



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Pre-Draft Press Conference with General Manager Mike Mayock

Opening Statement: "I don't have much of a statement. Basically, we're in the middle of a grind. It's kind of cool. Coaches, scouts, we're all working pretty much 24/7 on this draft. It's a great process, the scouts are in now. I'm working with the scouts on the draft, the coaches with [Head] Coach [Jon] Gruden. I'm jumping between rooms. It's really been awesome, been a great process especially with what we've got with eight picks and four of the first 35. Having said that, what do you want to talk about?"

Q: Have you learned anything new about yourself as an evaluator while being on the other side of things for the first time?

Mayock: "I think the important thing is, I think you always have to go back to trusting who you are as an evaluator. We've talked about this before. The great thing for me is that we've got all of these resources now with the scouts and the coaches to bounce a bunch of stuff off, that I didn't have as much before. So, now I can look at something and say, 'Man, that kid just ran a lot faster at his pro day than I thought he was.' Or, a lot slower at his pro day in the case with some guys this year. We've had to go back and really grind it. But, I think the answer to your question is probably at the end of the day, despite all of the pressure and all of the influence, you just kind of have to close the door and get your head space back and say, 'What do I believe in and who do I want to fight for in this draft?'"

Q: Is there a way to prepare for the juice and the energy of the moment?

Mayock: "I mean, what we're going to try to do is try to have our board completely stacked – both by position and number – by the end of next week. And then the week of the draft, I think we're going to spend an awful lot of time in there, in our war room, in our draft room with the people that are going to be there, kind of going through every scenario that we can. I'm going to have people calling in on the phones and trying to get Jon and I rattled and propose trades. Let's be honest, I haven't done it before. So, if I'm going to evaluate myself, I have to make sure I'm prepared. There's two minutes left on the clock and three phones are ringing and there's a trade, what is the process? How are we going to react as a team? Where is everybody even sitting in the room? What's the feedback? How quickly am I going to get the information on the trades and the point values? So, there's a whole bunch of stuff and I've kind of got it, I said to Jon, it's game week. We want to get in there and practice our game plan no different than the team would for a Sunday game."

Q: How do you prepare for something that you've never experienced before, in terms of being in the war room?

Mayock: "Well, I think over the last 18 years or whatever, I've got pretty good feedback for what happens, how it happens, the pressures, the time frames. I've talked to a lot of people in this building about how they've done it in the past. Where's everybody sitting? What's up on the boards? I've changed some things already with what's going to be up in the room and some of the information available to us and how we're going to process that information. I think the important thing, Michael, is at the end of the day is just some of these practices, putting some pressure on ourselves and hoping that if we put enough pressure on ourselves Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday under a bunch of different kind of conversations and trades, that when Thursday night comes and Friday Saturday, we're more than prepared to deal with anything."

Q: Do you use one of the trade charts that is already out there?

Mayock: "I've had trade charts forever. I mean, that was my job. Teams would share their trade charts with me. To be honest, I think I saw Coach [Bill] Belichick quoted the other day about them. They're all within points of being the same thing. If you're on the clock and you have two minutes left and somebody is calling about a trade, unless it's for an existing NFL player, you have to have a way to see what the benchmark is quickly. I think all teams are using these trade charts that are very, very similar. Now, you have to use your gut a little bit, and there are different times where you might want to get more, and there are other times where you might take less, but that's kind of the benchmark to start with."



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Q: How different does your board look preparing it for one team than it could have looked in your old job? Is it pretty similar or different when you're evaluating for one specific team?

Mayock: "It's a lot different. I think my old job was to try to be the GM for all 32 teams and I had a board that was stacked for what I would call league value. So, league value is one thing. What I used to do in my old job is I would talk to a bunch of GMs and a bunch of head coaches the week before the draft. I would send them my board, because they'd want to see it. To them, it was league value. So, it was a tool for the teams to use and it was a way for me to talk about my board, where it might have some weaknesses. So now, you're just doing it for one team. Now, I still have to be aware, and we're working really hard, on understanding what the team needs are and the scenarios are around the league. I think league value is a way to kind of understand where you might be able to move up or down on the draft. So, understanding league value is still a part of it, but understanding what we want to do as Raiders is the biggest piece.

Q: How integral is it to know what other team's needs are during draft day?

Mayock: "I think it's really important to try to understand what other teams are doing and trying to do. We're spending a lot of time putting together some information on all other 31 teams, their decision-makers, what the decision-maker's footprint looks like historically, what their needs are this year. I think we've worked hard since I've been here establishing or continuing relationships with the GMs I've had around, just in a different fashion now. Instead of calling up and saying, 'Hey, what do you think about this?' It's more like opening up and continuing lines of communications for draft night and I've had a lot of those calls, taking a lot calls and it's really been fun."

Q: As you talk to those other guys around the league, do you notice any of them slipping up and forgetting your new role?

