



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "Good afternoon. I'll be happy to answer any questions that I can. I know there's a few."

Q: Why trade Khalil Mack now?

Gruden: "First of all, I'd like to wish Khalil well. He was a great player for us, a great person, a great teammate. I did have contact with him yesterday, too. Exchanging our best wishes to him and thanking him for being a great Oakland Raider. The negotiation was what it was. It was tough. It was a long process. We talked about it daily. We made an offer. I don't believe we were anywhere close to where the Bears were. The Bears made us an offer that we thought was really unique. Very, very tough to say goodbye to a great player, but here we are today."

Q: Why not just wait to see if he would report?

Gruden: "We have waited. We waited and waited. The Rams game was looming. Our feeling was that he was not going to report any time soon. I saw the Redskins go through it with Kirk Cousins. It's a long process. You can wait it out, you can franchise him, you can force him to play, but we made a decision and we're going to stand by it."

Q: Did you feel like you had to address this with the team?

Gruden: "I addressed it with the team. He's a great player and a good teammate. A lot of these guys were very good friends with him. It was tough, but he's been gone for a long time. Like I said, we wish him the best. We have to build this football team. We have a lot of needs. We'll address them as we see fit. It's never easy saying goodbye to anybody especially a great player."

Q: How does this affect your ability to win over the next two years?

Gruden: "It's tough. It wasn't my goal to trade Khalil when we got here. One of the reasons I'm here is because of him. Unfortunately, we had a standoff with the contract and we could not come to terms. The Bears made us an offer of two first-round draft picks and here we are today. We have to put together a 53-man roster. It's hard. Salary cap issues do exist. There's an economic part of this thing, too that you have to sit down and study and get a lot of information from a lot of people to see how it impacts you, a contract of that magnitude. Anyways, I can't answer any more questions other than we did the best we could, and we are sorry to see him go. we wish him the best. We'll have to do right with the picks we did acquire and the players on this roster have to step up."

Q: How did the players in the locker room react when you addressed them?

Gruden: "I'm not ever going to speak for our players. You'll have to ask them for yourself. I'll just let it go at that. There's obviously some surprise, some shock. Deep down I think some people realized it was a tough, long, drawn out negotiation and at the end, something had to happen."

Q: You said the Bears went above what your offer was. Was it a case of you wouldn't go to that number or you couldn't go to that number?

Gruden: "I'm not going to get into the negotiations. Reggie and Tom Delaney and the people that were negotiating were involved in that. I know there's some feeling that I was involved on a day-to-day



Oakland Raiders Transcript

negotiation. I had nothing to do with it. we were at a standoff. Something had to happen and here we are.”

Q: Is there a point that when you’ve got a quarterback making as much as you do, you can’t bring in another contract that’s comparable?

Gruden: “How many teams have done that? I don’t know how many teams have done it. Aaron Donald got signed. They don’t have a quarterback that’s been redone yet. I think the Bears made this trade, [Mitchell] Trubisky is still on his rookie deal. It’s tough when you have two players that are the highest paid, or close to the highest paid, at their positions. The economic part of it certainly weighs in. We’ve got free agents on our team that are next year. We have to find a way to bring them back. You have to field a 53-man roster and there are some implications of having two players making that much money. That’s no mystery to anybody.”

Q: What do you like about AJ McCarron and how is he going to fit into your offense?

Coach Gruden: “Thanks for changing the subject. *(laughter)* He had been at Cincinnati with [defensive coordinator] Paul Guenther, our defensive coordinator. I had been impressed with him when he was put into some tough spots in a playoff drive on a very good football team and he went in there and did some really good things. Signed by Buffalo, I think he got a big signing bonus, things didn’t work out. He’s young, he’s got some playing experience in some big games. We have a lot of intelligence on him, [defensive backs coach] Derrick Ansley was at Alabama [with him], I had him on my little episode. I got to know AJ and Paul Guenther was with him on a daily basis. So, we feel like we got better at the quarterback position and we have to prove that too.”

Q: Do you feel that Reggie McKenzie was truly on board with trading Mack?

Coach Gruden: “They’re trying to divide us, people are trying to divide us – ‘I wanted him gone, he wanted him here’ – we made a decision as an organization. Mark Davis, Tom Delaney, we all got the information and we made a decision together. I’ll just say what he said, I read what he said yesterday, it’s a decision that we all came to.’

Q: Was there a misread in the situation? Why not make the decision in February or March to trade Mack in April?

Coach Gruden: “Why would we do that? I don’t understand why we would do that.”

Q: Your picks would have been drafted in April...

Coach Gruden: “Well, you don’t know if you can get those picks. We’re trying to negotiate a contract to keep the player here. We would like to have the player stay here. He was under contract. We did not expect this to last as long as it did. We’re going to be second guessed until the cows come home on this, I understand that. Bottom line is, we did do our due diligence, there was a standoff and he got a great contract from the Bears.”

Q: What did the Aaron Donald deal do for the situation?

Coach Gruden: “Well, it pretty much set the stage of what it was going to be. Ninety million guaranteed is an astronomical number. It’s phenomenal for the players, great for him, obviously. That was something we could not do.”



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Q: Was the conclusion that you would not have received a bounty of picks if you waited until the next draft to trade him?

Coach Gruden: "Well, it's hard to say you could ever get two ones. Getting two first-round picks from a team is a lot of resources. There's no guarantee that you can get two ones in six months or two years, there's no guarantee whatsoever. But, two first-round draft choices is a lot of compensation and we have to do something with."

