



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "How's it going today? I'll be happy to answer any questions that I can."

Q: Do you know what your interior offensive line is going to look like yet?

Coaching Gruden: "Not yet. It's going to be determined here in the next few days. We'll use today to get Chaz Green and Denzelle [Good] and Cam Hunt some work and hope for the best."

Q: Where would you like to play home games next year?

Coaching Gruden: "It's always something everyday here, isn't it? I enjoy see you answering all these questions. I want to play in Oakland. I'm real sensitive like you would expect. It's where I want to play. We'll see what happens."

Q: Would it be difficult to practice in one spot and play in another?

Coaching Gruden: "Yeah I can't even think about that. I don't like to sit around and speculate. We have to try to get ready for the Bengals. I'm not the right guy to ask those questions to. We have enough issues to try to figure out ourselves."

Q: Do you have a sense of where Kelechi Osemele and Gabe Jackson are?

Coaching Gruden: "No, I don't. Do not. I know that both of them are as tough as they come and if there's a will, there's a way. They have the will, I know that. We'll just hope for the best. Like we've done at other positions on offense, we'll have to rally around the next guy up."

Q: You guys let C.J. Anderson go. Was that just a numbers game?

Coaching Gruden: "Yeah we didn't have any choice, honestly. We didn't want to do that. Some things we do here we really don't want to do, Vic. But we have to do sometimes, what you have to do. We lost [Jon] Feliciano for the season, so we really don't have a backup center. Cameron Hunt comes in here as a center and if need be go in and play. Otherwise we'd have a hard time putting the ball in play."

Q: When you got here, how much did you know about Jared Cook and what did you find out since being here?

Coaching Gruden: "I've known Cook just because I've been close to the game for a long time. He's a good pass receiver in college. I saw him play at South Carolina. I knew what he was coming out. Saw him at Tennessee and Green Bay and as a Ram. Broadcasted his games. He's a unique talent. He had a big year here last year. He's a really unique talent. Given the fact that we've had some injuries and we've had some departures. We've had some people missing. We've had to lean on the next guy up. This guy is a hell of a football player. If he's not a Pro Bowler, I hope there's an investigation."

Q: How much has Tahir Whitehead elevated his game these last few weeks?

Coaching Gruden: "He just stays true to himself. A couple of weeks ago he couldn't cover. He was (inaudible) coverage on Pro Football Focus. He just keeps playing, keeps hustling. Has a great play on fourth-and-1. He has a critical interception. The end of the game he ran [JuJu Smith-Schuster] down and just stopped him just enough. His effort level is great. I just think he's a good player no matter who he plays for and what scheme he's in. He just stays true to himself and trusts his abilities and makes plays."

Q: What's the scouting on Jeff Driskel?

Coaching Gruden: "Well Guenther knows him. AJ McCarron knows him. We know he's athletic, very athletic. He ran the scout team for Guenther last year. We know he's a capable runner. He can run the read option. I thought he did a nice job. I thought the Bengals played very well last week against a great team in the Chargers down in LA. He's going into his third start now, I believe, maybe his fourth. So experience is often the best teacher. We expect him to play well."



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Q: Based on what you've seen from Derek Carr this year, what do you expect to see in the future in this offense?

Coaching Gruden: "I don't know what else to say. Some people...you're entitled to write what you want about us looking for another quarterback. Derek Carr is a great quarterback. He can play with...like I said it doesn't matter who the running back is, who the guards are, who the receivers are. The guy is a heck of a player. When you got a quarterback in this league, you have a chance I always say."

Q: What have you seen from Joe Mixon in the last few games?

Coaching Gruden: "Man, he's good. He's a great slash. He can stop and start. He has power. He's a good receiver. He's a good blitz pickup guy. He's putting it together in Cincinnati. Don't forget about [Giovani] Bernard, either. They have two really good halfbacks."

Q: Do you feel like your run defense has made some strides over the last few weeks?

Coaching Gruden: "It's amazing how Justin Ellis has a factor in that. He's helped us. Paul Guenther's scheme is catching on I think. Yes, they have played better."

Q: Did a week off help Maurice Hurst from what you've seen?

