



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “Kind of a season wrap up unless you have any other questions about yesterday. As I told the guys earlier, each year the turnover throughout the league is close to 25 percent or so. It’s never going to be the same group of men. We had a good group. We had a good year. We went from seven wins to 12 wins. Had a lot of great moments throughout the year, a lot to be proud of. Certainly, I thought our fans were awesome. Whether it was at home or on the road, the Raider Nation showed up. Then we had an abrupt ending that kind of leaves that taste in your mouth where, as I told them, I’m not happy about it. We should expect more, and I’m going to demand more. We’ll evaluate everything. That’s what you do this time of year. We’ll have our after action review. The staff goes through a really comprehensive review of what was and what we can do better. We’ll analyze our schemes and make sure we’re doing the best we can with the players we have. Then evaluate our own roster and then get on with building the team stronger and preparing for next year. That’s kind of where we are. You go from getting ready for the next opponent each week to shifting gears and now getting into offseason mode like the other 20 teams that were already here. That’s how we’re going to go about our business. Have a good thorough evaluation and then move on to next. We’ll catch a little bit of a break here. After a few days of work, we’ll get a little bit of a break and kind of decompress from the season and then we’ll charge forward. With that, questions?”

Q: Is it hard to evaluate what improvements the team needs to make to reach the Super Bowl because of the injury to Derek Carr?

Coach Del Rio: “I think you attack that the best you can. You evaluate who you are, what you are. Look at the things you can do better and areas where you feel like you can strengthen. You don’t always get your wish list. You try to strengthen the best you can. You don’t always get your wish list, but to me it’s a never ending process about building yourself as strong as possible and preparing for the next opportunity.”

Q: Was there more of a psychological issue with Carr’s injury than you anticipated?

Coach Del Rio: “I don’t think so. I don’t think so. We didn’t really talk about it much, but two weeks ago we had a bug hit us prior to that Denver game. I think a little bit of what looked like a flat effort was more due to 30 guys having some kind of illness going into that game. It was a rough weekend, players and coaches going down. I think that was probably more involved in that type of feel that there just wasn’t that normal zest and energy. I thought our guys did a great job all year of playing with great effort. We’ve learned how to fight. We’ve learned how to compete and stay in it. Even when things weren’t going well yesterday, there was never a lack of energy in guys going forward and continuing to sacrifice themselves and their bodies and play really hard. That part to me has gotten to a point where what you will always push for and never take it for granted, but it’s gotten to a point where we’re seeing that sustained.”

Q: Do you feel like you’ve made a ton of progress from last season?

Coach Del Rio: “For sure we did. For sure. There’s been a great deal accomplished, there’s no question about that. Is it enough? No. I want more. We want more. As an organization, our goals are higher. So, that’s not going to change. We’re not going to pretend that it wasn’t really good. You win 12 games, that’s hard to do in this league. We won six in a row at one stretch and never really had back-to-back losses prior to yesterday. A lot of really good things were going on and are going on. We want to build on those. Recognize where we need to be better, and there’s several areas where we must be better in. Just kind of own up to it and roll up our sleeves and get busy.”

Q: You said you were going to demand more. What more can you demand out of these guys?

Coach Del Rio: “I mean, at the end of the day, areas where we’re not as strong as we want to be and intend to be, to make sure that we sure those up. We made great strides but there’s still work to be done. It’s throughout. It’s not like there’s any one area where I feel like I can just say, ‘Yeah, we’ve arrived.’ I don’t feel that way. I feel like we have a really good team and I feel like there are many areas where we can improve and must improve to be the kind of football team that I want us to be.”



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Q: Where does pass rush rank in that area?

Coach Del Rio: "I would say in particular, interior pass rush is critical for us to get that going. We were not nearly effective enough. I think Stacy [McGee] had the 2.5 sacks in there and Mario [Edwards Jr.], we got Mario back late and he wasn't a huge factor. 'Haddy' [Jihad Ward] wasn't a huge factor, Denico [Autry] played with that wrist all year and he wasn't... I didn't feel like we got enough inside push. That's going to be an area for sure that we're going to have to be better and do better."

Q: Do you anticipate bring all your assistants being back next year, similar to last year?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, we'll see how it goes, you know? Opportunities come up for guys. We were able to get that done last year and we'll just see how that breaks for us this year. We've got a good group of guys. They work hard, they care. We'll see where that goes."

