



## **Oakland Raiders Transcript**

### **Oakland Raiders Pre-Draft Press Conference**

#### **General Manager Reggie McKenzie and Head Coach Jack Del Rio**

**Q: How different is it going into the draft this year not having a top-five pick?**

**McKenzie:** "It's a little different. I prefer to be picking 32nd, but you know, the lower you pick, as far as down the line, it's harder to figure out what the other teams are going to do. This is different than picking top five."

**Q: How has the approach changed with this draft?**

**McKenzie:** "It doesn't change; we're still going to get the best player. We're not about just going for a specific need. We want to get the best player that can help this football team. Philosophy still hasn't changed."

**Q: When you see teams around the league mortgaging their drafts to move up and get a quarterback, how good does it feel to have a quarterback going into the draft?**

**McKenzie:** "It's nice to know that we have a quarterback here. We like our quarterback. Teams are different with their philosophy and what they want to do to get that guy. It'd still be hard for me to give up a lot of picks. Draft picks are invaluable, just invaluable."

**Q: Have you seen a player with the Raider mentality in this draft?**

**McKenzie:** "We hope to bring in some. We're not going to tell you who they are. *(laughing)* We're hopeful that we can get some Raider-type guys in here. We know the type of guys we want here."

**Q: What are some of the positions of strength that you see in this draft?**

**McKenzie:** "They all are. I'm not going to get into the specifics of the draft and types of players that are out there or what we're looking for, but there are some good players in this draft in all positions. We just want to be ready to help this football team by adding some of those good players."

**Q: How does Reggie McKenzie draft compared to other general managers that you've worked with?**

**Del Rio:** "Well rather than compare and contrast, I think what I would just say is that I appreciate the collaborative effort. We've talked from Day 1 about having a unified front and making sure that we value all the input that we get from coaches and scouts and all the work that goes into preparing for the draft day. I think that I've continued to feel really good about how we work at it, the work that goes in and the dedication of the guys that help gather all this information. It's a tremendous amount of information that we pour through. It makes, I think, for a good process and one where you can be effective."

**Q: What's the latest on Mario Edwards Jr.?**

**Del Rio:** "Nothing has really changed from what we talked about previously."

**McKenzie:** "He's doing everything. He's in with the guys. He's here."

**Q: Do you expect him to be on the field for when work starts next month?**

**Del Rio:** "I think the way we've tried to approach it, we'll continue to approach it, is not spending time discussing practice reports or who's practicing or how much they're practicing or what they're able to do in practice during the offseason. There's a time when we get to the regular season where that's required and we'll do that accordingly. At this point, all the guys are doing what they can do, working and learning the systems. At this point, it's really about working out and conditioning and things like that."



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**Q: With all the upgrade in talent over the past years, do you feel like there's less pressure to get the pick right with this draft?**

**McKenzie:** "Honestly, I think there's more pressure. That's my approach. I really do. You guys write about how good Khalil [Mack] and Amari [Cooper] and Derek [Carr] and all these guys are. How can that not put pressure on me. We have to continue to get really good players in here. We're looking forward to build on that."

**Q: When it comes to teams who have personnel guys that you worked with during your time in Green Bay, do you have an idea of who they're going to take based on being trained alike?**

**McKenzie:** "Not necessarily the idea of who they're going to take, but I do know some of the ideas of who they're not going to take more so than whom they're going to take. When you're raised a certain way, you kind of... The overall philosophy is similar, so is how you're going to build it and stuff. Do I have a better feel for those guys than some of the guys I don't know? Yeah. More likely, yes."

**Q: Is there less action with this pick compared to past years?**

**McKenzie:** "That varies year to year. When a team is falling in love with a certain player, that's when it gets hot and heavy. It's all about the player and that particular organization at the time. Usually, it's always a lot of calls. Whether deals are made, that's not necessarily so, but a lot of calls are being made, yes."

**Q: What's your philosophy when it comes to trading up in the draft?**

**McKenzie:** "I really don't want to discuss philosophy, especially mine, but you always would like to get a special player if the opportunity arises, however, whether it's the first or seventh round. If we feel like we really like the guy, you'd like to have him. Free agent, during the offseason, if it's a guy, you want to add him. But philosophy of how you move up and when you move up, I have a thought processes, but I don't want to talk about it a whole lot in detail."

**Q: Looking through your previous drafts when you were in Green Bay and your first years here, I don't think you've ever drafted a running back in the first round. Generally, is running back a position where you can find guys later in the draft more so than other positions?**

**McKenzie:** "I think just like running back, any other positions, you can find those guys in rounds one through free agency. I don't think you can pinpoint just one position like that. Like we always do, we're going to evaluate it. If the player is a great one that we feel good at first round, we'll take him. If we feel good about taking him in the fifth round, we'll take him. It all depends on the player versus the other. It doesn't matter position, really it doesn't."

