



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "I'll be happy to answer any questions that I can. We're excited to play the Chiefs – great challenge."

Q: Where's Gareon Conley in the process? Is he totally cleared to play?

Coach Gruden: "No, not yet. He has to still pass another step, but today was a good sign. I can't comment any further than that."

Q: There was a report that Jordy Nelson and Tahir Whitehead received bonuses?

Coach Gruden: "I don't want to get into all of that. I wasn't aware of that report, but I'm sure we can address it after the game. I don't have any true knowledge to all the reports out there."

Q: Your players credit you as someone who's the same every day. How important is that as a head coach?

Coach Gruden: "I appreciate that compliment. I try to have a little bit more poise than I used to have. Maybe I'm a little more seasoned, maybe more mature. I don't know. I know what we're doing here. I'm really proud of our players. They're giving us everything they have. That's all you can really ask for as a coach. I just hope we can finish on a great note. I'm confident if we play to the best of our abilities, we can do that."

Q: Jordy Nelson said he wants to come back next year. Is there mutual interest there?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, I think. I'm just having fun with all the reports out there. Normally when you hand out a bonus for next year's season, there's a pretty good chance those guys are coming back. If you watched Jordy play carefully the last four weeks when he's been healthy, you see what he's capable of doing. I think as we continue to improve this football team around some of the core guys that are here, I think you can even see better and better days ahead. So yeah, he'll be back."

Q: When you first brought in Arden Key you had plan to gradually introduce him to the game, but instead he had to be thrown in there every down. What do you think this year will do for him?

Coach Gruden: "I think it will help him a lot. I think he has a great offseason planned. He's going to train with some of the best. He's going to train to be the best. Arden Key and P.J. Hall and Maurice Hurst were brought in to be inside rushers and outside rushers, specialty rushers. We thought [Eddie] Vanderdoes and Justin Ellis and a couple other guys would do the heavy lifting inside. We thought Khalil [Mack] and Bruce [Irvin] would do most of the heavy lifting outside. As you said, times change and we adapt. I give him credit. He has some confidence. He just has to be a better pitcher in the ninth inning, he has to close the deal. He's winning at the line of scrimmage at times. He's getting chipped, he's getting nudged, he's getting the respect of the opponent. But when he gets the quarterback in his grasp, he has to close the deal to be great. He knows that. He has to get stronger, got to get more complete."

Q: What have you seen from the way Frostee Rucker has adjusted and given you what this team needs? And being a leader off the field?

Coach Gruden: "Well, he's been great off the field for our guys. Been great on the practice field and versatile. That's how he's made it so long in this league. He's been able to play defensive tackle, defensive end, right end, left end, sub nickel, whatever package you're playing, he can play in. That's one of the reasons that he continues to play pretty good. He knows what to do and he's versatile."

Q: How much of a measure stick do you feel like this game is going to be?

Coach Gruden: "We'll see. We know what they're capable of doing. We know what's at stake for them. We know what the point spread is. If we want to dabble in all of those negative thoughts, then we can do that. We just have to go out there and keep playing hard. I think we're getting better. I think we played



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better football over the last month of the season. Hopefully we can go out there and perform at the highest of our abilities.”

Q: Have you been seeing strides from Johnny Townsend?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, I think the last few games he’s played better. He’s punted more consistently. He’s hit a couple of bombs. We’re going to need him in this game, not necessarily to have a great punting average, we need to limit the punt return. Directional punting will be on display, I hope, this week in Arrowhead.”