



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening statement: "Always good to get started and get out there with the rookie class and host the tryout players that are here for the weekend. Looking for them to make a good impression, make a case for themselves as to why we should have them going forward with us as we put together our football team. A lot of eagerness, a lot of nervous energy out there. When you're talking about rookies making the team, whether they're drafted or undrafted, having an impact on special teams is important. Understanding how we do things and what it looks like to be here and be respectful of each other, come in here and be a great teammate. All the things I talk about with everybody that comes in here. Again, a nice start with them. We had the one unfortunate incident at the end of practice where the young man in a non-contact drill went down. Hopefully we get good news from that. Other than that, good start to the weekend. Got a couple more good days in front of us."

Q: What have your first impressions been of Connor Cook?

Coach Del Rio: "I think he's been outstanding. He comes in, had a tremendous career and is very humble. Obviously he is intelligent. He asks good questions. He's got arm talent. It's a matter of getting familiar of what we do and how we do it. Great start for his first week of being here. Having him throughout the week in meetings and then today getting a lit bit of work with some of the younger guys that are here with us this weekend, I think he's off to a great start."

Q: Do you guys like to flood them with information over the first few days to see how they react to it?

Coach Del Rio: "Not just to study how they react to it, but to help them hear it. The more you hear it, the more often you hear it and go over it and the detail of it, the better chance you have to really understand it and get a great understanding of it so you can apply it and be able to perform at a high level. The great thing about Connor is that he's very bright. He gets it and it makes sense to him. That's a great place to start."

Q: Even though Karl Joseph can't be on the field, is it beneficial for him to be here this weekend?

Coach Del Rio: "Yes, and the whole week. We got him here as quickly as we could, with all the rookies and Karl in particular. The meetings that he's involved in, we're still able to walk it and talk it so we're doing some of that. All of the players that are mending will continue to work hard and do the things that they're able to do with [Head Strength and Conditioning Coach] Joe [Gomes] and with [Head Athletic Trainer] Rod [Martin] to get themselves back. It's definitely valuable time to have. We don't get enough time with these guys and we've got to maximize the time we do get and be really efficient with it."

Q: I know with Jihad Ward, there were reports that he might need to have his knee looked at again. Obviously he was out there today...

Coach Del Rio: "He looked pretty good, right? Don't trust all those reports out there. We felt pretty good about our reports. He looks terrific. He's very athletic. I think you get a chance to talk to him today and you'll find he's a little bit like Amari [Cooper]. A little soft-spoken... Maybe not quite as much. He's a serious guy and an intelligent guy. He's got very good athletic ability and we're excited to have him."

Q: Mario Edwards Jr. announced that he had been given final clearance. What are your thoughts on that?

Coach Del Rio: "My philosophy on talking about guys that are injured is really not to. I love the way our team is working. I love having Mario be a part of that team that's working hard. He's a really good football player. We just don't get into discussions about injured guys this time of year."

Q: When you guys go 11-on-11, these guys are all strangers and it's all new. How much can you really take away from that?

Coach Del Rio: "You get an evaluation on everything that goes on this weekend. How fast some guys can pick it up, whether it's 11-on-11 or in a 'skelly' drill or in a run drill or in individual work. It's all being evaluated. You get a feel for them. The interaction that we have with them, with some of the guys that have been here, the draft picks and



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some of the free agents that were signed, have more time to make an impression. Some of the tryout guys have a shorter window, but we're evaluating everything."

Q: What does it say about the evaluating process of the Raiders that you would put so much faith in an undrafted guy?

Coach Del Rio: "When you get into undrafted guys, you're really tapping into the scouts. Those are the guys that bring those names to you at the end of the draft. They're fighting for their guys that they believe in. That's when the scouts shine. From a coaching standpoint, anybody that we get, we're going to love them up, we're going to work to develop them and we're going to give them a chance to compete. We'll then evaluate them from there. As an organization, we're very open to the idea of giving guys an opportunity and seeing what they're about."

Q: Do you think some of the undrafted guys that are out there today see that philosophy and want to come here more?

