



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Defensive Coordinator Paul Guenther

Opening Statement: "Did you guys all have a good summer? I would just like to start out saying this is an unbelievable place to hold training camp. The set-up is unbelievable. Rooms are right here. Beautiful fields here. We had a good day in pads, first day. So it's exciting to get started."

Q: How much room has Jon Gruden given you to be the head coach of the defense?

Coach Guenther: "Yeah, he's heavily involved in the offense. Obviously, we communicate everyday with what we're doing on defense. I pretty much stay on everything that's going on over there. Again, we communicate each and every day on what is going in. We're working together in practice and making sure we're getting the proper looks for Derek [Carr]."

Q: How does that compare to previous stops?

Coach Guenther: "It's very similar. I've worked with Marvin [Lewis], obviously was a defensive coach. Marvin kind of went with both sides at times. I would say it's a little different."

Q: What's Gareon Conley dealing with?

Coach Guenther: "He has a little hip strain there. It's unfortunate. He made a good play on a ball on the one-on-one drill. Just bumped his hip a little bit. He won't be out for too long. We have a lot of guys working out there at corner, it's going to be a good battle to see who come out of it."

Q: What do you like about Daryl Worley?

Coach Guenther: "He's played a lot of football. He's an experienced guy. He's big and long. He's really starting to pick up the system the last couple of days."

Q: When you're starting with a new defense, how important is it to have players who have gone through it before?

Coach Guenther: "It's very important. I always say this, but it's a player's game. So when you have guys that really understand the details of everything. Obviously, we haven't been through a season with some of the guys who were here last year. Some of the things that come up, whether it be in the locker room or in the meeting room. I may say, 'Hey, remember when this happened two years ago against Atlanta?' We recall those things. So it's very helpful to have guys that are in the infantry line there to help us out."

Q: How hard is it when your best defensive player isn't here yet? What can you do in terms of getting through Khalil Mack not being at training camp?

Coach Guenther: "I really can't worry about that right now. That's going to be [General Manager] Reggie's [McKenzie] deal. I'm just trying to coach the guys that are out here. Obviously, when he gets here, if he gets here, he'll be an exciting piece to add."

Q: What has Arden Key shown you?

Coach Guenther: "He's a talented rusher as we know. That's why we drafted him. He's doing a good job of playing the runs how we want him to play the runs. We know he can rush. He's special that way. Obviously, we came out here in pads today, he showed the same thing he did in shorts. It's exciting to have him out there."

Q: Is that the big difference for guys? You see one thing in shorts and you want to see it carry over to pads?

Coach Guenther: "No question. It's a different game when you're in pads. Whether it be a 7-on-7 drill or a pass rush drill, whatever it is, it's better to do it in pads because that's how we play on Sunday."



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Q: What have you thought about Bruce Irvin?

Coach Guenther: "He's had a tremendous camp so far. The other day we had a backup drill, he got the ball out of the back on a strip and he intercepted a ball coming out of there on a blitz that he scored with. He's been a tremendous leader for us. I'm glad to have him on my side."

Q: What do you think Irvin is capable of moving into defensive end?

Coach Guenther: "I just think when I watched him when I took the job. When I watched him, I said...I did him in college coming out of West Virginia and obviously I was pushing to draft him in Cincinnati. He went to Seattle before us. I just think his best gift is going forward. That's what he should be doing each and every down. So instead of playing linebacker, dropping off in coverage, we have to utilize, really his and everybody else's talents, to the best we can. Whether it's 10 snaps a game or 50 snaps a game. Whatever it may be. That's kind of what we have here. We have a lot of different abilities on the defensive side and it's our job and my job as the coordinator to get these guys in the best position that you see with what they got."

Q: What have you seen in Tank Carradine?

Coach Guenther: "Tank's a physical player in there. Over the tight ends, tough to block for a tight end. He's picked it up. He's smart. He's understanding our defense. All the different blitzes and the coverages and fronts that we're running. He's been a real good surprise for us."

Q: What have you seen from Dexter McDonald?

Coach Guenther: "He's done good. I will tell you, the corner job is wide open. It's wide open. It's going to be exciting to see who comes to the top of that battle. He's in it. All of those guys are battling each and every day. It'll be exciting to see when the preseason games come what happens."

Q: With corners do you have a philosophy to have them stay on the same side?