Coaching Gruden: "I hope so. I heard a rumor he was running around on the treadmill pretty good yesterday, so hopefully he can do some stuff today. We'll modify practice and make it more of a teaching practice today. Hopefully he can be back in form by the end of the week."

Q: What kind of problems does Geno Atkins create?

Coaching Gruden: "He's what you're looking for as a three technique. He's a power guy. He's a little bit different than Warren Sapp and some of the guys I've been around. He's got incredible power. When he unleashes it, you feel it. He also has the ability, I think, to get on the edge and beat you with speed. That's a combination that's tough to go up against. They still have Carlos Dunlap. We don't know what [Vontaze] Burfict is going to do. The middle of this defense is very, very talented."

Q: Have you gotten a chance to talk to Reggie McKenzie yet?

Coaching Gruden: "No, we exchanged messages. We will."

QB Derek Carr

Q: What are your thoughts on Reggie [McKenzie] not being here anymore?

Carr: "It's hard because I love Mr. McKenzie and his wife, June. They are really special people. I think we all know that. Very special and some of the best people I've ever met, let alone just in football. The support that I had from him. He drafted me and gave me my chance. I had a good conversation with him after I found out the news. I sent him a long text and he sent me a long one back. It was special, man. Our relationship was special, and it always will be. You never saw anything that would make you think this would happen, but it is what it is. You wake up and you see it and are like, 'Oh, man!' It's a part of this and we are moving forward. He is someone I will always keep in contact with and in my message, I said, 'Any success that I have, I hope you feel a part of it. Whatever I do, hopefully win a lot of games and do some fun things, I hope that you feel good about it because I want you to know you are big reason for it.' I love him to death and I'm going to miss him."

Q: What do you make of all the changes; whether it be the GM, players or coaches that have happened since you arrived here?

Carr: "It's crazy, man. My brother warned me about stuff like this because he played for 12 years. I was like, 'No, man.' When you get here it's just rainbows and butterflies because you made it to the NFL. All of



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sudden you get new friends every year. I think I counted, I've had like 27 different people in the locker next to me in five years. It just shows you how tough this business is. To be here one year, let alone five, 10 or 15. It makes you thankful and grateful for where you are at. I thank God for being here and being a Raider. This is where I want to be. I want to stay and when you look around and see very few familiar faces from the beginning, it puts it in perspective for sure."

Q: Have you learned how to deal with change and how to just keep pushing forward?

Carr: "Yeah, because there has been a lot of turnover. Not only in the last five years, but in the last 12 months. There has been a lot of turnover. A lot of different things; systems, players, obviously the GM, coaches. It just teaches you that you can't control anything outside of what you can control. The best thing that you can do is show up every day and give it everything that you have because anything outside of that is out of your control."

Q: Any thoughts on the fact that the Christmas Eve game could be the last game that the Raiders play in Oakland?

Carr: "That is crazy and to me that seems weird. It just seems different to even have to think that way because I've spent five years playing in this stadium. We've had people talking trash about it or whatever they want, but I love it. It's ours. It's been fun and the fact that it could be the last is crazy, but when that time comes, we will enjoy it."

Q: How do you approach the uncertainty of not knowing exactly where you will be playing games next season?

Carr: "It's kind of like when you are leaving college. You don't know where you are going to be. Good thing is you have experience, you know what team you are going to be on. You know who your coach is going to be, and you know the system already. Just where you are going to play your home games, that's just weird and it's nothing anyone wants to go through. There is no book on how to do this. I'll figure it out the best way I can, day by day."

Q: How challenging will this week be with a banged up offensive line?

Carr: "It will be very challenging, especially against a good defense. Their front, obviously we know they got good players. It just is what it is this year. Guys are hurt, guys are leaving the building and we are getting new guys in. It's next man up, but just the mentality that coach Gruden and I have together is, however it unfolds we are going to give Cincinnati our best shot."

Q: Jon had talked about how incredible it was that both Jon [Feliciano] and Gabe [Jackson] finished the game on Sunday. Is that something that you saw in the huddle, how hard these guys were fighting for the team?