**Q: All the players we spoke to on Monday refrained to really talk about the hype. Have you noticed that everybody has been pretty good about ignoring the hype talk, or do you have to remind them?**

**McKenzie:** "I remind my scouts to not believe the hype, to still scout hard and scout them the way we always have, as far as that goes. We're still going to grind. That's just the way we do it. Jack and I always talk about how we want to get to the playoffs, then that's when the season starts. We want to try to bring home the trophy after that. Let's win this division. That's when we want to start doing it. It starts with the work, this whole offseason. We have to work."

**Del Rio:** "It's not hard to remember who won the Super Bowl, the fact that they're in our division. We've accomplished a lot, in terms of the work we've done. We know there's a huge mountain of work in front of us. Continuing to put in the work, continuing to select good players, coach them up, become a good team and there's no shortcut to that. It takes a lot of effort."



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**Q: A year ago, you had your new coaching staff preparing for their first draft. The fields were still getting put in. How much farther ahead do you feel right now, a year later?**

**Del Rio:** "We're working on other things right now. Last year, just trying to come together as a staff. This year, we're refining things. Last year, we were working on the performance center and the fields. [Head strength and conditioning coach] Joe [Gomes] and his staff were juggling the players during this offseason process where we could work them out and meet with them. We've made significant strides in several areas. Yet, as I pointed out, for us the excitement about coming in here, fired up, wanting to pour everything you have in it every day remains the same."

**Q: The fact that there is higher expectations for you guys this year, is that a factor at all in terms of what you're doing?**

**Del Rio:** "I think raising expectations is one of the goals I had from Day 1. You're going to get what you demand and what you expect, if you commit to it and work at it. I wanted us to think in those terms last year. That hasn't really changed. I think we can see some of the areas where we made improvement and see some of the areas where we need to make improvement. I think it's internal much more so than external. The expectations of what we set out to do internally are what's most important. How it's covered and talked about amongst those outside of the building really doesn't affect the product that we put on the field."

**Q: You added Reggie Nelson, Sean Smith and Brynden Trawick to the secondary in the offseason. Can you talk about the state of that group? Do you feel like you're more complete in the secondary?**

**Del Rio:** "We accomplished a great deal. Like I said, we'll continue to create a very competitive environment and look to be a really strong football team. A part of that is having good, healthy competition. We definitely brought in some guys that will provide that."

**Q: You guys have signed some pretty big names in free agency already this year. Do you have any sense of chemistry yet?**

**Del Rio:** "I would just say it's a little early for declaring chemistry to be what it may end up being. I would say that I'm very pleased with the approach that we started this offseason with. Week 1 was a very productive week. It was great to see the guys back. Guys certainly are excited to be back and digging into the work. The work that's going in in the weight room and the conditioning in the classroom and the teaching is what it needs to be. We get nine weeks with these guys. We're trying to maximize that time. Keep it fresh, but at the same time really accomplish some things during these nine weeks where we're able to get to training camp and get the ground running. Be ready to really attack the camp, have a real productive camp and lead into a big year."

**Q: With the type of offenses and styles of play being run in college these days, do you notice a major difference in the preparation level?**

**McKenzie:** "It goes hand in hand. A lot of these guys get with some coaches and try to learn some of the nuances of the NFL game. Some of the things that they did not do in college... For instance, quarterbacks in shotgun. They start working on taking snaps up under center. Offensive line that's in a two-point stance, they start working more and more in the three-point, so by the time they get here, they've done a lot of it to get ready. The game has changed a little bit that way. The speed and the spread offense, that part of the game and that transition is something we have to stay on top of."

**Q: Does that make it harder to project guys into the NFL?**

**McKenzie:** "That's our job as scouts is to try to see it for what it is. We're looking at the talent level, the athleticism, their skillsets. To say that you can't tell a certain receiver can't run a full route tree, can they do it at the NFL level? That's a projection. That's what scouts and coaches... The more we look at the tape, bring them in and see all this stuff, you have to be able to project. Does it take more work? Probably so, yes."



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**Q: Do you find that you can tell fairly quickly if a player is physically right for your team, but it is a little more complicated to look into their eyes and see...**

**McKenzie:** "The nuances of the players are always the toughest. To me, it's a lot of fun, not only for ourselves but just to see what your counterparts do and how they evaluate. Everybody sees the player differently. Usually, what you see on tape is what you see. You can get that wrong also, but usually it's much more difficult to find out about the person than it is what you see on tape."

