



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “We had four good days in camp. Guys came in, really, in pretty good shape for what you can do in the offseason. Now, we need to get in football shape, but the team is ready to work. I thought today was just OK, a little sloppy. Ball on the ground a little too much, some offsides issues, but Day 4 of camp. We’re so far away from where we need to be. So much work needs to get accomplished between now and the time we break camp. It’s just another day. We’ll be off tomorrow and then back at it on Thursday and ready to get back after these guys.”

“I know we had good news for Gareon [Conley] yesterday. That was pretty much anticipated by us, so I am just happy we can now turn our full attention toward football and I know he’s relieved. I know you’re going to ask the question about Donald [Penn]. I’m going to focus on the guys that are here. I spoke enough on it last week, or four days ago, five days ago, so I don’t really have much to add to that.”

Q: What do you think about the fact that you, your general manager and your defensive coordinator played middle linebacker in the NFL and that is a position that is kind of uncertain?

Coach Del Rio: “Maybe I can talk [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] out of retirement, I don’t know. *(laughing)* You work to put a football team together and I think, in a strong way, we’ve addressed a lot of different positions. We really haven’t had attacked that one the same way. That’s not to say we won’t. It’s just you can only do so much each year and that’s just the way it’s worked out. We’ve got a collection of young guys right now that are eager. They’re learning, they’re developing and we’re going to work with these guys and we’ll find out. I think the fact that we have identified really good edge people like Khalil [Mack] and Bruce [Irvin], I think it starts there. I think you work with corners and guys that can cover in the secondary and we’ve identified some of that. I think linebacker is also on that list, it just maybe hasn’t gotten checked off the same way other positions have yet.”

Q: How do you combine the elements of being confident and building off of last year but also staying focused?

Coach Del Rio: “First of all, good or bad, whatever happened in the past is left in the past. I think for us each year, you have to come in and reestablish who you are, the things you believe in, learn how to sacrifice, get yourself in shape – and it’s not just physical condition, it’s mental, emotional conditioning. That’s what we’re here to do. We’re working hard at it. We’re just getting started here in camp. It’s very early in camp. We’ve got a long way to go, but I like the spirit of this football team. We’ve got a good group of men, and we know we’ve got a lot of work in front of us.”

Q: In your experience, are there certain positions that you don’t want to see miss time more than other positions?

Coach Del Rio: “I’m going to focus on coaching the guys that are here.”

Q: What kind of growth have you seen from Shilique Calhoun from Year 1 to Year 2?

Coach Del Rio: “I think Shilique is a good, young player. He’s being asked to do a lot more right now with Bruce [Irvin] working his way back. He’s getting a lot of exposure and experience right now. Obviously, all the experience of last year, you build on that. I think guys like Karl Joseph, [Jihad] ‘Haddy’ Ward, Shilique, I think those guys all benefit from having a little experience, a little wisdom.”

Q: What are your thoughts on James Cowser as a person and football player?

Coach Del Rio: “James is really, really one of the smarter football players out here. He’s very instinctive, he’s got natural feel for pass rush. I like him. He’s a guy that works hard every day, you can count on, and very dependable.”



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Q: Do you see Jelani Jenkins as a guy who can step in and do some of the things Malcolm Smith did for you over the last couple years?

Coach Del Rio: "That's the hope, you know? Yeah, I think Jelani, adding him to the Will position, giving some veteran presence there and that's what he's getting every opportunity to do."

Q: How steep is the learning curve for someone like a fifth-round rookie such as a Marquel Lee?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, some guys are natural leaders. Some guys are intelligent enough to handle all of that. We'll figure that out as we go through camp. I think he's done a pretty good job thus far of showing that he's a pretty good learner and he's got a good presence about him. We'll see how that grows and whether or not he can earn that. He's going to get every opportunity to compete for it. I know that he definitely sees himself as that guy. We like that. It really doesn't matter once you get here how you got here. Whether he's a high pick or a lower pick, he's got a spot here at camp, he's got on opportunity to show us what he's all about. I think he's been pretty solid to start camp."

Q: What have you seen from EJ Manuel and Cordarrelle Paterson from a chemistry standpoint and what went into them becoming roommates here at camp?

Coach Del Rio: "I don't have any clue about the roommate thing. (*laughter*) I think looking at EJ and him coming here, Cordarrelle, him coming here, I think obviously they were two guys that we felt could upgrade us at those positions; Cordarrelle with his tremendous explosiveness, his return ability and the fact that we feel like there's still a lot more to develop there from a receiver standpoint and potentially doing some other things with him. And then with EJ, he had a relationship with [offensive coordinator] Todd [Downing] before. He was selected high in the draft before. He doesn't carry all that burden with him, he just comes in here with a chance to compete and develop and not worry about all of that other stuff and just think about growing every day as a player. The fact that the two of them are coming together and spending time getting on the same page is great, but it's not the main thing for me because we want all of our guys to grow and build relationships. I'm happy that's the case, I'm happy we have both of them."

Q: To see Karl Joseph put a whole offseason in and then stack a few practices together, what do you expect to see from him?

Coach Del Rio: "I think you're saying exactly right, we're seeing the same things. He's a tireless worker. There's no shortage of energy from him and desire from him to want to improve and become a really good football player. We liked a lot about what we drafted and I think he's healthier now. We're getting a chance to see more of what he can be as he's healthier and has a little bit of experience."

Q: Does it ever happen with a guy that he's working so hard this early in camp that you have to slow him down?

Coach Del Rio: "I suppose it could be, but that's rare. We keep a good eye on them. We're not going to let them go too far."

Q: Where do you see Jaydon Mickens and K.J. Brent so far?

Coach Del Rio: "They've been really strong throughout this offseason. I think both K.J. and Jaydon, obviously being with us last year on the practice squad and developing, it's a little different in how they do it. Jaydon, smaller, quicker guy with some return ability and K.J., a bigger guy and able to get in there and do more blocking, the dirty work we ask our receivers to do. They're both doing a great job. They're both in the mix. We have a good, solid group of wideouts. Everywhere on our roster, we're going to compete and let it play out."



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Q: Considering how you have to rebuild your special teams with the players you lost, how big has Johnny Holton fit into your plans?

Coach Del Rio: "It would be natural for him to expand his role a little bit. Take some of the experience he had last year and help us make an even bigger impact on special teams as well as being involved in the offense. That's the next step for him. That's the progression we're looking to see."

Q: Given the spirit of this team, you saying that today was just OK, is that disappointing?

Coach Del Rio: "It's not good enough, that's all. I explained it to our guys. It's not what we needed to do. We needed to come out and practice crisper, sharper, cleaner football. It's one day. Just like if it's one period, you learn a lesson. I always shoot straight with our guys. I don't always share it with you but I just gave you a little synopsis of what just happened."

Q: Injury question, do you expect Amari Cooper back on Thursday?

Coach Del Rio: "Injuries? You know how I am on injuries. We'll see."