Carr: "Absolutely. I could definitely see it. At one time I told Gabe...We had one timeout left and I said, 'Bro, I'll call the timeout.' He's lying there and it's hard for him to get up. I said, 'I'll call the timeout, man. Just get up. We can't lose you.' And he goes, 'No!' and just runs back to the huddle. I said, 'OK'. He's so selfless that he didn't want to waste the timeout on him. Jon, same thing, you see him on the last play where he can't even put pressure on his leg. I believe it was his right leg and he's still blocking. Then after the touchdown you see him trying to put pressure on it and he can't. He just waves. He can't even put pressure on his leg and he's out there fighting on a game-winning touchdown. Those are the kind of people you can win with. Those guys are my brothers. I love them to death and it's sad that Jon got hurt and Gabe is hurt. Hopefully, Gabe will be able to play. Jon won't be able to play anymore and that stinks, but hopefully we will get him back."

Q: Did you feel at any point in time during last game that you could make any throw on the field?

Carr: "I think that's the problem, I think that all the time. *(laughter)* And sometimes it doesn't work out. I didn't play any less aggressive. Some ball's I've thrown that didn't end up good. In this game they just



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ended up good. Like I said, the one to Seth [Roberts], I thought I overthrew. Seth hit another gear and made the play. There's one to Marcell [Ateman] on a seam route, we just happened to get a linebacker on him. Just little things like that that just ended up making those plays work out. But, it wasn't like I felt different. I feel more confident in our system. I feel like my reads are quicker. I feel like I can get through things and eliminate things faster. That feels better. So, that is a different feeling. But, I didn't feel like when you play basketball you can shoot it however you want and they're going in no matter what. I didn't have a feeling like that."

Q: How has your comfort in this scheme and offense grown over the season? Can you project what it would feel like a couple years from now?

Carr: "It's seems really nice. Those thoughts are nice. To know that we've come so far in such a difficult offense to learn, mentally to play in, but once you see it start to work it's kind of like this beautiful art piece. You see it – a little bit of chaos in the beginning – and then at the end you're like, 'Oh, that looks pretty nice.' It feels like that, it feels like it could be that. But, none of that matter unless everyone continues to work how we've been working and taking care of business on and off the field. Because if we can do that and get the right people doing that, this thing could look really nice."

Q: Can you name the 27 players that have been by your locker?

Carr: "(laughter) It would take me awhile. I once had a tally mark going but I don't know where that paper went."

Q: What do you see from the Bengals defense on film?

Carr: "You know what, again, I have never been big on the defensive stats. When you turn the film on, I want to see who's out there, how they're competing, how they're covering, how they're rushing, how they're fitting the rush, all of those things. And they do all of those things really well. They've had a couple mistakes here and there that have been big plays. I think that if they eliminate big plays, then they're a top defense. I don't go too much into stats. There's going to be mistakes here and there made. They have a really talented secondary, a lot of first-round picks, a lot of veterans. They have a really talented veteran front. They have some guys in the linebacking corps that really like to hit and fit the run. So, we have our hands full. This is an AFC North opponent, so this is going to be a physical game – that's how they play football in the north. It's a good thing for us; that's how our team likes to play too."

Q: Coach Gruden said that he felt he needed to allow you to be more free. When did that shift happen?

Carr: "It was around the same time... we were trying to talk about it. I couldn't remember the exact time. It was around the early, middle of the season where he just kind of sat me down and said, 'Let's not take your right arm out of things. Let's just take it back to the simple things.' We didn't cut anything out, I just think that the way he was starting to word things was different. Instead of every little detail, because if you give me 100 details I'm going to try to do 100 all correct, now he's said well let me give you 50 details and let's just let your talent take over the rest. We've been doing that and correcting as we go and adding here and here. It just helped me play freer for our team and for him. It's been nice."

Q: Has Coach Guenther been an asset in terms of being able to give you tendencies about the Bengals' defense?

Carr: "Absolutely, him and AJ McCarron. AJ, he was throwing against these guys all the time. All of it is just information until you go out there and play. They'll have a new wrinkle, they'll try something new or whatever, so you always have to be ready for that. Any information, I try and gather whatever I can, even guys that I just have as friends that play for another team certain weeks. I'll just text them, 'Hey, what do you know about so and so?' Even if he's like the fourth corner, like what do you know about him just in case he plays? Just because you have to be ready for all things. So, having those guys in our building and AJ being a close friend, being able to talk to him every day, it's been really nice."