Coach Guenther: "I've done both. I've kept guys left and right. I've had guys locked on one guy. I've done both, just depending the difference in the ability from one guy to another. Really the way we teach our system is we teach it in progressions. So, the corners understand, if I'm playing over that widest receiver or the No. 2 receiver or the No. 3 receiver, what's my responsibilities and all of those things. We have the ability to do that."

Q: You worked as an offensive coach early. How do you think that made you a better defensive coach?

Coach Guenther: "I think it's made me way better. I always told any of my buddies in coaching, if you ever have a year off, as a defensive coach, go somewhere, even if you're not employed, go somewhere and learn the offense. There were two years I was working with Coach [Steve] Spurrier as the head coach, I learned all the protections and how the line is supposed to set and what the running back is supposed to look at in the run game. Having understood all those things and taking all those notes. You can kind of defend against those type of things. How the center is supposed to set in a protection or the tackle. Who the back has, he's blocking these two guys. It's a huge advantage for me."

Q: It's fair to say you can tell them exactly what that offensive lineman is trying to do.

Coach Guenther: "No doubt. No doubt. You relay it. Again, it's not what I know, it's what I can relay to those guys. It's important that the way we teach these things is in progressions. These guys are really working hard. I like the group of guys we have. They come to work. They take great notes. They ask questions. They're hungry which is most important."

Q: Derek Carr said his goal is to make your lunch taste a little worse every day. I guess my question is how does your lunch taste today?

Coach Guenther: "After today's practice, I'll probably skip lunch, which I could probably use skipping lunch. It's good competition. Jon and Derek are teaming up. It's fun each and every day to go out and compete against. He's



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a hell of a player. He gets them in and out of plays all the time. Good plays, which is good for our defense because it's a great challenge every day because he's one of the best at it."

Q: How much of an asset is it to have a guy like Marcus Gilchrist?

Coach Guenther: "He's been tremendous. I'll tell you, I told Marcus when you're done playing, I'm going to hire you as a coach because he's smart. He understands the big picture. He can play nickel, safety, corner. So when you have a guy like that, you can utilize him against tight ends or receivers or backs coming out of the backfield. He's been a great asset for us."

Q: How important is it for Conley to get back?

Coach Guenther: "No doubt. I mean it's unfortunate. He went down with the injury the other day. We're going to try to get him back on the field and make sure he's in the meeting room taking notes and understanding that he's not getting behind with the techniques of what we're teaching?"

Q: What are your first impressions of Nick Nelson?

Coach Guenther: "Well Nick, he's been doing a lot of studying in the offseason. Obviously, came out the first couple of days, just getting the rust off a little bit. He's doing a good job for us the last couple of days, being out there in full practice. He's playing some nickel and outside corner for us. He's been doing good. Right where we want him to be."

Q: What would you say is the most difficult thing for the guys who are carrying over from last year to this year in terms of adjusting to your system?

Coach Guenther: "You know I didn't really ask much because when you change coaches or whatever it is, it's part of the NFL. I can't go through everything they were taught last year, so I kind of didn't worry about it. I said, 'Erase everything you had from last year. We're going to start this book with a new chapter and we're going to write every chapter as we go.' I can't really answer the question because I didn't really ask the players much. We just said we're going to start new here and this is what we're going to do."

Q: In terms of installing a defense, what do you think is the thing you're going to challenge themselves with? Is it the physicality aspect?

Coach Guenther: "For sure. That's No. 1 of being smart. Situationally understanding. I always tell them, 'I'm going to give you a game plan sheet every week and I'm going to tell you why I'm calling these things.' Just don't say, 'OK.' I want you to ask me, 'What are you looking for here?' It's important that they understand it because they're playing."

Q: There's obviously a lot of responsibility on your linebackers to execute right. How has Marquel Lee done?

Coach Guenther: "He's doing tremendous. We're utilizing all the linebackers in different packages. Like I said, we may have three different linebackers on first down than we would have on third down. That to me is the greatest thing with the guys we have with the difference in abilities across the board in the room. Marquel is smart. He can make us all the calls and get us set up to go."

Q: How is Obi Melifonwu coming along?

Coach Guenther: "He's doing good. Obviously, he missed a lot of the spring, so this training camp is going to be very important for him. He's going to have an opportunity in the preseason to go out there early in games and see what he can show."

Q: Do you think he can still match up with tight ends?

Coach Guenther: "You know, you can't just go into a game and say, 'Hey, I'm going to utilize this guy against the tight ends.' He has to learn the whole thing and then go because obviously offenses will adjust when they see that. His main thing is to understand the techniques and all the coverages that we're teaching. Being in the right spot."