Q: Were you happy on the strategy from both coordinators through the end of the season?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, you can always get into... People always want to get into play calling. That's the first area that everybody that plays Madden thinks they have it figured out, you know? (*laughter*) I can't worry too much about those types of things."

Q: What was your overall assessment of how the defense played this season?

Coach Del Rio: "I thought we played really well early in games, really well late in games and got turnovers throughout games. That's what enabled us, that's part of what helped us win 12 games. What we didn't do particularly well, and we closed the halves well, first and second half, but there were far too many explosive plays allowed this year, whether it be run or pass. That's, you know, that's an area that must be addressed. That might be the number one thing that we must do better going into 2017."

Q: Do you believe that you had an inordinate amount of drops this season?

Coach Del Rio: "I'm not sure what the numbers are yet. I haven't looked at the final tally, but I would say that there are more than I'm comfortable with, more than we should have. You can add that to the list of things we're talking about here, areas that are obvious areas that must improve."

Q: Amari Cooper's production dipped over the second half of the season. Why do you think that was?

Coach Del Rio: "Not sure about that. Last year, I think it was clearly involved with his foot. Don't believe he was dealing with a similar type of injury. Whether it's, as we evaluate ourselves and go back and look at it, whether it was what they were doing to us or what we weren't doing to provide those opportunities for him. Which was it? Was the guy he was going against good enough to get him slowed down? Was it scheme? Was it design on our part? Those are all things we have to look at in detail after the season."

Q: You talked about the explosive plays. Do you have any idea why?

Coach Del Rio: "Explosive plays, whether you like it or not, they always come back to the secondary. The front line, even if you have a front line that is full of holes, the back end has a chance to cap the play before it goes explosive. Runs that get out big time, typically have to do with a missed tackle, poor leverage, missed assignment, something along those lines. In the back end, obviously balls go over the top of your head, missed tackles, missed assignments lead to long passes as well. That's just the way it is. DB coaches will talk about it all the time like, 'We're the ones when you're playing out there on that island, there is no hiding from it.' You're there, that guy gets behind you somehow, and everybody in the stadium can see it. There's really no sugarcoating that."

Q: There were probably expectations that the defense had to step up because of the injuries. The problem becomes that because the offense doesn't have the ball enough, the defense sort of wears down. What did you think of the defense yesterday?

Coach Del Rio: "I talked about it a little bit yesterday after the game. I thought it was a little bit of a microcosm of the year, where there were some really good moments in the game. I thought there were terrific three-and-outs



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and series where it was exactly what it should look like. Then, there were some leverage issues, misplayed balls that end up going big. A run that's bottled up that works its way around the perimeter, a ball down the sideline, just a couple things where big plays got away where it mars what otherwise was really pretty darn good. A lot of tackles for loss, a lot of shedding blocks and toughness in the trenches and playing hard, those types of things. We were pretty good on third down. At the end of the day, you add those things up, they're what determine the difference between really special and not quite enough."

Q: Is there anyone you know of that has any medical procedures planned for the offseason?

Coach Del Rio: "[Head athletic trainer] Rod [Martin] brought me up to date on that. I don't have anything to share right now. I think there are a couple guys that are getting M.R.I.'s tomorrow to try and decide if surgery is needed. There might be a couple clean up things going on, but I don't know that there's anything major going on right now."

Q: Would you expect Derek Carr to be ready for mandatory mini-camp?

Coach Del Rio: "I don't know yet. I know he was thinking he was going to play in the Super Bowl. 'If you guys get there, I'm playing.' That being the mindset, he's coming along nicely. I don't want to guess on anything though, and if he's not there you're asking me why. I think we'll see. I think he's got time to do it right, recover the right way, and we'll expect he'll be back at full strength soon."

Q: How long does it take to flip the disappointment of how abruptly this season ended into excitement going into next year?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, less than 24 hours out right now, so it's still a little raw. We'll definitely be able to look back and be proud of what we accomplished this year and then let that sting that you feel from having it end the way it did be a reminder of how hard you need to push, how much work is in front of us, and let that fuel the type of offseason we need to have."