Mayock: "No, I think they are all trying to get me to slip up and forget about it, but I've had a lot of texts and phone calls that have been very funny where guys are like, 'I miss just being able to talk ball with you,' and I'm like, 'Yeah, same thing. Who are you going to take?' So, it's been fun."

Q: How well do you feel that all of these acquisitions and moves have set you up for what you are trying to do in the draft?

Mayock: "Yeah, I think we feel pretty good. We made some major acquisitions early and since then I think we have been kind of connecting the dots the best we can with available free agents. Not just positions of need but anywhere, positions of need, depth, whatever. I think we've done a pretty good job of signing younger players, for the most part, to prove it contracts where it will help both them and us if they play well."

Q: Do you sense how important this draft might be for your reputation?

Mayock: "I don't really worry about it in all honesty. The way I look at this thing, from a 'how do people perceive me' perspective, is a lot of people doubted that anybody should come out of the media and go be a GM for any team. I know that, and I get that, but at the end of the day here's the deal, if we win everything will be fine and if we lose I'll get fired, and I'm perfectly fine with that."

Q: Coming into the draft with the amount of capital you have, does it change or alter your thinking?

Mayock: "As Jon keeps telling me, 'Don't mess it up, dude.' I took a lot of slings to get you three first round picks. We laugh about it all the time but, A.) I don't feel any pressure about it, B.) I love it and embrace it because it's going to give us an opportunity to continue to try to turn the corner here and become a good football team, and I think what it really gives us is flexibility and that's what I love about it. Obviously, we could move up and you got to know what you are trying to do and how you are trying to do it. You can try to increase your draft capital by



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moving down or you stay the same, and four of the first 35 picks gives you an opportunity to consider all those scenarios multiple times, and again, that's why we are opening up the lines of communication with all the teams around the league. I keep telling our guys, and you guys have heard me say this before, we need to be nimble, and nimble means depending on what the situation is to be able to react quickly according to the situation and make the right decision."

Q: How fine is that line between drafting for need and drafting best available?

Mayock: "I'm the son of a coach and I know how coaches think, and coaches think need. And we are a coach-driven building, our coaches are highly involved and that's good. I embrace that. The flip side is you can't reach, you got to use some common sense and that's what I preach upstairs. Is that if we are in a situation where if two similarly rated players and one is a higher position of need, great, let's go get him, but if there is a discount, a disparity between two let's not reach for need because the more you do that, the more you dilute your roster, and that's a conversation we've had a lot."

Q: Is players being driven up and down the draft board primarily media driven?

Mayock: "I think a lot of it is media driven and you're trying to stay true to what your grades were coming through the Fall and into February when you stack the board the first time, but I'm not going to lie to you, there are guys that ran faster, they ran slower. We are finding more about them medical or character, and really it's more tangible things that causes a guy to move up or move down. We get the medical rechecks back tonight, and that can cause guys to move up or down a little bit. The character stuff, we get more and more information on character with guys, those are tangible things that can change a football grade that have nothing to do with football. So, they are real. It's the other stuff where I think people get carried away when a guy runs really, really fast at the combine. Did you see so-and-so ran 4.38? You just have to be careful and go back to the film."

Q: To what extent do you try to imagine the different ways the first three picks could go?

Mayock: "There's a finite amount at four, right? And that's what we have to be prepared for, regardless of the scenario, we have to be ready to pick at four and be excited about a player. Now, we might move up, we might move back, who knows? We won't know until draft night, but if we are 'stuck at four', we have to be ready to go and that's a heck of a lot easier than worrying about all the permutations at 24 and 27 and 35."

Q: What do you like about RB Isaiah Crowell and LB Brandon Marshall?

Mayock: "Well, at running back we really are happy with Jalen Richard, third-down, change-of-pace, he and DeAndré Washington we think are as good a pair as any group in the league, but we've got a little bit of a hole at that kind of a lead back and Crowell is 26 years old. He's a power runner, he's a big dude that can move piles and he also has some breakaway capability, so it's a one year prove-it deal. We are hoping he comes in ready to go, protect our quarterback. You play for Jon, you got to pass protect, so there's some different things that running backs have to be aware of here. Brandon Marshall, we think brings a veteran, big, physical presence to our linebacking core, so between him and Vontaze [Burfict] we think we got bigger, we got a little bit more mature. We got guys that have started a lot of games in this league and hopefully that will hopefully help us bring along some of the younger linebackers."

Q: Is there anyone in this draft that's red-flagged to a point where you wouldn't take them or is it just a factor that's weighed in when evaluating the players?



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Mayock: "I think there's a balance in every building. In our building, I think Jon will roll the dice a little more, and I think I'm little more conservative. I think that's a good balance. We bounce that off ourselves all the time. We have some spirited meetings with the coaching staff where they're banging the table for a kid and I might say, 'He's got way too many red flags, I don't want to even consider him at that spot.' And then we get into it. I think that's healthy and I think everybody that I've ever talked to that's sat in this chair has talked about the same thing; healthy discourse between the coaches, the scouts and trying to come to those kinds of agreements on those kinds of players."