**Q: How high of a priority is it to draft a guy who fits into your locker room?**

**Del Rio:** "It's all part of what we do. There are a lot of different areas, a lot of different boxes that we're trying to check off on these guys. That's part of the process. That's what we work at. The scouts are with these guys several years in many cases. As coaches, we jump in in the spring and try to catch up and, from our standpoint, try to provide a scheme fit, an understanding of some of those things. Maybe we have relationships with coaches and things and we can get some information that way. The bottom line is there is a bunch of information gathering. A lot of discovery and then we come in and share and work through that information. That's why I said it's a collaborative process. It's a very involved process and one that's very thorough."

**Q: In your second year going through it together, how much is Jack in your ear in the draft room, Reggie, and how much does he listen to you, Jack?**

**McKenzie:** "We're talking all the time. We were spending time together before you guys got here. That's where the unified effort comes in."

**Del Rio:** "It's throughout the year. This happens to be during the draft about draft issues, but it's throughout the years in terms of knowing our roster, talking our roster, sharing information."

**McKenzie:** "We have a good feel for each other. We like a whole lot of the same things. It makes it a whole lot easier."

**Q: Who called you from the Raiders when you got drafted? Do you remember the call?**

**McKenzie:** "It might have been one of those two ladies back there. It might have been [Raiders staffers] Kristi [Bailey] or 'Fudgie' [Otten] that called me and put Bob Zeman on the phone and the first thing they said was, 'We're moving you from outside linebacker to the inside. Are you OK with that?' I said, 'Absolutely.' So that, I do remember that call."

**Q: How do you feel about Aldon Smith and how he is doing personally and being able to get reinstated when that time comes about?**

**McKenzie:** "Just like we told Aldon when we signed him, we want the best for him as a person. He's in this process, and we had to take a step back. The league office has certain procedures for what we can and can't do, but he left here in great spirits, probably the best that we've seen. So, we're hoping for the best for him. If we get him, that'll be great, if the league so decides to do so. We feel good about our decision to give him an opportunity."

**Q: Have you encouraged the players to keep in contact with Smith and encourage him?**

**McKenzie:** "I don't think we have to do that as much. Those guys, that's what players do. They stay in touch. They connect. I don't have to go out of my way to say, 'Hey, do this or do this.' Players will see upon themselves to do that."

**Q: Are there any players in this draft that you really love and will they still be there at your pick?**

**McKenzie:** "Good question. There are always players that you really like, but I have zero idea who will be there when. So, you can't get too excited about a guy unless you're picking first. I learned that a long time ago. I've seen players taken right before me, so it's tough."



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**Q: Are there more than 13 lovable players?**

**Del Rio:** "We have a coach that says he loves every one of them he's talked about." *(laughing)*

**McKenzie:** "Let me tell you something, when we get our player, we're going to love him. We're going to love that player whenever we take him, so I am not going to get into details."

**Q: Going back to Aldon Smith, do you treat him like a luxury that would be a nice addition later on, but won't really part of the core in terms of your planning going into the season?**

**Del Rio:** "Correct. Yeah, he's not allowed to be here at all until November. So, we're not counting him until then. At this point, we're just carrying on as a football team."

**Q: Could Smith's status impact this draft in some way, knowing that he could be there in the future?**

**McKenzie:** "No, not at all. Number one, you can never have enough guys to rush the quarterback. It really doesn't matter if we're projecting him being here or not."

**Q: If you have Player A on your board, and Player B is behind him on your board, but Player B is at a position that is more of a need than Player A, do you go with Player B or do you still take Player A?**

**McKenzie:** "So you're asking me to give you a little bit of my philosophy. *(laughing)* I will decline to answer that."

**Q: Do you guys have degrees of red flags and is there still room for debate of draft night?**

**McKenzie:** "The red flags, we know who they are before the time comes. We red-flagged a lot of guys, for whatever reason. Whether it's off the field, medical, and once we determine that we're not going to take them because of that, that's it. We make that decision and we stay with it."

**Q: What do you think the team will miss most about Charles Woodson this year?**

**Del Rio:** "I think just, for me, the competitor that he was, the class that he carried himself with. I think those are things that will stay with us for some time. I think the impact that he made and the guys that were here that were able to see the kind of courage he played with, the kind of effort he gave to prepare himself, the way he carried himself, the way he treated all of you all, the way he treated his teammates. I think those are things that are lasting. That's called a legacy. I think he leaves a legacy of greatness here and I think that carries on with us."