



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Q: How did you spend the Holiday?

Coach Gruden: “In here. Yeah, pretty much. Short week. Players had yesterday off, and we let the coaches sleep in a little bit and have Christmas with their kids. Spent most of yesterday and last night getting ready for our last game. It will be a real challenge for us.”

Q: How did you like the way your rookie tackles played on Monday?

Coach Gruden: “Pretty good. We are really pleased with those two guys. I know Pro Football Focus has some statistics that aren’t always positive, but they played very good, and not just pass protecting but run blocking and handling the audibles. We have seen a lot of progress there.”

Q: What are the challenges of coming off an emotional game to going to play in Kansas City?

Coach Gruden: “You just put the Kansas City Chiefs tape on. They realize that Kansas City is leading the division and has a chance to lock up home field. They’ve got a very talented football team. Best record in football, I believe. We also know that if we didn’t turn the ball over three or four times the last time, we were right there with them in the fourth quarter. I think we are excited to finish this season with as much authority as we can. I’m really proud of the way our guys have been playing.”

Q: How helpful was it preparing for the Chiefs some last week?

Coach Gruden: “It was helpful, but we’ve had so many changes on our roster that we need another week to get ready. Last week we didn’t have [Maurice] Hurst, we didn’t have our starting corners, we are still getting [Denzelle] Good ready to play right guard. We still are in a transition mode. We moved [Marcus] Gilchrist to nickel. If you watched the game the other day he played a fair amount there, so a lot of moving parts right now. The Chiefs are formidable as you know.”

Q: How difficult is it to coach defensive backs right now, with the way the rules are?

Coach Gruden: “I think it’s a lot easier. I think we’ve done a good job for the most part trying to keep the helmet out of tackling. It’s a cliché around the league now, and if you lead with your helmet or the crown of your helmet you are going to be fined. Hitting and hard hitting is a sign of a good football team. That’s how you get the ball back. That’s how you knock the ball loose. There’s an etiquette I think that everybody is learning how to play with, and if you are not playing with that type of etiquette you are going to be flagged and fined. We do really take pride in being a hard-hitting football team and your safeties usually have to lead the charge there. We’ve got some guys that will really hit you.”

Q: What’s been the biggest difference with Karl Joseph the last few weeks?

Coach Gruden: “I think he’s just feeling the defense now. I think he’s learning a new defense. No different than Derek Carr. You talk about Carr learning a new offense. It’s tough on a safety now. He’s got to be the quarterback back there. He’s been playing with different nickels, different middle linebackers. I mean, hell, he’s been playing with different defensive linemen, different corners that he has to communicate with. It’s a transition period for him, but he is really accelerated in the last four or five ball games and become a real good player for us.”

Q: What is the next step for Joseph?

Coach Gruden: “Just got to keep improving and we got to keep improving around him. Much like we plan on doing with Derek and our offense. If you can get some playmakers in the middle of your defense and build around those guys, usually that’s a good thing.”

Q: Has there an official decision made on Donald Penn playing again this season?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, he won’t be playing this year. Hopefully he can get himself back in great shape, which I expect him to, and hopefully be a part of this in the future.”



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Q: How do you think Nick Nelson did on the outside?

Coach Gruden: "He did pretty good. I think he did alright. I think he's got to continue to improve. He needs reps, he needs snaps and we've been moving him around with the injuries. It's tough on him as well."

Q: How would you assess Arden Key's rookie season?

Coach Gruden: "Pretty good. I wish he could close the deal. I think he's got one sack, but he's had about eight or nine quarterbacks in the grass. He's just got to be a better finisher when he gets home. We do like his energy. He stands out to me in terms of rushing the passer when we are rushing."

Q: Does [Daniel] Carlson remind you of anybody? How big of a surprise has he been for you?

Coach Gruden: "He's my favorite player. For a while there you don't know your kickers name. I know this guy's name. He's really making a name for himself. Long range field goals, different climates, wet ball, high snap, low snap, on the road, cold weather, he has done it all for us. I don't think he reminds me of anybody. He's just tall. He's a long kicker. I just met his brother who was at practice last week. He's another up and coming, tall kicker at Auburn. We are happy we have him. He's clearly been one of the strengths of this team."

