



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "I'd just like to say that I was really happy with today's practice. Normally the last real practice at training camp, a lot of people get a little bit distracted. What we did is we went out and really challenged our guys with short yardage, goal-line backed up, two minute, no huddle. Desperation field goals. Covered a lot of ground. Our guys did a nice job. We got our team rejuvenated physically a little bit after two, long, padded practices for the upcoming game. I'll answer any questions I can."

Q: Will tomorrow's closure to training camp be similar to how you ended mini-camp?

Coach Gruden: "We'll see. We don't want to let the cat out of the bag yet. These guys have all these modern technology, they'll find out the answer to the test."

Q: What do you like about what Griff Whalen has done during camp?

Coach Gruden: "He's just been steady since he's been here. Seth Roberts is out. Has been out for a little over a week. Hasn't been able to go in the slot much. Martavis [Bryant] has been out. Whalen has stepped up. He earned that right. He's doing some great things."

Q: He and Ryan Switzer are very similar, but how have you been able to differentiate them?

Coach Gruden: "Well it's very competitive situation. They're neck-and-neck. As you said, special teams will have a big part of that, but also sheer production. You have to be able to go in there and make plays. You have to be able to go in there and block linebackers sometimes and big safeties. You have to know a lot of assignments because Derek [Carr] is going to change the play at the last second. It's neck and neck with those guys. When Seth Roberts gets back, it's a very competitive position at the slot."

Q: You have a lot of wide receivers in general. How do you sort through them all?

Coach Gruden: "Well it's been a similar problem that we've always had. We get these receivers and we train them from the very beginning to play multiple positions. [Wide receivers coach] Edgar Bennett has done a great job. It's going to be probably right down to the wire to see who makes it, how many guys we can week. Special teams as well will be a determining factor."

Q: There was one play where Gareon Conley and Bryant both went up for the ball and came down hard. Was it good to see them both come up OK?

Coach Gruden: "I try not to think like that. I think too many of us are thinking like that. There's going to be some of that in this game. You just have to hope for the best. Our guys did a great job today and throughout camp maintaining a really good edict. Taking care of each other. Trying to avoid pills of bodies being on the ground. Now that I think of it, I'm glad both of them got up."

Q: What went into the decision of making Donald Penn going to right tackle and how much of it is a reflection of Kolton Miller?

Coach Gruden: "Kolton has made a lot of progress. He's done a great job for us. Donald Penn has played right tackle in the past. By no means are we done. We haven't settled on any starting lineups yet. We really didn't want to disrupt Kolton's status right now without being sure where Donald exactly was physically. This is an opportunity to get Penn back on the field with us. Not only test the ankle, test his conditioning. Get his timing down. Get back in the channel of our offense. Then we'll address this later next week."

Q: From a football shape standpoint, where is Penn?

Coach Gruden: "He'll have to answer that. I think he'll tell you he's a little rusty. It's one thing to condition over here in an air-conditioned tent drinking cherry juice. They do the work out and they get sponged down and they get cherry juice to recovery. It's a heck of a lot different when you have to block Justin Ellis and some of these characters. He needs a lot of cherry juice I'm sure today."



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Q: What have you seen from Kelsey Martinez?

Coach Gruden: "I like our whole staff. I really like Kelsey. I've known her for a while. Tom Shaw had a lot to say with bringing her here. He brought a diverse staff. D'Anthony Batiste, Rick Slate, Coach France, Deuce Gruden, it's a good group of people that really care about servicing our players. I think they're on the cutting edge of flexibility, speed training and weight conditioning, and diet."

Q: What kind of reception are you expecting when the Raiders go back to the Los Angeles Coliseum for the first time?

Coach Gruden: "I expect it to be pretty good. That's a pretty cool place. We have a lot of history, the Raiders do, in LA. I know they're housing two football teams right now, but I have no idea what to expect in life anymore. I just try to hope for the best."

Q: Have you played there before?

Coach Gruden: "I have not. No, I have not. I have not."

Q: Seeing Marshawn Lynch out there with the resistance band on his legs for the whole practice, is this something new or has been doing this the whole camp?

