one-day contracts. You live every day and you coach every day and you play hard and certain things like that are tough. There is a human element to this. We are family. It’s sad any time a member of your family gets dismissed or something. At the end of the day, we have the Broncos coming in here on Sunday and we have to get our minds right to go play this game. That’s something that they’ve done a great job with this week. Truly focusing in on what we need to do.”

Q: What have you seen from this year’s defense that’s held them back in terms of interceptions?

Coach Pagano: “You know, it’s the opportunities that we’ve missed. I think sitting up there it started with Week 1 of having two opportunities that went right through our hands. Not like a tough play here and there. Just catch it, catch the ball. I talked to these guys this week about we need to do simple better. What is simple? It’s fundamentals of covering. It’s tackling. It’s communicating. It’s catching the ball when it comes. We’ve had opportunities. It’s not like we’re out there struggling and straining to dive and layout for the thing. It’s hit us in the hands where we’ve had many, many opportunities. We chart them. Those are our ‘mops.’ Those are our missed opportunities. We have to come up with the ball. We just have to go catch it and make the play when the ball is in the air.”

Q: Do you have any idea on the number of opportunities that you’ve missed?

Coach Pagano: “There’s a bunch. I don’t know the number offhand. I visually see them all right now, so maybe if you give me a couple of minutes I can go through. You just have to make those plays when they come to you. When that opportunity comes, you just have to catch it. Just keep working at it. Is it unfortunate? Yeah, but you know what, every week is a new opportunity. We get an opportunity this week to be able to do that.”



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Q: A buzz word when you came in was communication. How do you think that's gone this year?

Coach Pagano: "I think it's worked well. I'd love to look at our numbers from the explosive plays. They're down from last year to this year at this time. I think it's a more important thing, letting the ball get over the head. We're communicating, it's just how fast can we play out there on the field? The things that we need to do and that attention to detail, those little things. Communication is always key. It's big every week. We're improving on it every week. It's never perfect. It's never going to be perfect. We just have to keep getting better at that."

Q: There was a play Sunday against New England where Marquel Lee had a blitz and before the snap, he took a step and Tom Brady adjusted. What did you see on that play and the season as a whole in terms of disguising blitzes?

Coach Pagano: "He went deep on that play, I'll give you credit on that. I am trying to remember the play. Disguising is always a big part in the National Football League. I've always prided a defense on being able to disguise, to not give those quarterbacks the pre-snap reads of truly understanding what's coming. How that's gone? It can always be better. I think we can take it to another level. You have to coach every day and be able to do those things to make sure it meshes to exactly what you're doing. I look at this game a lot of times like a chess match. You're always trying to set up that next move. By your alignment, by your feet, certain things how you align can change something to the next play. You're talking about a quarterback in Tom Brady that can see a lot. You've got to do a lot more to those quarterbacks, veteran quarterbacks who have seen everything. From that standard, you have to really disguise. If they see you coming, you better come then. Go get them."

Q: You've faced Bill Musgrave a number of times. One of those was one of the more memorable games when you were in San Diego on Christmas Eve. What do you recall about that one?

Coach Pagano: "Surviving. It actually came up this week, we were talking about it this week. I was giving the receivers, not saying any names, but I was saying how I had a receiver in San Diego locking him down. They were laughing about it and they said they remembered it. That was something that you always prepare for. You've talked to guys. You don't get a lot of reps on it but you're always in that emergency mode of guys that you have where you can place other guys in that spot. The guys executed and played that night. We still lost that game but it was something that you look back on and you see they did a good job of handling that adversity they were set up with."

Q: At this point in the season, can you make big changes or are you just tweaking a few things here and there?

Coach Pagano: "There's always room for change and there's always room for doing things better. Without telling you our game plan, it's about we go out and execute the call, bottom line."

Q: Are there guys that maybe you haven't seen a lot of that you want to see play?

Coach Pagano: "Same guys are going to go get it."

Q: You've worked with Shalom Luani through his time here. What has stood out overall about him?