Q: On a personal level, is there a difficulty to trading someone whose career trajectory could have placed him among Raiders pantheon?

Coach Gruden: "Pantheon's a tough one on me right now. *(laughter)* Yeah, it's tough trading him. I've said that. It's tough to trade him. But, there's an economic part of this that is also tough. I'm not going to get into that, but we have to field a 53-man roster. The Bears came in with a great offer for us and the agent, Joel Segal, did a great job. He stood his ground and he ended up getting the number one contract in football for a defensive player."

Q: Do you feel like you had to include the second-round pick?

Coach Gruden: "I really wasn't involved in all of that, so you'd have to ask Reggie to be honest with you."

Q: Six weeks ago you were hanging out at Ricky's Sports Theatre and Grill and told the fans there that you were going to do whatever it takes to get Mack in here. Now that he is gone, what do you say to that?

Coach Gruden: "Well, we're going to do everything we can to win. We're going to do everything we can to win and put together the best football team possible. We have a lot of holes and we have to do what we can to fill them."

Q: You have a backup quarterback that does not know your offense yet, what is your comfort with that situation? Could one of the two quarterbacks that were here in camp return or is that going to be a situation with one?

Coach Gruden: "Hopefully, Derek [Carr] stays healthy. That's number one, we have to fast-track AJ, he's in here now working with [quarterbacks coach] Brian Callahan and he'll be a consistent visitor here at this facility for the next few weeks. He's got a lot of catching up to do and we'll try to fast-track him the best way we can. There is a possibility that we bring another arm in here, so we'll see."

Q: Can you win this year?

Coach Gruden: "That's the plan. We're going to try to do everything we can to win. We also have to build this football team. We've had one winning season in 14 years. We have to do it the right way. We have to make some tough decisions like we have since the beginning of free agency. This is tough to swallow. We wish Khalil the best, obviously. We need some of our players to step up."

Q: You saw so much in Martavis Bryant. With him gone, how does that affect the roster?

Coach Gruden: "We expected more from him. He did not make the team because Keon Hatcher came on. Some other players outperformed him. I think he covered that during training camp. He missed extended amounts of time. You saw Hatcher the other night. He's done it on our practice field. He did it



Oakland Raiders Transcript

in a game. He can play multiple positions and he can play on special teams. We tried to keep the five or six best receivers, and that's what we did."

Q: You did give up a third-round pick for Bryant. Was there a miscalculation there?

Coach Gruden: "I don't think so. I think the guy is a superb talent. The guy has great talent. We released our second-round draft choice last year and the year before and the year before that. Not everything is a perfect science, but we'll be criticized for that. It was a risk I thought well worth taking. Perhaps we get Martavis again next year and we can get the best out of him."

Q: How much did the fear of being suspended play into releasing him?

Coach Gruden: "Not really. I think just the overall versatility. Who goes in for [Amari] Cooper if Cooper has an alignment. Who goes in for [Jordy] Nelson? Who's the third? Who goes in for Seth [Roberts]? Who can help us on special teams? Keon out performed him and for that reason we're keeping Keon Hatcher."

Q: Did Keon win a roster spot on the last day?

Coach Gruden: "He probably did. I probably would've got thrown out of the airplane if we did not keep Keon after that game. But he kept our eye. He had a great offseason. He's under the radar. He's undrafted. Practice squad a year ago. Caught a lot of touchdown passes at Arkansas. But when you put him in a game, he converts third downs. He can make big plays. We're happy to have him aboard."

Q: Do you have enough pass rush on the roster?

Coach Gruden: "Well we'll see. There's other ways to get to the passer. There's other ways to get to the passer besides just the four-man rush. Somebody has to step up. It's Arden Key's time. Bruce Irvin has to step up. Perhaps that means more blitzing, we'll have to see."

Q: You have a veteran roster, do you want the team to get younger as you go along?

Coach Gruden: "Well, we have these draft choices. We're trying to hit on the draft. We're trying to draft and develop. Obviously the last three draft classes, we haven't gotten a lot of production out of yet. I don't think there's anybody left from the '13 Draft. But '15, '16, '17, not much production at all. With that being said, you have to fill holes. Sometimes you have to fill those holes in free agency. Some of the guys that are free agents are a little bit older. That's one of the reasons why I think we're a little bit older than some teams. We do have some good veteran players. Some good veteran leadership. We're anxious to get started."

Q: Why were the two waiver claims made today?

Coach Gruden: "[Justin] Murray, had some good preseason film. He's got some range. I think he can be a swing tackle. [T.J.] Clemmings played at Washington. Had some starting experience. A little more seasoned, game experience. Tough guy. Look, these are not lifetime contracts. These are opportunities for us to look at some other linemen that perhaps improve us in the eighth and ninth spot. We need better depth, more consistent depth, and that's what we're trying to find."



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Q: Is Chris Warren's knee injury and surgery something that could've been avoided if he ran less this preseason?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, probably. That's my fault also on that. We did want to feature Warren. I think, I don't know this for sure, but I think he won the preseason rushing title. But what a story he's been. He came from obviously nowhere. The rookie mini-camp to potentially earning a roster spot. He'll be a guy that will be worth keeping an eye on next year."

Q: What was deficient in Mario Edwards Jr.'s play that led to him being cut?

Coach Gruden: "He had some opportunities in that last preseason game and in the three other games to emerge. P.J. Hall, Maurice Hurst came in and really took over at the inside pass rushing position. We tried him as a sixth technique. We felt like we were better off letting him find another opportunity and us going with the guys that outperformed him."