Q: You have a number of unrestricted free agents coming up this offseason. Do you anticipate that some of those guys will be signed before the free agency period hits?

Coach Del Rio: "I think the first part in that process is to evaluate the roster real thoroughly. We'll begin that process now as a staff, meet with [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] and his people. Reggie and I will talk it through and that's kind of how we do it. We'll have decisions to make. I'm sure we'll want to keep as much of the nucleus. We have a good, young nucleus of players here. We want to keep as much of that nucleus intact as possible. That will be the plan going forward."

Q: Somebody like Andre Holmes, who comes up really big yesterday as a receiver when you needed it and is involved in a couple of special teams plays, does everything go into the evaluation and that last game counts significantly?

Coach Del Rio: "It all counts. It all counts. He's been a really good player for us. Those are the kinds of decisions... You can't keep everybody. You can't play everybody, especially once you start paying your quarterback what he's going to end up making, which I'm sure will be a pretty nice amount. So we've been fortunate the last few years, we've been able to do more other places because we didn't have a lot put in the quarterback number. As that number goes up, it'll limit some of the things you have to do."

Q: Reggie McKenzie said a little bit ago that this thing is built to last. Is that something that you see with how contracts are structured here and the young nucleus that you have?

Coach Del Rio: "I like hearing that. *(laughing)* That's part of our responsibility, to build it the right way and build it so that it can last. Nobody wants to take one swing and hope that you have a magical year one time. I think you want to build your roster strong, build your team strong and build the culture strong so that what you're able to put in and put together is a roster that can go out and compete at a championship level year after year. That's what the goal is. That's where we are in terms of the football team is raising the expectations, creating the culture



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of 'can do,' a lot of sacrifice, a lot of adhering to the process that we talk about all the time of how we recover, prepare, compete and continue to build the roster strong and then go out and compete the way we've learned to."

Q: This thing before the Denver game, when did this illness thing come on that week?

Coach Del Rio: "I just never spoke to it because I didn't want it to sound like an alibi and I still don't want it to sound like an alibi. That's why it never came up. We had some flu mixed in with a lot of colds in a lot of people. It didn't sound very good on the plane ride coming back, that's for sure."

Q: Did it get you?

Coach Del Rio: "Just the sniffles and cold type thing. I didn't ever have the flu. Let's keep that from happening."

QB Derek Carr

Q: What have the last few weeks been like?

Carr: "It's been crazy. I haven't missed a game in my life. That was something I was hoping to do my whole life. Obviously, this game is violent. Freak things happen, my foot and all those things. It's just been weird watching my team play and not being able to help in any kind of way. Not really on the field, but just be there for them off the field. It sucks not being able to travel because of swelling and it would set me back weeks. I had to do the right thing to hopefully be ready for an opportunity again this year. It was just so hard to sit there and watch, knowing I couldn't do anything physically."

Q: Was it a helpless feeling?

Carr: "It wasn't like a helpless feeling, it was more sad. I just feel for my brothers. We all put so much work together in the offseason, during the season. You just want to be out there. That's the hardest part is that you don't get to strap it on and play the game with them. That is what hurt me the most, that I couldn't be out there."

Q: Where did you watch the game? Were you with family?

Carr: "I was just on my couch at my house. My wife was there. My boys were there, [Rod] Streater came by and watched the game with me. That was fun. We had a good time."

Q: Do you find that you yelled things out at the TV?

Carr: "Yes, I was telling him all the routes that were coming. I could kind of figure it out. I had my game plan there with me. [Offensive coordinator] coach [Bill] Musgrave gave it to me. I could tell him what was coming and things like that. I'm trying to do the reads. I wish they did a quarterback view of the defense so I could read it out but it is what it is."

Q: For Connor Cook to go in there with almost no reps in a playoff game, can you relay what he was up against?

Carr: "He won't ever be in a tougher situation than he was then. His first action, being the starter action, was in the playoffs against the number one defense, on paper, in football. It will never be harder for him and I told him that. I said you made great throws, I saw your decisions, even though not a lot of people could see it, I saw what you were doing. Are there things you want to correct? Absolutely. I have the same feelings after every game. I told him he shouldn't lose any confidence at all. I see it in him every day. I see how much better he's gotten since he got here. He's going to be a great player in this league. I'm not worried about him. I told him, 'Whatever you do, don't lose confidence because you can't be in a harder place than playing those guys for your very first time.'"