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Then working some man-to-man in there against the tight ends. Like I said, we have a lot of guys working out here and like I told the players in the meetings, there's no job secure. Whether you're a first-round pick, a free agent, I'm going to pick the best how many guys they give me."

Q: What does Carr audibling during practice do for your defense during practice?

Coach Guenther: "Like I said, the players understand we may have to get in and out of calls. He's tremendous to go against every day. He's smart. Every now and again we'll fool him, but not very often. He's a good player that way."

DE Bruce Irvin

Q: You've had a strong start to camp. What do you expect from yourself this year?

Irvin: "I'm a seven-year vet, third year here. I feel like the stuff I'm doing is the stuff I'm supposed to be doing. They've got me back at d-end where it's more natural, less thinking and more reaction. It's me running around flying to the ball."

Q: I know you're happy to be in coverage less but did that pick-six change your mind at all?

Irvin: "No. I'd rather have a sack than a pick-six any day."

Q: How is practice different between yesterday in shorts and today in pads?

Irvin: "Today was real football. The past two days and OTAs, the t-shirts is not realistic. It was good to get out here today and see guys tackling and thudding guys up and hearing those pads again. Football is back."

Q: You got to see Kolton Miller in pads today, how did you think he played today?

Irvin: "He's going to be good. He's just young. He's a big guy. He's very athletic. Takes coaching. What else can you ask for in a kid? He's our first-round pick so he's coming in with a lot of expectations. He's doing a great job. We battle every day. I tell him that we're going to go at it every day because we're in the AFC-West and he has to go against Von [Miller], Bradley Chubb, those dudes in KC, so we have to get him ready. We need him. He's going to be a really good player."

Q: Is camp different this year?

Irvin: "It feels the same to me. Work is work, really. I'm just working."

Q: How do you see the defense as a whole change this year?

Irvin: "The defense is like night and day to me, from past two years to this year. Norton is my guy, I love Norton. Guys are flying around. Guys are doing less thinking. First day we had five turnovers. All last year we had 14 combined. We had two yesterday and I don't know how many we had today, I've got to watch the film, but guys are going at it. Guys are battling. Guys are trying to get the ball. That's what we preach, that's what we harp on: getting the ball and getting it back to our offense as much as we can. I think the guys on defense are doing a great job and picking up the system, flying around and making plays."

Q: What do you think is allowing the guys to get more turnovers?

Irvin: "Less thinking and more reacting. Guys just playing football, not out there trying to figure out coverages and what each guy has. It's just guys lining up, in assignment, making plays."

Q: What do you think when you see the importance that the Raiders put on their alumni?

Irvin: "It's big. A lot of organizations aren't like this, just welcoming the alumni back with open arms. For me and for younger guys to see that, it's big. Hopefully we can become one of the Raider legends one day. It's great to see these guys and to have them around and hopefully I can make it to that point one day."



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Q: What have you seen from Maurice Hurst?

Irvin: "Mo Hurst is going to be good. He's a very athletic guy. He's like Kolton, he takes coaching. PJ [Hall], I like PJ. Arden Key is a hell of a player, too. The rookies in our room are really going to help us. They really have no choice, we need them. Those guys are picking it up good and learning. They're coming out here and working their butts off. They're doing really good with their rookie duties. We need them and those guys are doing good."

Q: You mentioned Arden. What struck you about him?

Irvin: "Long, athletic. He's a really natural rusher. He reminds me a lot of the old 99 that was here. If he keeps his head on straight, which he will, he's going to be a hell of a player and a hell of a player for the Raiders. Can't wait to see what he's going to do this year."

Q: Is your leadership role enhanced with Khalil Mack gone?

Irvin: "If Khalil was here, we'd be leading the same way. We can't worry about who isn't here. Khalil gets tired, so when Khalil goes out of the game, the guys here have to go in the game and play while he's tired. He rarely gets tired, but when he does those guys have to be ready. We're trying to focus on getting these young guys ready. Those things will take care of themselves."

Q: How did you think he looked playing with those college kids in Buffalo?

Irvin: "When he was doing the one-on-ones? I told him 'you go out there and try to guard me with those big Mack Attacks on, it ain't going to be good.' He's working. I talk to him every day. He misses it, but you know how it is. He's working his butt off and when he gets here, he'll be ready."

