



Oakland Raiders Transcript

T Donald Penn

Q: How's it been being back in Florida?

Penn: "It's good to be back out here. Got to see a couple of my old friends, old teammates and old guys. It's going to be kind of weird. I've never walked into Raymond James Stadium from the visitor side. It's going to be something new. Looking forward to seeing some of the old guys that still play on the team. I'm just trying to go out there and come out with a win."

Q: How big is that chip going to be playing against the team that let you go?

Penn: "Oh, it's huge. I'm not going to sugar coat it. It's very huge. You know me, I'm a straight forward guy. That's definitely in my mind. I mean that's something I'm never going to forget, when they released me. The thing is I'm happy where I'm at now."

Q: Do you put extra effort into taking care of your body?

Penn: "There's definitely a big change from back in the day. I remember my first couple of years I never even got in the cold tub, never even sniffed a cold tub. Now it's a daily routine. Massages during the week. The big thing I do is when it's time to rest, I rest. Get off my feet. When I'm at home, I'm chilling. I'm sitting on the coach, have my feet up, lay in the bed, have my feet. When it's time to rest, I rest. I'm not running around the mall, walking around the grocery store, doing all types of stuff like that. I get off my feet and I rest when it's time to rest. I think that's a big part. A lot these guys think, 'I got so much to do.' You have to know when it's time to rest. You have to let your body rest."

Q: Have you thought about how much longer you're going to play for?

Penn: "Derek [Carr] is always in my ear about five more years. (*laughing*) He stays in my ear about that. After next year, we'll sit and see how things go. Thirteen has always been the year, has been a number in my head since I was younger. When I was younger, I was thinking 13 NBA years. It switched over to NFL years quick. We'll have to readdress that, but I have a lot more football in me. I could probably play five or six more years if I want to, but the thing is do I want to. When am I going to call it quit? My body has been great. Hopefully it stays great, but I have three kids. I want to make sure I'm still able to do things with them and be able to do stuff and enjoy that. Right now with the way it's going, winning, it feels good. It feels fine, you never know. I might still be out here a little longer. As long as [General Manager] Reggie [McKenzie] is going to keep me."

Q: Why are you guys so good on the road?

Penn: "You know it's crazy. It's usually the other way around. I really can't pin point. I think coach tries to figure it out, too. Like, 'Why do we win on the road and not [at home]?' Is it the way we prepare or the way we set up things. It has nothing to do with that. I really can't give you a certain thing. I don't know if we like going in there and overcoming adversity, being on the road. Being at home? No. I really cannot tell you, but we need to get it fixed fast. We need to start winning at home. We need to continue to keep winning on the road, but I really cannot tell you why it's like that, but I'm going to take it."

Q: It was said yesterday you get legitimately annoyed if even an opponent touches Derek Carr's jersey.

Penn: "Yeah, I don't like nobody getting next to my quarterback. I'm talking like I get pissed at myself. I think that's why I've been able to play so long. I'm my biggest critic. I think that's why I've been able to do this for so long at such a high level because I'm my biggest critic and I'm hard on myself. In the meeting room, I'm correcting myself before my coaches. They'll start, I'll finish the sentence. I'm hard on myself. That's something big. I don't want nobody touching my quarterback. I don't want nobody touching my running back. I stick up for my teammates. I feel like as a left tackle if my guys aren't touching D.C., we should be successful."



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Q: Do you feel like you're playing your best ball right now?

Penn: "If that's what people are saying? I mean [shoot], I don't know. I feel good. I've never been 5-2 before, so I might have to say it might have to be. I've never been 5-2 and it's feeling good. Things are clicking. The offensive line, we're still getting better and better every day. We have a long... We know how far away we are, but we're still working hard to get better and better every day. Me and Kelechi [Osemele], week in and week out, our double teams are getting better. Our pick up on games, our pass protection, the way we're feeling each other is getting better day in and day out. It's new to us and we're working and building. We have a long way away, but we're working. We're trying to get better every day."

Q: Do you appreciate where you are now having gone through losing seasons?

Penn: "Especially at this point in my career, I really do appreciate it a lot. It really means a lot because, like I said, I'm more seasoned. I am going to play, and I want to win now. I'm not trying to win later. The good thing is these young group of kids we have. Some kids come in here and they're like, 'Oh, we're going to get it eventually.' These young kids on this team, they want it now, and I love that because they're on the same page as me because I want it now. The effort that we're putting out on the field, on the practice field, it's showing. We just have to keep that up."

Q: How would you describe how Derek Carr has matured?

Penn: "It's crazy man. I mean last game, I had no idea he was throwing that ball to 'Coop' [Amari Cooper]. I'm running, I think I got a pancake. I was trying to kill somebody so we could get that first down and only him and 'Coop' knew he was throwing the ball. Just some of the things that he does like that, he's just growing. Did you see how pretty that pass was, too? With the game on the line. To have the balls to do that. It was those, 'No! Yes!' He's done that a lot this year, and he's gambled very well for us. That's not even a gamble. I don't want to call it gambling no more. He knows what he's doing, and he knows he's going to make it right. He's doing that and that's the growth you're seeing from last year; being in this offense again, having the offense from last year and being able to critique yourself from last year. Now [offensive coordinator] Bill [Musgrave] is giving him advice like, 'Oh, OK. You want to do that? OK Yeah, we can do that, D.C.' He's coming to Bill for advice and stuff. They're switching stuff and stuff is clicking right now."

Q: How does the confidence that Head Coach Jack Del Rio has in the team affect the rest of the team?