Q: How excited are you for the future? Twelve wins, huge steps you've made in the last few years.

Carr: "I'm super excited. We should have a good majority of our guys back. Obviously there is always turnover in the NFL with the way everything is set up. But, our team is going to be back. We're going to add pieces like we do every year. I just got done meeting with [quarterbacks] coach [Todd] Downing on the things I need to be better at.



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The things that were on there, the good things were really good but the things I need to get better at are the things I'm going to work my butt off. That always stays between him and I, but I'm going to work my tail off to be better next year. That's the mindset our whole team has. They came in here today to hear what their coach needed them to do better. When you've got a group of guys that have won 12 games and don't care about that, they just want to be better, then we're going to be alright."

Q: If everything goes well, what is your timetable for the offseason?

Carr: "No timetable. I'll never do that. I can tell you the good news, that it's going a lot faster than what everyone thought. I see doctors on Twitter tagging me and they don't have a clue what's going on. With no X-Rays or M.R.I.'s, they've figured it out. If he can do that, he shouldn't be on Twitter, he should be working at Stanford or something. I just think that stuff is funny. He's doing his job I guess."

Q: The anticipation is that you'll be ready for mini-camp?

Carr: "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll be ready for offseason. Now, how much they'll want me to do, I don't know. In the offseason, you take it slow now, now that we don't have a chance of playing. We'll take it as slow as possible but I anticipate being fine."

Q: In your mind, would you have played in the Super Bowl if the team would have gotten there?

Carr: "Absolutely. Everyone was telling me no chance, 'unlikely' or not going to happen. That didn't mean anything to me. I just said, 'OK, thank you.' I would have been there."

Q: Are there screws or hardware in there?

Carr: "Maybe we'll talk about that in April. We'll get to it then."

Q: When did you start reaching out to teammates? Was it after the game or did you wait until you saw them here?

Carr: "Once the game was ended? I was texting them after the game. I FaceTimed Latavius [Murray]. I was talking to guys. It's so hard not being around, especially with my brothers. I love them and want to make sure they're OK. I want to make them laugh and make them smile. I wanted to let them know I was super proud of them and what we did this year is something that hasn't been done in a long time. It's something to feel good about. The thing that hurts is going to motivate us for the future. The thing that sits in our heart and makes us sick to our stomach, that competitiveness and that drive is what is going to continue to make us better."

Q: A guy like Latavius who is a free agent, is stuff like that tough to ride the wave of emotions?

Carr: "That's always hard. In this business, you don't know the turnover, you don't know what upstairs is thinking, you don't know what they want to do. We all know that we want him back. We love him. He's one of my best friends in this whole world. Not just because he can run the ball, but because he can pick up blitzes. That goes unseen and unheard sometimes. I want him back. I know everyone here wants him back so hopefully we can do that."

Q: What's it like to watch a guy like Andre Holmes yesterday, coming in making huge catches, downing balls inside the five, etc.?

Carr: "Coach [John] Gruden said it best on TV, he said Andre is one of Derek Carr's favorites. He's right. I love that guy. The way he continues to compete, the way he continues to... He's been the same guy ever since I got here. He's never changed. He always works his tail off on special teams. He runs as hard as he can in practice and that's why he makes the plays that he does on special teams. Me and [Rod] Streater were sitting there like, 'Man, Andre downs a ball inside the five every game.' The effort that him and Taiwan [Jones] had on the one, that stuff goes unseen because it's special teams but it's invaluable stuff."



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Q: When you watch the playoffs, will you think what if?

Carr: "Yes, because I'm human. Absolutely. I said, 'What if?' I said, 'Why?' a lot in the last two weeks. I can promise you I've been the same person. It's obviously hurt me. Some days I've been really down and sad, but it doesn't change who I am. It just hurts, man. It just hurts because I love our team, I love our coaches, I love our fans and I love playing this game. God blessed me with a right arm, thankfully, because I don't know what else I'd do, to throw a football. So, I love playing this game. I think that's the part that hurts the most. I just wanted to be out there, but we'll be back there."

Q: Do you feel like you've let people down?