CB Rashaan Melvin

Q: What have you noticed at all about Dexter McDonald and what's it been like working with him?

Melvin: "I think Dexter McDonald comes here every day, works hard, makes plays. The guy works hard – extremely hard – and he understands the game of football. He's always in the right places."

Q: What kind of duo could you and Gareon Conley amount to this season?

Melvin: "I think, first, Gareon is a very talented football player. A young guy, long guy, his skill set is unbelievable, for one. For myself, like you said, high expectations for both of us. I feel like we can be one of the best defensive back groups in the league and that's what we're aiming for. That's our main goal, to come out here every day and practice hard and get better."

Q: How have you learned over the course of time to take care of your body and how has it changed over recent years?

Melvin: "I've been in the league for six years. The start of my career, there were a lot of injuries, banged up in the past three years, three years I've been healthy. So, just staying the course. Injuries happen in football, it's a part of the game. You just try to prevent it as much as you can and if they happen, try to recover as fast as you can and get back out there to help the football team out anyway you can."

Q: There's a lot of young guys in your position room. What kind of things have you been able to teach the young guys in your defensive back room?

Melvin: "Absolutely, man. The main thing is every day, stretch, cold tub, get proper sleep. There's a lot of guys on different time zones, so the first couple days it's hard to get sleep. Even for myself, go to bed around 2:00 a.m., 1:00 a.m., 1:30 a.m., 2:00 a.m. every night. You just have to come out here and get as much as you can, take advantage of the breaks and get treatment."



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Q: Is it tough going to bed that late and getting up that early?

Melvin: "Yeah, it is. But, once you get around the guys, you brush your teeth, say a prayer or whatever you might do, game on. It's time to go out here and work hard to get better so you can be a part of this football team and help this team win."

Q: Is it hard not to think about what the defense could be when Khalil Mack returns?

Melvin: "Khalil Mack is a great football player, we all know that. We want him a part of this team. Whenever he does decide to come back or whatever it is, we have other guys on the football team to step up and make plays in his place and we're moving forward from that."

Q: Is it helpful having Leon Hall, a person familiar with defensive coordinator Paul Guenther's defense, on the team?

Melvin: "Man, Leon is a great guy, a great veteran, 12 years in the league. He comes out here and works his butt off. His age is not showing at all, so for him to come out here and compete every day like he does and be a leader in that room, it's tremendous. It's something all of us can lean on. He understands the defense. We just go to him to ask questions. He's a great player for us?"

Q: How often are you leaning on him to ask questions about the defense?

Melvin: "All the time. Any time we're putting in a new defensive scheme or whatever it might be, he's been in the system for a long time. If it's a nickel position, he knows it. If it's the corner position, he knows it. So, whatever questions we might have to ask or to ask coach, he's like another coach for us in the room."

Q: Coach Guenther said that he sees Marcus Gilchrist as a future coach someday. Do you see that at all from him?

Melvin: "Marcus is a very talented football player as well. He's smart and he shows it. He knows where to line up and where other guys need to be at in order for them to make plays. He understands the offense. He understands the game. So, it makes the game easier for him and it also makes the game easier for the 10 other guys on the football field that's playing with him."

Q: How has the communication been for the secondary thus far?

Melvin: "I think the biggest thing about us gelling together as a defense and going out there and putting a very good product on the football field is it starts with communication. We take pride in going out there and knowing what to do and being vocal out there. So, I think all the guys on this football team on the defensive side of the ball, they know it's important to be vocal and communicative. That's how you get the job done."

Q: How has it been working with defensive backs coach Derrick Ansley?

Melvin: "Coach Derrick is great. Coming over from Alabama, his mindset is to work hard. He expects a lot out of us. He comes to meeting rooms every day and he demands attention, demands respect because he has high expectations for us."

Q: Does having Conley and you on opposite sides of each other excite you?

Melvin: "Absolutely. I think any time you can have two great cornerbacks on the football field at one time, it makes the defense easier. Also, it's not just us two guys on the football field, there's nine other guys. It's about all of us doing our job at the same time, play-in and play-out. That's how you become a great defense."

Q: What is the best way to practice interceptions?

Melvin: "The biggest thing is just getting to the ball, getting hands on the ball and then catching the ones that the quarterback throws to you. Putting yourself in position to make plays and it first starts off by guys being in position, understanding the defense and being in the right spot at the right time. That's when plays happen."



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S Marcus Gilchrist

Q: What are the characteristics of the defense?