Coach Gruden: "He has. I don't think he's worn it for perhaps the entire practice. He's had a really good camp. I'm really proud of our backs. He has his own, I think, needs in terms of what he feels like he has to do to get ready. He's played long and hard and good enough in this league to earn that right. The problem is, we're going to have 14 more guys wearing the bands tomorrow. That's the way it usually goes."

Q: You're playing a team that you're facing the first week of the season. Have you ever done anything like this before?

Gruden: "I don't understand it honestly, I don't."

Q: You can totally be vanilla or throw everything at them. How do you exactly attack a thing like this?

Gruden: "It's a preseason game and we have a lot of really tough evaluations to get through before we start thinking about what play we're going to call. We're going to really continue to use this as an evaluation, period. You're going to see a lot of players playing a long period of time that are going to get a chance to show us they belong here. That's how we're looking at this game."

Q: What was your reaction when you saw the schedule?

Gruden: "Like I said, I've never seen that. I was in the league a long time, I don't remember that. What are you going to do about it, right? We'll just adjust and adapt. Same for them as it is us."

Q: It looks like you're going to get out of here without seeing Khalil Mack in Napa. Has that been a distraction?

Gruden: "I don't think it's been a distraction. It's obviously, for me, been disappointing. You want to have your best player here. This guy is really a great guy, too. I'm disappointed we don't have him here. Going to try to get him here as soon as we can. In the time being, you got to move on. You've got to get up and go to work. That's one thing I'm very proud of what we've done here."

Q: What have you seen from Connor's overall mental progression?

Gruden: "I think he's done great. I think he's really done a fine job. We're giving him a lot of information. When you see this blitz, there might be three things you can do. There might be four things you can do, honestly. It all depends on the down and distance, the situation, how much time is left, how much risk you want to take. There are a lot of things that you have to be thinking about. I think he's grown tremendously. I give [quarterbacks coach] Brian Callahan and [offensive coordinator] Greg Olson a lot of credit. I know I probably have made him mad most of the time yelling at him but that's just what I do."



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Q: Derek Carr's fluency in the offense seems to go beyond the months you've had together. What does it take to get to where he is?

Gruden: "That was heavy. I think he's one of the best, in terms of processing information. I think he craves new things. He wants... 'what do we have today? What are we doing today? What's new? What do we got?' He has a photographic memory. It comes so easy to him. He's got the offense mastered more than I do, that's for sure."

Q: How much resource was your brother when you brought in Derek Carrier?

Gruden: "My son, too. My son was a strength coach out there and really liked Carrier. Jay [Gruden] loved Carrier. He got hurt as a Redskin and got into a log jam. A couple other guys emerged. Got released. Sean McVay who was with the Redskins claimed Carrier and when Carrier got to be a free agent, I got Carrier. There's a lot of Carrier fans out there but I'm leading the charge."

Q: Why are you a fan?

Gruden: "Good player, man. A really good play. He can play in the slot and be a big receiver. He can pay in-line and be a tight end. He can cover kicks. He can run option routes. He has quickness and savvy and great instincts. He's been a former receiver in college. He's what I call a joker. You can line him up in any hand. He can line up here, there or anywhere. He's a good player."

Q: What has it been like to have Jemal Singleton on staff?

Gruden: "He's a good coach. He's an Air Force grad and he has a certain degree of character that is special. Great communication skills, great work ethic, he's upbeat and positive. He's a leader. He's one of the best running back coaches in football."

Q: Does it feel like you guys have a good handle on Martavis Bryant with his headaches?

Gruden: "I don't know. I really don't know. We're calling Martavis the white tiger. I used to go to Busch Gardens in Tampa. We call Galloway the white tiger in Tampa. You go to Busch Gardens and they've got a white tiger. You go 12 times or 13 times, the white tiger was always in his cage. But the white tiger came out today. Bryant came out. I don't know if you get that analogy but sometimes he comes out to play and sometimes he doesn't. It's good to see him because he's really special, like the white tiger. It's late in the day here."

Q: Anything on Obi Melifonwu?

Gruden: "I don't have any update. He's being evaluated, and we'll have some information hopefully when we get back to Alameda."

Q: Is Jared Cook OK?

Gruden: "Legs and overall rest. He was sore. He's practiced every day and practiced hard. An opportunity for a couple guys to get some extra treatment and pre-hab, I call it. Have a good day, see you guys back in Alameda."