Carr: "Gosh, no. I'd hope not. I couldn't do anything about it. (*laughing*) I couldn't do anything about it. I know I let them down when I throw picks, but that's OK. I can deal with that."

Q: Donald Penn took it pretty hard that it was his guy. Did you reach out to him to talk to him and put him at ease?

Carr: "Yeah. I told him, I said, 'Bro, that's a freak thing.' How many times have I been hit? Quarterbacks are hit every week. Sometimes those things happen, sometimes they don't. I've gone my whole life with nothing like that ever happening. I just gave him a hug and said, 'Man, I love you bro. It's never going to change.' I said, 'I'm not mad at you. It wasn't your fault. That happened for a reason.' I – in the last two weeks – have become a better man spiritually, mentally, emotionally. I've gotten better. I told him, 'Obviously, it sucks for our team.' It sucked that I couldn't play, but for myself I've gotten better. So, I'm kind of excited that I've been able to grow already in just the short amount of time."

Q: What are things you have to work on to get better?

Carr: "I don't have an exact way to tell you right now, just obviously, keeping what me and coach Downing talked about to ourselves for now. When we get back in April, I'll have a list. I'll have things that you'll ask me, 'Hey, what are you working on this offseason?' I'll be more prepared then. I think these last two weeks have been more of just trying to be an emotional leader. Just trying to be here for my team, and I haven't really focused on myself. I mean we literally just got done talking. Once we sit down and talk more and figure out what I need to do more, then I'll have a better answer."

Q: How did you feel for Penn not being able to play in the playoff game after not missing a start for 10 years?

Carr: "Oh, it broke my heart because I know how he feels. I know how he feels. I was hoping, I wanted to be one of those guys who never missed a start. I tried. I played through some things, but you can't play through this one. (*laughing*) I tried. I tried to walk on it and that wasn't a good idea. It just wasn't working. I know how he feels and I knew that it hurt him. Especially with 10 years, that's ridiculous. He has nothing to hang his head about, but it does hurt you as a teammate and as a brother to see that."

Q: What did it mean to you that your teammates wanted to be there for you after your injury and what other messages of support have you gotten?

Carr: "I think the coolest thing to me is when I text my teammates and they're about to play a football game or they're getting ready for practice and I'll text them just to encourage them, just anything, and everyone texts you back, 'Hey, no problem. Thank you. Love you, bro.' To see that kind of love from your peers, to feel that, there's nothing like it. There's nothing like it. No win, no stat, no trophy, no award can replace that ever. I'll be able, when I'm done playing this game, I'll know that I loved all my teammates the best that I could and they loved me back. That to me, that's what means the world to me."

Q: Does having that support system make this process easier?

Carr: "Oh yeah. Obviously, I'm human, man. I'm going to get sad. I'm going to be down, but it lasted a whole two minutes. Y'all know me, I'm going to be the same person all the time. I have my faith as the foundation. I believe that. I believe that's who I am. Whether I'm doing really good at football and everyone is chanting, 'M.V.P.' Or



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whether I'm hopping off with a broken ankle, I'm going to be the same. It's not going to do anything for me. Now does it help when people tell you they love you and have your back? Absolutely. I think everyone needs encouragement. I truly believe that. It does help, but it doesn't determine who I am and how I'm going to be."

Q: How hard is it going to be take the negative feelings on how the season ended to make it a positive for next season?

Carr: "Yeah, it sucks. There's a game going on the TV right now and it makes me sick. I wish I was playing. Actually that's my buddy DeVante [Adams] playing, so I'm happy for him, but it still sucks at the same time. I'm going to sit back and I'm just going to reflect on it. I'm going to know that, 'Hey, it's not easy to win 12 games in this league.' Who knows if we'll do it again. Hopefully we do. That's the plan. We want to win all of them, but that is not an easy thing. The fact that we were able to do that is exciting, but like I said, there's so much to get better at and work on that that thing in our stomach that makes us sick and makes us angry is going to propel us moving forward so we can compete and be better versions of ourselves. "

LS Jon Condo

Q: How do you feel after this season?

Condo: "Personally, my body and all that stuff, I mean I'm 35 years old, but I thought I did a good job when I was younger. Year 4, 5, I started resting my body, taking care of any small nagging injuries right away just so it doesn't become anything serious. Physically, I feel great. Mentally, I feel great. Free agency, it's out of my hands. It depends if the Raiders want me back here, but it's out of my hands, not that I'm worried about anything. You can't worry about things that you can't control, so it is what it is."