Gilchrist: "I think we're able to do a lot of different things. I think the coaches do a good job of putting together a good scheme where they can teach it the right way and the young guys get it and the older guys try and lead by example, piggybacking off the coaches. That way now that we're in camp, everybody knows what to do and we've got this thing rolling a little bit."

Q: How is Paul Guenther is a teacher?

Gilchrist: "Probably one of the best ones I've been around in my eight years. Getting guys to understand whatever their role is on this defense or a certain coverage, whatever scheme that it is, probably the best that I've been around at getting guys to learn a scheme and being able to teach it the right way."

Q: He says he likes your knowledge of different positions and wants you to coach for him some day.

Gilchrist: "I don't know, it may be one day but right now I'm trying to focus on making this team and trying to do whatever I can to compete."

Q: What do you think about your coach saying that kind of compliment?

Gilchrist: "It's definitely flattering. It's something you want to hear. It's one of those things where I kind of try to keep my head down and just work."

Q: Jon Gruden brought a lot of veterans in. What have been your observations on how this team respects veteran players?

Gilchrist: "I think it's one of those things where it's a lot of veteran guys, but it's a lot of veterans that can still play ball. I think we bring that aspect to the table, as well as the knowledge so we can bring young guys along and teach them and help them as much as we can."

Q: Is it challenging mentally that you could be playing different positions each play?

Gilchrist: "Honestly, I've been doing it my whole career so it's just natural. It's like second nature to me."

Q: You've played under John Pagano, the Raiders' last defensive coordinator. Does that familiarity help you?

Gilchrist: "Definitely. I think with my tenure in the league, being able to play a lot of different stuff helps you be able to move on from one scheme to the next. A lot of schemes are different but they're the same, the terminology is different but the concepts are a lot alike."

Q: What are guys saying about the transition from last year's defense to this one?

Gilchrist: "We're just focused on this year, really. We're trying to take heed to what coaches are saying and buy in to this year."

Q: How much teaching have you had to do?

Gilchrist: "It's still a different defense for me. It was a learning thing for me, too. The coaches do a really good job getting guys to understand the defense and teaching guys. I think we're the second-tier guys if they have a question here and there, then we can help."

Q: Bruce was saying that a big thing from last year to this year is that guys don't have to think as much. What facilitates that?

Gilchrist: "I can't speak for last year, but just like I was saying earlier, the coaches do a good job of teaching defense and putting guys in position and helping them understand what their role is. It allows guys to play a little bit faster."



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Q: What do you see from the cornerback tandem of Rashaan Melvin and Gareon Conley and what it could be this season?

Gilchrist: "Both very talented guys. You can see it when we go out there and we do drills and then we get in team drills and stuff like that. Guys are just out there working hard and just competing. And that's with all of our guys, everybody is competing."

Q: Does anything strike you about Conley?

Gilchrist: "Yeah, just a very athletic guy. To be a young guy, he understands ball, understands splits, understands routes and understands combinations and stuff like that. He's a young guy, but you can tell that he's got football knowledge."

Q: Can you see Head Coach Jon Gruden and defensive coordinator Paul Guenther trying to foster a healthy offense verses defense battle in camp more than in other places you have been?

Gilchrist: "Yeah, it definitely is. I think it's kind of like, it's always been a thing, but I think moreso because of the connection that those guys have. I think those guys are really close. Being that they're really close, I think they compete a lot. It trickles down to the players and it makes us even more competitive."

Q: How has the communication between you and Reggie Nelson and Karl Joseph been and how do you build that chemistry?

Gilchrist: "I think it just takes repetition. I think it takes being with a guy, I think we all kind of know each other now. Sometimes I may do something and they can play off of it and somebody else may do something and we know how to play off of it now. I think we've gotten to the point now where repetition has created a little bit more chemistry each and every day."

Q: What have you seen form Nick Nelson thus far?

Gilchrist: "Same thing I would say about Gareon – you can he understands ball. It's tough to come in this league and play in the nickel position with all of the different things you that you have to be able to read and have to be able to cover and have to be in in the run fits. You can just tell by the way he diagnosis plays that he has an understanding of being able to play the game."

Q: Does he come to you much looking for advice of any kind?

Gilchrist: "Most definitely. He's a quiet guy, but you can tell he wants to learn a lot because he'll ask questions. Not even just to the players, he asks a lot of questions to coaches and in the team room and all of that type of stuff."