Coach Pagano: "I think [safeties coach Brent] Vieselmeyer has done a heck of a job with him as a safety. He's learning. He's still understanding, he's young. His buzz word that always follows him is that he's got great instincts, so I'll jump on that. He's an instinctive player and he can see the ball and he goes and gets it. You've got to have that playmaking ability. He had some great tackles. He had a great tackle in the New England game coming off the edge. Something that he needs to keep improving on. He's young and you just keep giving him those reps. He's got instincts and he can run. He has a knack of finding the ball."

Q: What has been missing from this pass rush?

Coach Pagano: "Opportunities, again. We've had ample opportunities. It comes down to finishing. We talk about it all week. Any time we get the opportunity to get the quarterback, it's a guy fell here, a guy missed here. That opportunity to get him down, it goes the same way with our turnovers. The ball's on the ground last week, we got three guys standing over it. We have to jump on it, it changes the game. Those opportunities, the missed sack opportunities, the rush keeps improving, guys are getting better. I think you look at a game last week and see how



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90 [Treyvon Hester] rushed for us this past game and how he stepped up, had some great pass rush moves that got a couple quarterback hits last week. So, you see those guys improving – and Eddie [Vanderdoes], Khalil [Mack] and Bruce [Irvin] and Denico [Autry] all those guys in there, we have to get them down when we have the opportunity.”

Q: How do you think the secondary as a whole has adjusted to the injuries?

Coach Pagano: “I think they all adjusted well. I think the thing that always happens, when your time comes, you have to go answer the bell. I think they’ve done a great job of being put into those positions. Guy are at times special teams core players and playing 60-70 plays for you. And when your opportunity comes, you do it. So, you just adjust and you go with it.”

Q: When it comes to a guy with instincts like Shalom Luani, do you have to make sure you don’t make sure he’s in too tight of a box and just allow him to play?

Coach Pagano: “You never take that away from a player – a guy that has instincts like that, you don’t want to overcoach those things. You want him to have the ability to go see the ball and get the ball. From that standpoint, he’s still got to learn this game. The game, the more reps he gets, the more he sees, the slower this game becomes to him and then they start understanding it. Right now, they’re in baby steps of rookie football of making sure I get aligned, making sure I’m aligned properly in that sense of when the ball is snapped, where do I have to go? And I think from that moment, he can take himself out a couple steps just from not being in his proper landmark or proper depth, and that happens to him, he’s a young player. But, you never, ever want to take away anything from an instinctive player that a lot of times, you just can’t coach.”

Q: Are you excited about working with Khalil Mack?

Coach Pagano: “You’re always excited. Since Day 1, since I’ve been here, you find yourself... I stare at the dude and watch him work and how professional he is. Being able to help over the weeks and certainly, even more now of being able to design that type of rush. We understand what we’re going to do. We have to go affect the quarterback and we haven’t done enough of that. So, how do we change those certain things? We keep working at it, we keep doing those types of different rushes that we can implement. From that standpoint, he’s been unbelievable.”

Q: I believe Obi Melifonwu played some corner in college, but he’s more of a safety by nature. Is there a balance between wanting a player to come in and help you but also minding where his development is?

Coach Pagano: “Great question. Understanding that type of role, he’s played corner and safety, where we were in the week, how we felt, he was going to go in that situation and play. I think the biggest thing, being young in that setting and being in a fast tempo offense, I think it really was a strain. You have to go. He needed more of those preseason that he didn’t get the opportunity to make. He recovered well in certain situations. He gave up a deep ball. That’s going to happen. You better have a short-term memory and be ready to come back out and play the next snap. When you’re always developing as a young player, you’ve got to be able to use those guys and put them in different spots. Like you said, there can be injuries, there can be anything. He’s got to take advantage of next time when he’s called upon in those certain roles to be able to go out there and do the things that we need to do. there’s always going to be growing pains with young players. He’s got to grow up real quick and understand that we cannot let the ball go over our heads on those deep balls.”