Q: Did you guys think that you had no chance yesterday because of all the injuries?

Condo: "No, not at all. I mean, you're in the playoffs, anything can happen. Any sport you look at, there's been major upsets, and if we won yesterday, I don't even think it would've been a major upset. It's just one of those things. We were in there. Physically, I thought we were pretty good, except for some injuries that we had there toward the end of the year. For the most part, we were a pretty much healthy team. Mentally, I thought we were healthy. We went in and it just was a disappointing finish. I mean, I'm proud to win 12 games. We've done some great things this year, but unfortunately it just didn't end up the way we wanted it to end up. It sucks to say, 'Well next we have something to build off of,' because we saw how good we were this year and the potential that we had. Just things happen and that's out of your control. You have to move on."

Q: How exciting was it to be a part of this ride this year and how much do you want to be back next year?

Condo: "Yeah, to win games, I told everyone, 'The season goes a lot quicker when you're winning games.' Everything is better. The food tastes better. Everything is better when you're winning games. I think [Head Coach] Jack [Del Rio] and the coaching staff did a really good job of taking each week at a time. He was like, 'Hey, it's about the process. Don't forget how you won in Week 1.' It was just so on and so on. We wouldn't look ahead at the games three or four weeks away. It was about next week's game. That was the one thing and it kept our mind focused on the task at hand for the upcoming week. It was a great season. It was fun. A lot of good times and everything. A lot of great plays. We had a lot of great players on this team. I was happy for the fans, happy that we were able to put out a good product for the fans that have been with us the past 10 years that I've been here, that have been coming to all the games. So I'm happy for them because they can finally have some bragging rights to some of their friends, especially here in the Bay Area."



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QB Connor Cook

Q: How was it to go from inactive to the starter in the playoffs?

Cook: "Earlier in the year, I was talking to a bunch of people and just always said, 'Anything can happen at any given time.' You just always have to be ready. That's the name of the game. You see stuff like this happen every once in a while. It's just the name of the game. It's next man up. No matter if you're third string, fourth string or second string. Inactive, active, you just always have to be ready because you know whenever your number is called, you're expected to go out there and get the job done. I thought I did a good job of staying locked in all season long even when I was inactive to being activated and getting my first start against the Texans. I thought I did a good job of preparing and getting myself ready."

Q: How do you feel like you've grown this season?

Cook: "I'm a lot more comfortable, obviously, in our system that we run. Coming in in OTAs and mini-camp and training camp, it was still a whole learning process. I feel like I've grasped the stuff that the coaches are asking of us right now. I just feel like my comfort level is a lot higher."

Q: What was the flight home like?

Cook: "It was good. Guys obviously were down in the locker room after the game, but once we got on the bus, once we got on the plane, guys started to lighten up. I think that's what's so great about us; no one is really blaming anyone. We're a very close group. I think it's a lot like a college team. We have a fairly young group of guys and the chemistry that we have is awesome. It's offense, defense, special teams, offensive line, defensive line, everyone. We're all brothers. We're always going to have each other's backs."

Q: When will you get a chance to watch film?

Cook: "Yeah, I haven't watched it yet. I'm actually probably going to go back right now and go watch it by myself in my apartment today."

WR Andre Holmes

Q: To not win is painful, but you had a pretty good game yesterday. To be in a big arena in a big game playing well on special teams and catching big passes, what was that like?

Holmes: "I knew it was going to be a good game. Basically all year, I went out there and made plays on special teams and everything. I felt a lot of confidence, especially in big games, in primetime games. I have played well in those. I knew it was going to be a big stage and I feel like that's when I play my best."

Q: Is it more exciting or scarier entering free agency now? Not knowing exactly what is going to happen.

Holmes: "I'm excited. I have no idea. Last year, I was a free agent and, really, I'm not even going to worry about it up until that day that stuff starts. Right now everything is out of control. It really will be out of my control the whole time. All I can do is listen."

Q: If the Raiders want you back, would you want to be back?

Holmes: "I love the Raiders. That's where my heart is. Especially since... Ever since I've been here, I have wanted to be on the team that got the Raiders back on the map. Now I want to be on the team that gets to the Super Bowl. That's really important to me. I love the Raiders."

