



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: “How are you guys doing? Sorry I’m late. I was with Howie Long and he was asking some questions about the game yesterday. I’d like to thank the Raiders fans for their support. Disappointed in the outcome of the game. But I’ll be happy to answer any questions that I can.”

Q: Was Howie satisfied with your description of the game?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, it was great to talk to Howie. It really was. He’s a good friend. Good to get his insight and talk about some things.”

Q: You made some changes on defense and put a lot of new guys in, how do you think they fared?

Coach Gruden: “I wouldn’t say we made a whole lot of changes. We tweaked some situations. Obviously, we still have a ways to go. We’re going to get back to work tomorrow. We’re putting together our game plan for the 49ers. We have to collectively play much better.”

Q: It seems week-to-week where some players roles change on defense drastically. Do you think that type of week-to-week fluidity can be difficult for the players confidence and comfort in the defense?

Coach Gruden: “It can be. It can also be an excuse. It can be a lot of things. We’re looking for more consistency. We’re looking for somebody to step up, not only on game day but during the week. It’s a situation where we picked up [Dominique Rodgers-]Cromartie, as you know, late in this process. Right before the first regular season game. [Daryl] Worley was out the first four games with a suspension. That has a lot to do with the fluidity. Nick Nelson has been hurt. He’s healthy now. We’re still working through who are the best corners, who is the best combination for us in every situation. Hopefully we can settle on it soon.”

Q: Paul Guenther said last week that the defense had their best practice of the season. That being the case, how do you account for the way it went?

Coach Gruden: “Well it just wasn’t good enough. I’m not going to sit up here and say much more. We have to do a better job collectively. Getting off blocks, staying in the right gap and making physical tackles and knocking them backwards. Those areas, it’s hard to practice live. It’s hard to practice against the exact look you’re going to see at full speed, as you know. But we are practicing well. We are practicing hard. Guys are on the details. I don’t know exactly why Indianapolis had that much success. I do give them a lot of credit, but we have to go back to the drawing board and solve this quickly.”

Q: Does your schedule this week allow you to tweak some situations?

Coach Gruden: “No, we’re not going to be able to do much. I think the game is in 48 hours. We have to be smart about our preparation. Do the best we can to get the right people on the field. Guys that deserve to play the most.”

Q: Bruce Irvin hasn’t taken his normal percentage of snaps. Is the reason behind his low snap count because of certain packages or are you disappointed in his performance?

Coach Gruden: “Well he’s tweaked his shoulder a little bit. I think that has a little bit to do with it. Obviously, when someone is running the ball as effectively as they were yesterday, you don’t get in any of the mix-down, pass-rush situations where Irvin is most effective. I think that combination has a lot to do with his numbers being down.”

Q: What’s your confidence level that Kelechi Osemele will return this week?

Coach Gruden: “I’m getting more confident. I was really pleased to see him on the practice field last Friday. He got some work in. I think he’s getting closer, but we’ll know a little bit more tomorrow, obviously. He’s been someone we’ve really missed, but I do credit Jon Feliciano for playing well yesterday. I was really



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pleased with our line. After not playing particularly well collectively in London, that group of five really responded and played well for us yesterday.”

Q: Are you guys going to put T.J. Clemmings on IR this week?

Coach Gruden: “I believe that will be the case. It was a serious knee injury. It’s another big loss for us. He was a guy that was a swing tackle for us, backing up both positions. He was a veteran. Been doing a great job. Came in and helped us in Miami, so that’s a big blow for us.”

Q: What else did you see on offense yesterday?

Coach Gruden: “I think it all starts with pass protection and just balance. We had some good runs from Doug Martin. I thought the run blocking was better collectively. I thought we used Derek Carrier, we used Keith Smith creatively a few times. Got them involved in the game. Derek played well. Had time to see the defense. Had time to get through the progressions. I thought we had four or five really good drives. Unfortunately we didn’t see the ball enough.”

Q: Do you think Justin Ellis will return to practice this week?

Coach Gruden: “I don’t know about this week. I know Eddie Vanderdoes has a chance to make his debut against the 49ers. Justin Ellis is a guy we really miss. Obviously, we resigned him quickly in free agency to make him a big part of this run defense. But I don’t that he’ll be back any sooner than Arizona, honestly.”

Q: Do you anticipate Justin Ellis returning to practice this week?

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Q: What did Brandon LaFell bring to the offense?

Gruden: “He’s a good player. He’s been in a Super Bowl. He’s been productive as a Carolina Panther, as a Patriot, as a Bengal. He’s a pro. He’s a big guy. He can run after the catch, he can block, he’s detailed, he’s tough. Every quarterback that has played with LaFell, likes him. They count on him and they trust him. That’s a big guy with a big arsenal of things to like.”

Q: Have you had a chance to look at the 49ers yet?