Q: The decision to relieve Strength and Conditioning Coordinator Tom Shaw of his duties mid-season, why?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, that's a personal matter. I'll just leave it at that. Tom is a good friend and really good at what he does. It's a personal matter and unfortunately we are going to have to go in a different direction, and that's something we are going to have to do when the season is over."

Q: Do you think Patrick Mahomes is the MVP of this season?

Coach Gruden: "I haven't seen everybody. I don't know how you can't be the MVP after you look at his body of work as a first-year starter. Not to take anything away from [Drew] Brees or anybody else that has played at a high level. This guy is making throws that people haven't seen before and closing in on 50 touchdown passes in your first year as a starter. It's quite amazing. He's taking care of the ball and he's won games for his team, so if I did have a vote I would probably stand here in front of these microphones and say, 'I vote for him.'"

Q: How big has Jordy's involvement for the offense been the last few weeks?

Coach Gruden: "He's a good player. He's as good as you'll ever get chance to coach. He is so instinctive, so smart, so versatile and so team oriented. That's why he is here. I think he's got close to 30 catches in the last four games. He's healthy, he's learned our offense and he's learned how to play anywhere on the line. Third down or any down, he is still a really good quality wide receiver."

QB Derek Carr

Q: What do you think is the reason behind why Jordy Nelson has put up more number recently?

Carr: "One is trust, the timing. It always takes time to build that. It's like with Jared [Cook] last year. It took us some time. Anytime you get new receivers and they're going to be a focal point, it does take some time. I would say that, especially when he came off his injury, he was healthy and we had a lot of time on task. Obviously, I trust him. He's a great receiver. I think a lot of that has to do with once he got healthy, he was ready to roll. It was really that Colts game where I felt like we were ready to hit it rolling. Then he ended up hitting his knee or whatever and he was out. When he got healthy, just ever since then, he's a trustworthy guy that does things the right way. Usually guys like that, the ball ends up finding them."



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Q: Is there a sense of pride you take in being able to finish the season strong?

Carr: "Well, yeah. How it started was hard, especially with the expectation. The coach coming, us having a lot of talented players and all of that is cool, but you need to know the system. You need to play together. You have to bring a team together. It took us a little longer than we'd like to, but absolutely, you want to finish strong. There's still some of those losses there where we felt like man, if we just did one thing here or there, we felt like we were in those games and could've won them. We definitely feel like we're playing good football. I think I said that a few weeks now. We feel like we're playing good football really in all three phases. It takes all three to win. I think this game that we just played, I mean the way we ran the ball, defense, special teams, it was awesome. It was nice to sit there and be able to enjoy that and watch our team come together and win a big game against a team that was just in the playoff hunt. It was good to see. If we can finish off, obviously we want to win this game. We don't have any more after this. They do and that's cool, but we don't. I miss football too much to not go out there and give it my all. We're excited to play them. It'll be a great opportunity against a really good football team. Hopefully we can finish with a win."

Q: Von Miller didn't have a single tackle in that game. What do you make of the play by your rookie tackles in that game?

Carr: "Yeah, they played their hearts out. They did a great job. Von, he impacted the game. He impacts the game with just standing on the field, you know what I mean, with certain calls. He's a Hall of Famer, but the fact that he didn't get a sack or anything like that, that's a testament to the O-Line, tight ends helping, chipping in, running backs chipping in. It takes a team effort. And it's something that we talked about before, I think this time last week, we have to be able to control [Bradley] Chubb and Von to win the football game. We did a decent job of that and ended up getting the win."

Q: How important was it for those guys to be able to deliver the blows rather than wait for it with the team running more than passing that game?