Q: Do you think about what could have happened if Derek Carr hadn't gotten hurt?

Holmes: "It's kind of obvious. D.C. was M.V.P. all season. You lose your M.V.P., it makes it tough, especially when, even though we have very capable backup quarterbacks, not being able to... But, with any team, the backups aren't getting the reps that they need in order to be as successful as they can be, especially in the playoffs. I



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commend them for stepping in there and doing what they could. Connor, not dressing all season, and then having to make his first start in the playoffs, that takes guts to go out there and do that. With all that said, if D.C. was healthy, there would be more people in this locker room right now.”

Q: Was it a blow to you guys psychologically, maybe more than you thought it would be, losing him?

Holmes: “I think so. We had full confidence every week in practice. We felt confident we were going to win the game before the game. It’s just a different feel out there when we couldn’t move the ball like we’re accustomed to. It made it tough.”

RB Latavius Murray

Q: You came here when things we’re pretty down and now being part of the team building up, do you want to stay and be a part of it as they take the next step?

Murray: “Absolutely. I don’t think I ever want to be a guy that bounces around or anything like that. I would love to finish my career here. I think it says a lot for any player who stays in one place. I would love to finish what I started, but I know how things could go.”

Q: Did you have talks during the season about an extension?

Murray: “There were conversations about it, but obviously nothing concrete or anything at this point, so we’ll see what happens.”

Q: How bright do you think the future is for this organization?

Murray: “I think it’s really bright. This year we were able to do some good things. We made it to the postseason and obviously when you do that, you give yourselves a chance to play for a championship. We were one of 12 teams to be able to do that. I think we just need to continue to do the things that we did since Jack [Del Rio] has been here. He’s done a great job and everyone has just been buying in. I think just continue to trust and embrace the process that he has. That will be just fine.”

Q: Do you think losing Derek Carr affected you mentally more than you thought?

Murray: “I don’t think it took any confidence away from anybody. I was confident we were going to win in Denver and in Houston. It was disappointing, but we know that things like that can happen. It was very unfortunate, but I believed in both of those games that we were capable of winning. We just did some things that you can’t win and do.”

Q: Will you spend any time this offseason thinking what if?

Murray: “I think both. You have to always look back and evaluate or think about things that you could have done better as a player. I’ll always do that every year. But, as far as allowing that to play into me getting better or me looking forward as a player, I won’t let that waver at all.”

Q: Do you go into this offseason wondering what if?

Nelson: “I mean, it is what it is. We got sent home and obviously wanted things to be different but it didn’t work out that way. Injuries happen. Something you got to live with.”

S Reggie Nelson

Q: Looking back, what happened to the team psychologically when Derek Carr got hurt?

Nelson: “Nothing happened. You still have to show up and do your job. Like I said, I can’t speak on another man’s injury. So, you all saw it like we saw it. Obviously we wanted to keep playing, but we’re not.”



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Q: How do you think you grew as a defensive unit this season?

Nelson: "I think we grew together pretty good, to be honest with you. I mean, a group of guys that it's their first time playing with each other and stuff, I mean I think we did a tremendous job of communicating and getting the defense down pat and just playing together as a team as a whole."

Q: How hard is it to put aside the disappointment of this year while trying to look forward at how bright the future seems to be?

Nelson: "Oh man, it's very disappointing to be standing here looking at you all. *(laughter)* I mean, it's disappointing, man. There are no words you can explain that. Obviously, you want to continue to keep playing and advance to the next round, but things didn't work out that way this year and we just have to come back ready to get after it again."

Q: Do you look forward with a sense that this team could be really good next year?

Nelson: "Oh man, I mean it's going to be a good thing to watch. Whatever pieces they add, I'm pretty sure it's going to help just like they added the pieces last year. Whatever pieces [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] and them come up with it's going to be a tremendous help to this team and get us over the next step, get us to that next step and over that hump that we've been wanting to get over."

LB Perry Riley Jr.

Q: Did you just sign for the one year?

Riley Jr.: "I'm a free agent now, so we'll just see how it goes. I haven't heard anything from anybody."

Q: You would like to come back if everything worked out?