Gruden: “Yeah, sure did. They’re one-[win] record is not where they want it to be. I give C.J. Beathard a lot of credit. He is one tough quarterback. He is a tough kid. I’ve seen him get hit and keep playing hard. They’ve got a creative offense under Kyle Shanahan. They can score points. They can run the football, that I do know. Defensively, they’ve got a lot of high first-round picks in that front. It’ll be a challenge for us.”

Q: What about your time period in 2004 with all of your assistant coaches was special to you?

Gruden: “It was a great group of guys, the brat pack you know? I always have taken pride in hiring young coaches that love it, that have some passion for the game, that are good communicators. That was a fun time, for sure. I remember Mike Shanahan calling me and asking me if I’d be interested in hiring his son. I thought it was an honor to have Kyle on my staff. Unfortunately I couldn’t keep him long enough.”

Q: Was having them together pretty cool?

Gruden: “Yeah, we had a lot of fun back in those days. The woodshed, I called it. People are going to take me to the woodshed here pretty soon. if we don’t get this thing going [*laughter*]. I’m proud of our offense. I’m proud of our team for coming back yesterday. We just have to keep grinding and keep pushing. I’m sure Kyle is going to do the same thing.”



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Q: How do you evaluate Doug Martin's performance?

Gruden: "He's a good player. He had the fumble. Obviously, that will be remembered by a lot of people and rightfully so. But, what a performance he had yesterday. He picked up a couple blitzes. He ran with authority. He can catch the ball. He has a great stiff-arm, still. He still has a lot of life in his legs. He's a good back and he and [Jalen] Richard and [DeAndre] Washington will have to carry us here down the stretch but happy Doug is here."

Q: Did not having Marshawn and Amari force you to be creative in ways that were beneficial?

Gruden: "I don't know. I think we've tried to be creative. I think anyone will tell you that the injuries on the offensive line, multiple injuries at left guard, right tackle, can stymie you. It can make things tough on everyone. An 11-hour flight can make things doubly hard. I'm not going to say anything other than yesterday we had a goofy rhythm, we were able to finish some drives. I think Derek Carr showed you what kind of quarterback he is when he gets legitimate pass protection and gets some balance. That was exciting."

Q: You've coached in Raiders vs. 49ers games before. Is there something special about it for you?

Gruden: "For me, it is. It's the Battle of the Bay. I remember Tim Brown catching a pass in overtime to beat the 49ers. I still have great memories of that game. My man, [Sebastian] Janikowski, I went to him on second down and he missed the field goal. That was a fun day in Candlestick Park. The wind was blowing. The fans were great. I wish the game had two 8-1 or 7-1 teams playing in it. Hopefully someday soon you'll see a game like that, but this is still going to be fun for the fans and both teams."

With the short week, how do you balance dealing with the trade deadline coming tomorrow?

Coach Gruden: "I'm not on the phone calling around for trades. You never know who is going to call. You never know who is going to call or what the call will entail, but the deadline is looming and can't get here soon enough."

Q: What did you see from Nick Morrow and [Jason] Cabinda in the game?

Coach Gruden: "[Nick] Morrow, he had a couple issues with his underneath coverage. We expect him to tighten up. He's a run and hit linebacker. He needs to play. That's another group, another position we haven't had much fluidity or too much fluidity. I try to stay away from four syllable words. *(laughter)* I thought he did some good things. Cabinda played in the middle, didn't play a whole lot but got his eyes open and that was good. Hopefully, you will see more and more of those two guys here in the next few games."

Q: What's your confidence level in Martavis Bryant right now?

Coach Gruden: "I'm confident in him. I'm confident in Seth Roberts too. I'm confident in [Brandon] LaFell. I'm confident in Jordy Nelson. I'm confident in all our receivers. It's hard to get everybody out there when you only have 47 or 48 plays. It's pretty hard."

Q: What did you take away from the time you worked with the 49ers?

Coach Gruden: "The 49ers experience...you brought up a lot of young coaches. [Sean] McVay, my brother [Jay Gruden], Kyle [Shanahan] and I. We modeled my whole philosophy after Bill Walsh, Mike Holmgren and the 49er experience. We tried to duplicate it in Green Bay. We tried to practice the same way. We tried to prepare our game plans, coach the quarterback, handle training camp and travel the same way. We tried to copy it to a tee. They were always on the cutting edge. Eddie DeBartolo was the man. Everything they did was better and bigger than everybody else. They set the bar very high for every team in the league. I think they were copied and emulated by just about everybody."



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Q: Is there any chance at all that Marshawn [Lynch] can return this season?

Coach Gruden: "I don't know. I would say it would be very difficult, but I'm never going to shut the door with a guy like that. We've got a number of players, we already talked about [Justin] Ellis and Donald Penn, where we will see what happens with how fast they heal."

Q: What did you think of the play where Fadol Brown was flagged for roughness?

Coach Gruden: "I didn't like that, they said they blew the whistle. I didn't hear a whistle. I thought it was a big play. We have been hurt by the jet sweep all season. We practiced it and we made a big deal about it. Fadol Brown caught that flight. He caught that jet and unfortunately that also hurt us. I was unhappy with that quick whistle personally, but what can I do."