Coach Del Rio: "I do. I think it's a positive thing. I think agents understand that when they're dealing with us, that that is the case."

Q: Are there any qualities that stand out the most when you're looking at these undrafted guys?

Coach Del Rio: "No. Things like grit. We want to add tough-minded people to our organization. Guys that are hungry and that love football, that would be one. You're always looking for size and speed and talent and things like that. Some guys maybe don't get drafted but have that grit and they're going to give it all they have. Some of those guys continue to develop and maybe, for whatever reason, didn't get the opportunities that some others did during their collegiate career. Then they get here and they take off. We're open-minded. Anybody that comes in with us, we're going to give them a thorough evaluation and a good, solid look."

Q: Does it take a while to see that grit? Or does it jump out at you?

Coach Del Rio: "It can jump out at you. Where we get that grade is from our scouts that are with their people. Then we know that this isn't an impression just for the weekend but it's also what we know he's about, what he's been about. That's why the scouts really fight for guys that come in and get signed as undrafted, because those are guys they felt maybe should have been drafted that they'd love to have here."

Q: Damontre Moore has been signed since the last time we talked to you. What do you like about him and are there any concerns about off-the-field things with him?

Coach Del Rio: "First the part of adding him, he's a guy that a couple of years ago when he came out of Texas A&M, I was familiar with. I think he's got some of the length and athleticism and natural pass rush ability that we covet. In terms of the other things, some of the off-the-field issues or in the locker room issues or any of that kind of stuff, we feel good about being able to bring the best out of a young man like this. Don't really, in our opinion, see a huge downside. Guys have disagreements in the locker room. I was in a lot of locker rooms. I had a few myself, and it didn't make me a bad guy. That can get overblown a little bit, in fairness to him. For us, the way I look at it and the way I talked to him about it, is that it's a fresh start for him. Coming in here, be yourself, have fun, commit to being everything you can be, give us everything you have. If he does that, we think he has enough talent to be here. We'll see how it works out for him. He's the kind of guy that you pull for. Things haven't really started the way they probably could have, but that doesn't matter. For us, it's an opportunity. For him, it's an opportunity. It's all about moving forward."

Q: Do you think Amari Cooper is ready to take the next step in Year 2?

Coach Del Rio: "I think for everybody, 'Coop' as well, it's all about growth, maturity and taking that step forward. Last year, we saw a couple of second-year guys in Derek [Carr] and Khalil [Mack] who took that significant step forward. That's what we're expecting with 'Coop,' Mario and the rest of that class."



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Q: You've really been loading up on defensive line through the draft, free agency and even more. That's following into what you like from your defensive fronts? You can never have too many of those?

Coach Del Rio: "Agreed. Amen. I like what you're saying. Keep it coming."

LB Shilique Calhoun

Q: What was your first impression?

Calhoun: "It was fast. That's the biggest thing for me. The transition is a little different because of how fast the game is and how fast the game is played. Then also, retaining knowledge. You have to be able to retain it pretty fast as well."

Q: How new is all the stuff you're learning?

Calhoun: "It's not too far off, honestly, from what I've done in college. Other than maybe dropping a little bit more, pretty much the same basis. Just being that rush end."

Q: Does running a pro style at Michigan State help you with the transition?

Calhoun: "I believe so. I think Michigan State helped me a lot, but there's still a lot to learn moving up in the pros. There's still a lot to work at. It's a work in progress, and I'm looking forward to getting better each and every day."

Q: What was your reaction when you found out the Raiders drafted Connor Cook?

Calhoun: "Of course I was excited to have a fellow Spartan here on the team as well. He actually reached out to me, FaceTimed me. We talked about it for a little bit. Just ready to get after it, to be honest. Two Spartans that want to come in here and make an impact, any way we can. [We] want to be great teammates. Definitely just try to stick it out here, make it last."

Q: A lot of people said that you were the Raiders best pick. What kind of confidence does that give you?

Calhoun: "I think that's a great compliment, but there's still a lot of football to be played. Honestly, college is college, and now I'm in the NFL. It's a different ball game, so I have to refocus, get my game together and learn from the veterans and just kind of be a sponge."