Riley Jr.: "Yeah, if everything works out. I love this place. Like I said, the team, the fans, opened their arms for me and welcomed me with open arms. I loved it here, so if everything works out, perfect scenario, definitely I'd come back."

Q: Other than the talent here, what do you think made this team successful?

Riley Jr.: "There's a lot of grit in this team. The want to practice, studying, getting ready for the game, everybody took pride in it, from the young guys to the old guys. They have great leaders. All-around great bunch to be around. Like I said, they accepted me and allowed me to come in and be myself. I can't ask for anymore."

Q: Within the fan base, they feel crushed at the way injuries torpedoed the year. It seems like in the locker room, you guys don't look at it that way, do you?

Riley Jr.: "It's part of the game. Injuries happen all the time. I know from last year, I was hurt going into the playoffs with the team I was with. It happens. You have to overcome it; next man up. Everybody on this team, everybody at this level has the ability to get the job done. We trust everybody."

Q: What was the experience like for you, coming in here midseason?

Riley Jr.: "It was definitely different. I had been in Washington for six years, so I had become comfortable, familiar, with the scheme, coaches, everything. Just to come here in Week 5 and have to pick up everything on the run and kind of learn on the fly, it was different, but it was a challenge, a challenged that I accepted head on. I think that I did a good job of getting it done."

Q: Besides your coaching staff, were there any players on the defense that helped you in that transition?

Riley Jr.: "Yeah, Bruce Irvin helped me a lot. Me and him go back since we were yay high. I was able to lean on him very early, be at his house all day after practice, asking whatever questions I could ask him. He would answer



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whichever ones he could. He just helped me feel comfortable and kind of just gel with everybody and introduce me to everybody. It broke the ice for everything for me.”

TE Lee Smith

Q: What are your thoughts on how the season ended and the season in general?

Smith: “It’s a lot of work. You only get 16 opportunities guaranteed every year and that’s why we all work so hard. This is a brotherhood, this is a very close-knit locker room and not to toot my own horn or anything, but I feel personally like I could have helped this year beyond that fourth game. So, it’s hard, man. It’s hard to sit back and watch all of the hard work you put in for months and months and months to not be able to put forth for an entire season. But, the good Lord had different plans for me this year. These guys didn’t skip a beat without my sorry butt around. *(laughter)* So, it was good man. Unfortunately we had a couple more injuries late in the year that hurt a little worse than mine did. But, that’s life. That’s life in this business. We take that risk every time we go out there. I love these guys, I love these teammates, love my coaches and whatever I got to do to get this ankle right to contribute to this football program going forward is exactly what I’m going to do. I hate that the season’s over. It’s a sucky day, so to speak. We didn’t earn, as Jack [Del Rio] always says, we didn’t earn the right to go forward. So, we’re going to make sure we don’t have this salty feeling next year.”

Q: How’s the recovery going?

Smith: “It’s great, man. My ankle feels great. I’ve been through this ankle injury before earlier in my career, so I kind of know what to expect. All the guys in the training room are great here. We have a great group of guys. I’m going to stay around here so they can have their hands on me all offseason and just get this thing better.”

Q: Do you have to pass the scooter off to Derek Carr?

Smith: “*(laughter)* Yeah man, out of all the people in the entire world I would have picked not to give it to, it would have been him. But, yeah, I had to hand down the scooter to him. Fortunately, his surgery went well. He’s doing great and he’s moving around good. I think he was in here four or five days after surgery. So, he’s dedicated. He wants to be great for a long time for this organization and for all of his brothers in here. So, hopefully he’ll get off of it soon as well. Hopefully we can run it over with a steam roller this time instead of giving it to somebody else.”

Q: Was yours a fibula injury too?

Smith: “We both had lower ankle injuries. Both needed repair. I’m by no means as smart as these doctors, so I wouldn’t compare injuries. I’m not smart enough to do that. I just know that we both had ankle injuries and both had surgery and both needed a scooter for a few weeks. So, that’s all I know.”

Q: Will you be good for OTAs?

Smith: “Oh yeah. I’ll be rocking and rolling. I’ll be running around. That’s what stinks for me and Derek, we’ll both be kind of running around shortly after those guys play in that Super Bowl. So, it is what it is man, that’s life. So, we’ll both be rocking and rolling by the time we all get back in April.”