Q: The 30 visits are valuable to get some quality face-to-face with some of the prospects. One of those you evaluated here, Josh Oliver..

Mayock: "I thought those weren't public, Michael. How are you getting all of this, man? What's going on? Are you going to answer the question? *(laughing)*."

Q: What do you get out of the visits from a player who might be a top pick?

Mayock: "It doesn't matter who the player is, in our 30 visits we have potential free agent guys, we have first-round guys, we have middle-round guys. We have a pretty good blend and balance on purpose. But what we get out of all of them is we get them in early in the morning to the extent...Any of them hasn't been tested for anything that we're allowed to test. They didn't go to the Combine, measurements, whatever, we get that done. The biggest piece of it is a huge crunch of time with the coaching staff, five, six, seven straight hours. We want to find out which guys love it. It's easy to love it sitting in front of Jon Gruden for 10 minutes at 7 a.m. Jon is going to fire you up. Then Jon is going to hand you off to the offensive coordinator, then your position coach and then you're going to watch film. For two hours or three hours, we're going to watch film. Then we're going to have a quick bite for lunch. Then put you on the whiteboard and find out what you've learned or didn't learn. So, after six or seven hours after nothing but football tape, whiteboard, do you still love it as much as you did when Jon was telling you you're going to be an All-Pro at 7 a.m.? That's kind of the cool stuff. It's hard to fake it for seven hours. For 15 minutes at the Combine, that's a different conversation, but for seven hours with these coaches grinding you, putting all new terminology and names and things up on the board. Asking you to regurgitate it back. Can you retain it after lunch time? Which terminology are you using, your college or the Raiders? Which guys are in there at end of seven hours going, 'This is awesome! Give me more.' Then there's some other guys that are like, 'Man, when does my flight leave?' You know? So it's kind of cool."

Q: At No. 4 it's easier to make an educated guess at who will be available, but it's harder to do that with picks No. 24 and No. 27. Do you spend time projecting who might be there or do you just try to get your board set?

Mayock: "No, I think a big part of it is kind of sitting there and trying to understand. Especially between 24, 27 and 35, we have three awesome opportunities. I happen to think in most drafts, I happen to like 20 through 60. I always have. I think there's a lot of guys that love the game and are safer picks, sometimes, than top-10 picks. So, I look at those picks in there. You're constantly, constantly just playing games with which 23 names are going to be off the board. Or we're going to get to 24 and what clump of guys are going to be there and if that clump is there, which ones would you take? Which one would you say, 'I think he might get to 35 or 27.' I think the more you do that and challenge yourself and challenge the people you work with to do that, the more familiar you will be on draft night."

Q: With picks 24 and 27, how are you balancing depth at a position versus the top player on your board?



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Mayock: "I think you have to know all that. I think you have to know historically, for instance, pick a position, running backs, how many running backs typically go in the first three rounds. How deep is that running board draft now compared? So, it's going to be seven or eight running backs go or four or five, right? And if you need a running back and you're at 35 and then 106 with no third-round pick, who might be there at 35 that won't be there at 106 and are you comfortable with that position versus a guard, a running back, a wideout, a tight end? So all of that comes into the conversation at 24, 27 and 35, the depth of the individual positions."

Q: Does it sit well with you that you guys don't have a pick between 35 and 106? Do you think you guys might move around?

Mayock: "Sure. I mean like I said earlier, we move up, we move back, personally you just heard me say how much I love 20 to 60. I'd love to get a couple more picks in there. I just think we have a lot of holes that need to be filled. I think that's a really good place to go fishing. If we can, we can. But the other cool thing is if we just do nothing but sit there and go 4, 24, 27 and 35. What we keep talking about upstairs is we better four foundation football players. We define foundation as talent and football character. That's what we want, guys who love the game. If we don't move up, down or anywhere, we better get four of those guys."

Q: Are you concerned that other teams read your depth chart just like we do and think they can jump in front of you to get an edge rusher that you both may want. Do you think that's an issue for you guys?

Mayock: "You don't think we look at the media reports from the home media of all 31 teams? Just like they do with you guys. I mean you guys know our roster better than anybody in the country. People are looking at what we need, just like we're looking at what they need. We're doing the same thing. Who might need this position? Who might jump ahead of us? Where do we need to go to get that guy because team 'X' needs a 'whatever' position. That's all part, I think, of the intrigue, the game of poker that this is."

Q: Why do on-site visits with Kyler Murray and Dwayne Haskins if you already have a franchise quarterback?

Mayock: "I'm going to tell you, Jerry [McDonald], the same thing I told you at the Combine and that I believe in and I've said before Derek Carr is a franchise quarterback and we believe that. Beyond that, just like in any other position, we're going to do our due diligence. If we found somebody we like better or thought had bigger upside, then you got to do the right thing for the organization. We love Derek. We love what he brings to the table, but like every other position, we're going to do all of our due diligence. I happen to work with a head coach that absolutely loves that position. We're always going to know about those guys."