Q: What's your response to the reports questioning Cook's leadership ability?

Calhoun: "Honestly, it's not a problem with me. I think Connor is a great leader. He was a great leader at Michigan State. We won ball games because of Connor. Coming in here, he gets a new chance to go ahead and show everybody what he's about. But all that stuff is outside of the facilities. There's nothing that's in-house. You can't focus on that too much. It doesn't matter for us. We know what kind of guy he is and we're going to move forward."

Q: What was it like practicing with the veterans like Khalil Mack and Bruce Irvin?

Calhoun: "It was great. It was a great opportunity to see two premier guys that definitely get after it, see them work. Just see that work ethic. See where I have to build myself, too. Then also just trying to nitpick and take little pieces from their game and add it to mine. [They're] two great players who also are very willing to coach you up as a young guy, so I thanked those guys early on and I look forward to definitely getting after it with them."

Q: What did it mean to you to get No. 91?

Calhoun: "No. 91 will always be Justin Tuck, but I'm trying to definitely redesign it and make it Shilique Calhoun as well. He was a great player for the Giants and he was a great player for the Raiders as well. I'm not trying to replace him. That's not who I am. I'm going to be Shilique Calhoun."



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Q: Is that why you chose the number, because it was Justin Tuck's number?

Calhoun: "No, not specifically."

QB Connor Cook

Q: How difficult is it playing with strangers?

Cook: "You know, it's a little difficult. Everyone has to adjust. There were some throws out there, like the one screen that I got rushed, if I give just a little more flick of the wrist, I can maybe get it there. Another play that I just wasn't familiar with, with the footwork. I took a three-step [drop] instead of a five-step, was waiting on my guy to be open and ended up sailing it. It's good to get out here. Usually if I was in college, I would have already gone through spring ball, so this is the longest that I've gone without going up against a defense and seeing live action, especially at that kind of speed. Everyone is shaking off the rust a little bit, but it just feels good to be back out there."

Q: What's it been like learning all the plays?

Cook: "It's actually been pretty laid back. [Quarterbacks] Coach [Todd] Downing has been doing a great job with just taking it one day at a time. Not trying to force a lot of information on us QBs. Obviously, Garrett [Gilbert] has already been here. He knows a lot. He's doing a great job of taking me under his wing and coaching us up. Coach Downing has been going at a good pace. Not super slow, but not super fast, just the right pace. Making sure that we understand everything for when we come out for walk-throughs, when we come out for practice and everything like that."

Q: Do you feel like you're good at learning a new scheme?

Cook: "For sure. I think I can pick up on some things pretty quickly. The concepts that we run here are pretty similar to the concepts that we ran at Michigan State, just a different language. They might call it a glock route, we might call it a glance. Or we might call it a comeback, they might call it a Mars, whatever it is. Certain words are mixed up a little bit, but other than that I think I've been picking it up pretty well."

S Karl Joseph

Q: What has this week been like for you, not being able to be out there?

Joseph: "It's tough, just not being able to go out there and practice and learn the stuff, but I am still learning in meeting rooms. Right now, I am just focusing on rehabbing and getting healthy."

Q: Is training camp still the target to get back on the field?

Joseph: "Yes, sir."

Q: Are the meetings a lot different from what you had in college?

Joseph: "The language and everything is different, different plays, but it's not too hard at all, just getting everything down pat, but I am going to get it though."

Q: What has the experience been like since you got drafted? Have you had time to let it sink in?

Joseph: "It's been crazy. I am trying to enjoy every second of it. It's been a fun process for me and my family, but now it's all about business. It's all about me getting healthy so I can get ready to play this year."

Q: What's your primary focus at this point, knowing you can't apply it on the practice field right now? Is it all rehab and mental?



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Joseph: "Yeah, mainly. Just rehab and taking all the mental reps and spending as much extra time as I can with coaches and learning everything."

Q: Have you had a lot of conversations with the veterans that are here?

Joseph: "I've spoke to Bruce Irvin quite a bit. He has kind of helped me a little bit through the process and getting adjusted and everything, so it's good having a player like that to kind of help me. He's been through it all, has been in the league for a few years."