Carr: "It was huge. Obviously, we talked about it too, the conditions and the team we were playing, we knew we were going to have to run the football. It's not easy to throw against them. We knew that. So, the fact that we could run it and run it efficiently and then when we had to throw it we were efficient in our pass game, that's a recipe for winning. Again, I'm cool with stats, but I'd rather win any day. I'd take what we did in this past game against the Broncos than throwing for 300 and losing a game. The way that we played football - complementary - running the ball, tiring them out, I think our O-line, it really helped them getting their pads low and coming off the football. I think it was good for them."

Q: Do you think at all about the run you have had without an interception?

Carr: "Not during the game. As a human, it flashes through your head. Like on Friday, alright, stop thinking about it. But during the game, no. I hit a DB [defensive back] in the chest in Cincinnati. *(laughter)* Stuff happens man, you know what I mean? Stuff happens. Actually, I remember Tom Brady talking about it when he was doing his little streak and he said a lot of things have to go right for that kind of stuff to happen. It's not all me, but during the game I don't think about it to be honest with you."

Q: Did you take away anything from the first Chiefs game? Was it reaffirming for the team given how close the game was and the Chiefs' record?

Carr: "I think the thing that we took away from playing them before is that we turned the ball over too much. We put the ball on the ground, we gave three away. I gave one up that could have been another turnover on a strip-fumble. Those are tough, but it is what it is, you can't put the ball on the ground. We



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have to do a good job of taking care of the football. And then we feel like, if we take care of the ball, any team that we play we can beat. Again, we've been playing good football. We're learning, everyone's playing really well in the system, everyone's just doing their job. If we can do that, then we like our chances against anybody. So, I think the thing we took away is, 'Man, if we just take care of the ball in that game, that's three more possessions where we could have had some more points.'"

Q: How tough is it to come back six days later after an emotional game last week?

Carr: "Anytime you play on Monday night, let alone maybe the last game in the Coliseum in front of your fans, last home game of the year, all of those things, those are heightened emotions no matter what. I think that our job as professionals is to make sure that when we come into today, the way we're locked in, the way we're focused is at that same level. It's just a choice that each man has to make and I think that we did a good job in the walkthrough. I think that we're going to do a good job at practice and as long as we maintain that through the week then we can keep that level."

Kansas City Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid (Conference Call)

Q: How would you describe the mood right now inside the building?

Coach Reid: "Everybody is good. We are just prepping to play a good football team."

Q: What did you think of what you saw from the Raiders on Monday Night Football?

Coach Reid: "[Head Coach] Jon [Gruden] has done a great job, as his coaches have, and the players are buying in to the stuff that he is teaching. They sure looked good."

Q: Where have you seen the biggest differences in the Raiders between the first time you played them and now?

Coach Reid: "I just think it's that they know the scheme better on both sides of the ball, and they are playing fast."

Q: What have you seen on film from Karl Joseph the last few weeks?

Coach Reid: "I think they've done a great job of putting him in a position where his talents can flourish. That's good coaching right there. He's a good player and they've given him an opportunity to show off all of his talents there."

Q: What makes Jared Cook a difficult player to cover?

Coach Reid: "I think he's a good player. Obviously, he's had big games against us. He's big, he's fast and he knows how to use his body really well on routes. He's long, so he has a great catch radius and your quarterback uses him very well and has a lot of trust in him."

Q: Can you speak to the challenges of playing two rookie tackles for a whole season? What kind of benefit can that be down the road for the Raiders?

Coach Reid: "Well, that's obviously a plus. They are young guys and they've gotten better as the season has gone on. For Jon, that's a good thing, and for your quarterback and running back that's a good thing."

Q: What problems does Jordy Nelson present?



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Coach Reid: "I think it was just a matter of getting on the same page with the quarterback and they have done that. I think Jordy is a good football player. Come on, he's done it for a lot of years and been consistent. It's just a matter of a new system and new quarterback. That takes a little bit of time, so they are on the same page now."

Q: What's been the progress of Kahlil McKenzie?

Coach Reid: "Khalil has actually done a nice job. He's getting better every day. It's a new spot for him. We moved him from defensive tackle to offensive line, and we have kind of kept him at that guard spot. He gets better every day, works at it and you know the family. You know you are going to get an honest day work out of him, but it was all new. Where he started and where he is at now is completely different."