Penn: "It affects us great. Going into that two-minute last game, we got in the huddle and we're thinking, 'Let's get a field goal.' We had a couple, two plays [inaudible] but D.C. came in, 'No let's get a touchdown.' Next thing you know, two plays later 'Crab' [Michael Crabtree] got a [touchdown]. It's just things like that. We just have to keep working. Can't get comfortable, man, it's still early."

Q: Are you surprised with the success this team is having?

Penn: "You know when I came here three years ago, I could tell that this was a team that was wanting to change. They wanted it. They wanted to put in the work. It didn't really happen after that year. Then next year you saw the same want, but then you saw development. You saw things starting to get a little better, things starting going a little better. Then this offseason, we brought a lot of other guys in from other teams and made a lot of moves. The way Reggie put this together and Coach Del Rio put this together, it's like everybody is gelling really well together. It's all coming along. Like you said, we have to get it now. There ain't no later. That's everybody's mentality and I love it."

Q: What did Latavius Murray's return do for you guys?

Penn: "'Tay' [Latavius Murray] is the guy. He's our starter. He's our guy. When we need it, we're going to go to 'Tay.' Him coming back, him being healthy. I told him that first run, I pulled him to the side and said, 'Hey, trust it now. It feels good.' You could tell. I could tell by the way he got up. He was like, 'Yeah, OK. I'm feeling good. I can go.' Then the next run was even longer. He's just a big part of our team. In the pass protection, too, picking up blitzers, keeping D.C. clean and his ability to be such a big back and be shifty. He makes our blocks look good."



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DL Jihad Ward

Q: Did you think that last week was one of your better games?

Ward: “Just taking it to the next step, keep learning and learning and getting better. This isn’t the first time that, you know what I mean, I have learning to do. I feel like a little robot, you know what I’m saying? It just takes time. Everything takes time.”

Q: How much has the experience helped you in your rookie season?

Ward: “I’m getting it. I’m getting the game now and it’s time to go. It’s the middle of the season, hitting November, I just got to go and let it go.”

Q: When you were drafted, did you expect to play this much this early?

Ward: “I mean, it’s not going to be a surprise, you just have to get ready quicker. I’ve been effective all of the plays, I’ve been making some plays, but I can make more plays. So, coach [defensive coordinator Ken] Norton, [Jr.] and those guys are just telling me to go, just go ahead and do it.”

Q: What are the coaches telling you to work on?

Ward: “Just setting the edge, not just me, just the whole D-linemen. They just want us to get off the ball and set the vertical edge. Just penetrate to the line of scrimmage. We’re really focused on that, that’s the goal, just getting off the ball and getting vertical.”

Q: How much better can this defense get if Aldon Smith returns and when Mario Edwards Jr. returns?

Ward: “It can be great. I think it can be very, very great. I’m happy that Mario [Edwards Jr.] is coming back. Aldon Smith is going to come back soon. It’s like tools that we just have to combine and just go for it. We’re still trying to figure ourselves out, there’s so much new faces coming along. Me, from my perspective, I’m coming in and there’s a lot of new faces I’m seeing. Everything is going to be fine.”

Q: Has it been a case of having all the right tools but just figuring out how they all come together?

Ward: “That’s how it is, you know? In football, everybody is not going to have the same chemistry and same mindset. We just have to put the pieces together. That’s why it’s called practice. Just have to do what we have to do.”

Q: Do you feel the strides being made that Jack Del Rio sees?

Ward: “Yeah. He feels it and I feel it to. Just have to trust it. We all have to trust it, not just me, all of us. The whole front seven, we just have to trust it. Once we have trust, everything will come.”

Q: As a rookie, have you sensed you’ve been somewhat of a marked man?

Ward: “Me first coming up here in the NFL and it’s just like, ‘Why am I thinking too much?’ I have it, ain’t no point in thinking. So, I have some type of pass rushes where I think I’m deep to the quarterback, and I’m really not. The level rushing to the quarterback, but I’m really not. Just go and as I kept getting vertical I’m like, ‘Oh, I’m up to the quarterback, this ain’t nothing.’ So, I just have to keep trusting it, keep trusting it and that’s all I have to say on that one.”

Q: Are you starting to trust your athletic ability against some of these offensive linemen?

Ward: “Yeah, and that’s the whole mindset – getting more vertical and we need more pressure in the inside to help Khalil Mack and Bruce Irvin and Shilique [Calhoun] and all of them guys that set us out. So, we just have to put pressure in the middle. I’m happy that Mario’s coming back, Denico’s [Autry] doing a hell of a job penetrating with, but I just need the other guy because you know, who knows? I just feel like we need more pressure in the middle



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and I've been preaching about that ever since. It's just all of us, we just have to discuss that. It's not just me, we just got to communicate and just go, just go."

Q: Is it a good feeling to have work to do on the defense but knowing you're 5-2?

Ward: "I feel like it's a good feeling because we are 5-2 and we still have puzzles to solve. And that's the good thing about it because a lot of people are still trying to figure out what's going on when they're having a bad season as of now. The season is long, so we're 5-2 and we're still trying to figure stuff out and that's a good thing. Because, once we get it, it's going to come back strong and that's why I'm saying greatness takes time. I was really worried about it, worried about myself doing what I have to do, doing my job, but I can only control myself right now to be honest with you all. But, I can do my part and I can help the team better."

Q: Do things come together when players start focusing on what only they can control?

Ward: "The communication comes with that, let the other person know what gap they have to use or what play it is and stuff like that. Just doing your job. If somebody doesn't know the play, my job is to tell them so that we won't have any mental errors, so nobody will have a big run on us or a big play on us. That's part of our job, communicating."