Q: Some people have said that you play with such reckless abandon that it can get you hurt, but that's the only way you know how to play, right?

Joseph: "I think so. I've been pretty healthy throughout my college career, but it's about just taking care of my body. Besides this injury, I never really had any other injuries in college."

Q: Which NFL safeties do you like to watch or maybe model your game after?

Joseph: "There are a lot of different guys. There are a lot of old-school guys that I loved watching. Ed Reed, Brian Dawkins, guys like that. I like the way Earl Thomas plays and Tyrann Mathieu, those guys like that. They are very versatile with what they can do. They can do it all over the field."

Q: You get a lot of Bob Sanders talk too. Do you see a lot of your game in his game?

Joseph: "I hear that a lot, probably more so with the size and how physical we are. Yeah, he was definitely a baller though."

Q: How do you deal with balancing being a big hitter and then also having the soft hands with the interceptions?

Joseph: "Just doing what I have to do, just doing what is asked of me and not trying to do too much. When I need to play run game, play run game and when they ask me to play the pass. So, it's just all about doing your responsibilities, really."

Q: How is the rehab going? Is everything still on schedule?

Joseph: "Yeah, everything is on schedule right now. They're not trying to let me go too hard, but the kind of person I am, I want to go and get it going. I'm on pace for everything though. Everything is feeling good."

Q: What do you think of getting Ronnie Lott's number?

Joseph: "It's an honor. I didn't actually get to handpick it. Coach Del Rio actually picked it, but I told him that was one of the numbers that I was actually thinking about. So, it's just an honor. I am just going to try to represent as best as I can."

Q: Is it nice that you're now here and you can focus on rehabbing?

Joseph: "If it was up to me, I would have come the next day after the draft, really. I am just happy. I'm happy to be here and just get to work. I told them when I came in on Monday, 'I am just here to get to work.' I was excited about it and now I have a consistent routine and work that I can get in. I am happy about that?"

Q: You would have left that vacation spot in Haiti to get here right away?

Joseph: "Yeah, I would have." *(laughter)*

Q: When you found out last year that you were going to miss the whole season, was that a real tough thing for you to wrap your head around mentally?

Joseph: "It was hard, mainly so because it was my senior year and knowing that I wouldn't be able to go out there with my teammates. So, that was hard for me, but God always has a plan. I am just happy that everything worked out the way it did and now I'm here, so I couldn't be any happier."



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DL Jihad Ward

Q: What's it been like getting acclimated today?

Ward: "It just feels good running around, learning plays. It just feels good to be out there grinding, flying around out there. It's a good feeling to be back."

Q: Is it tough getting up to speed with everything?

Ward: "If it's going to be tough, that means you're not paying attention. You have to pay attention. Once you pay attention, everything will be good. I knew for the rookies, they were going to throw a lot of stuff at us, but it's up to you if you want to learn it or not. You just have to keep learning it. Some people make mistakes and you just have to learn from it and get better the next day."

Q: Have the past few weeks been crazy with finishing up school and coming here?

Ward: "Sometimes you have to go through the worst to get to the great. I finished school. I'm happy. I just couldn't wait to get to here. School really wasn't my thing, but I had to do it. Once I finished that, I was just ready to go. I'm happy just being around here. Now I can just worry about football."

Q: Were you confident that you would be out here practicing on the first day despite the rumors about needing work on your knee?

Ward: "Yeah, I'm very confident. That situation, what happened in the football season last year, I had surgery on it, but I'm completely fine. I'm running around. I'm flying around. As Coach Del Rio said, 'Just keep flying around.' So I'm doing what I have to do."

Q: What did you think when people in the draft said you were a project? Do you think you're ready now?

Ward: "I'm ready, but I still need coaches just to help me. You have to learn from the greats. I'm learning from all these coaches. [Defensive coordinator] Coach [Ken] Norton, [Jr.], [defensive line] coach [Jethro Franklin] and even Coach Del Rio. You can be great, but you have to learn from coaches. I'm [inaudible] from that and I'm confident with that."