



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Q: What do you like about Brandon LaFell and where does he fit in?

Gruden: "Well, he's a good player. He has played multiple roles and played well when he's played. Physical guy. We think he can come in and get ready quickly to make a contribution. He's got size we like, he's an excellent blocker, high-effort player, detailed, professional wide out. He's going to give us some versatility and depth, which we need."

Q: How do you balance putting a guy on the practice squad who has a really high ceiling but may not be able to be called up for the 53-man roster at any point this season, with a guy who is a bit more NFL ready who doesn't have that sort of potential?

Gruden: "Well, selfishly, we try to keep as many guys on the practice squad that were with us as possible, so that we can continue the developmental process. We still think we've got some really good, young players that we worked with all summer and spring that can help us down the road, and they know our system. We also looked at who was available, who we thought we had a chance at getting, so there's a fine line there. But, we do think all members of our practice squad have a chance to eventually help us at some point this year."

Q: How good do you feel about Mike Nugent?

Gruden: "I feel good. He's kicked the ball well since he's been here. He's had a little bit of experience kicking off not only our dirt, but all kinds of surfaces in this league. He's done it for a long time, I don't think he's going to be nervous and rattled. He gives us some mental stability and confidence at a position, I think, is critical."

Q: What started your relationship with Sean McVay?

Gruden: "We don't have a lot of time here today, but we go way back. My dad worked for his grandfather, John McVay, at the University of Dayton in 1970. So, we go all the way back, Grudens and McVays. John McVay helped my dad. I try to help any McVay I can. They've helped us throughout the years, we're a really close family and got Sean out of Miami of Ohio – kind of in a secretarial role – to get him in the building. Next thing I know, he's out there helping Joey Galloway and our receivers play better. He's a great, young coach and a really great friend. I can't wait to play against him."

Q: What has it been like for you to see him rise in this league?

Gruden: "Well, we have to try and slow down that rise. We have to try to douse the flames, he's smoking right now. It's been exciting, man. Anytime you see a young guy come into a profession and do what he's done, it's awesome. He's turned around a franchise that is really important to the NFL and I'm really happy for him."

Q: What kind of challenges do the Rams' defensive front present with Ndamukong Suh and Aaron Donald next to each other?

Gruden: "That's a big challenge, no question. They've got some young guys that we need to learn about on the outside. Robert Quinn is not there, Connor Barwin is not there, they have a new inside backer, [Alec] Ogletree is not there. They've got two new corners that are also there. That's why you can't really watch last year's tape to help you get ready for this game. They didn't play them in the preseason more than half a dozen plays. We're going to see where they are and they'll see where we are."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Q: How quick a study has AJ McCarron been since his arrival?

Gruden: "He's been quick. It'll be a challenge, obviously, if he has to go in and play but it's a challenge for any backup quarterback to go in and play. But I like McCarron. I think a lot of people in the league like McCarron, that's pretty obvious. He's got big upside, we'll try to get him ready if need be."

Q: How do you sustain offensive drives against this defense when preparing for the Ram's offense?

Gruden: "Hard to do. Easy thing is, let's go out and have a pep talk and let's have 36 minutes of possession. I used to work on those talk shows, we need to have 36 minutes of possession. Well, Wade Phillips is going to blitz, they're going to play an eight-man front and make it almost impossible to run the ball. So, the best way to win this game is to do something when you have the ball. We're going to have to score. When we get our chances to run it, we're going to have to deal with some loaded boxes and some talented Ram defenders. I can't wait to see how we do it."

Q: There has been a lot of change at cornerback here over the last several years. How good do you feel about your two guys now, Melvin and Conley?

Gruden: "A lot of change around here every year, isn't there? The only thing that's still here is you Jerry, I mean really. *(Laughing)* We are going to have to wait and see. I mean we played the Rams week two of the preseason. You would think we'd know about them, they would know about us but all of our starters on both teams were wearing sweat suits. We got a lot of respect for where we are, how hard we've worked. I can't wait to see [Gareon] Conley play. It's the first time he has played football in a long time and I'm excited to see [Rashaan] Melvin. I'm excited to see Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie. He's only been here for a short period of time. I can't wait to see Leon Hall in his first game as a Raider, but we'll see. I'm not going to make any predictions."

Q: The Rams have a pretty good slot receiver there in Cooper Kupp. What have you seen from him as you prepare for this game?

Gruden: "Greg Olson coached him in Los Angeles last year and just about every route that we put in the Rams run. He [Olson] always brings up Cooper Kupp, 'Cooper Kupp could run that route.' 'You are starting to bother me Greg.' Kupp's a good player. Kupp's a really good player. Not many people really know about him. He's overshadowed by some of the stars in L.A. but this guy can do damage as a slot receiver, as a blocker. He's a great conditioned, young receiver that is polished when it comes to running all kinds of routes."

Q: What's Leon Hall's readiness to take on that matchup look like?

Gruden: "We do a lot of things. We don't just play man-to-man and say, 'hey, go matchup on him every play.' Leon Hall is here to blitz, to tackle, to be a formidable and physical inside defender in our sub package. That's what he's been and that's what he's always been. He's also here to show Nick Nelson what it's supposed to look like."

Q: You have brought in veteran linebackers. What have been your impressions so far with those guys?

Gruden: "[Tahir] Whitehead has been outstanding. Everything we have asked him to do he has done at a high level. That's another position we've had no continuity at. We had to replace all them, as well. Whitehead's been good. Derrick [Johnson] has come in and been a great leader. And the emergence of



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Marquel Lee has been the story here I think. We knew what Whitehead was but so far I think the guy that has really emerged and steadily improved is Marquel Lee. Nick Morrow can play and Emmanuel Lamur knows the system. We got a really good linebacker coach in [David] Lippincott.”

Q: Any chance of the Raiders playing in Vegas in 2019?

Gruden: “You know, I don’t know. I just hear a lot of rumors. I try not to listen too much to what’s out there. I don’t know what’s true and what’s not, but we are playing here Monday Night. That’s all I know.

Q: You’ve talked about this before, you are trying to win your first game in 10 years. For it to be against McVay, does that add a little extra something special?

Gruden: “I don’t really care who we play. We always learned a long time ago the other team are faceless objects. You have to look at it that way. They can beat you up really bad in pro football, no matter who you play. So having the utmost respect for the Rams. Obviously, when the game is over it will be great to see Sean. You got to treat every game as its own and we want to win because it’s time to play.”