



## ***Oakland Raiders Transcript***

### **Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing**

**Q: Can you talk about the last week's game? Good to get the win.**

**Coach Downing:** "I think the best thing about coming out of Tennessee was the win. We've got plenty of things that we can improve on and focus on doing better this week. It was good to get one under our belt and have that be in the 'W' column. We're excited about our next opportunity."

**Q: The way you rotated the backs in Tennessee, is that ideal for the season or specific for Tennessee?**

**Coach Downing:** "We're really fortunate to have three talented backs, NFL starting caliber running backs. For us, it's just a matter of keeping those guys fresh. There's no real plan where we're on a rep count or anything like that. It's just a matter of rotating them enough to feel like we're getting the best version of those guys when we play."

**Q: How much of an advantage is that knowing you can save Marshawn Lynch to be the closer for the game?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, there's definitely something to that. I think having fresh legs in the fourth quarter, especially for a veteran like Marshawn, really plays to our advantage. That's something we hope we can continue throughout the year, keep him fresh."

**Q: Have you settled on Marshall Newhouse at right tackle?**

**Coach Downing:** "You know that's an ever-evolving situation. Marshall has played really well. I'll leave it at that with you. He's certainly done a great job in the eyes of the coaching staff and has warranted a lot of playing time. So, we'll see how that all develops. We're happy with what he's done."

**Q: How did the first regular season game go in terms of getting plays in on time and getting organized? Was there anything different?**

**Coach Downing:** "No, it was a comfortable feeling. I think the communication from the staff to myself and into Derek [Carr] is something that's going to continue to improve. We're pleased with the trajectory that it's on."

**Q: Do you want to get the play into Carr early to give him a chance to change it at the line?**

**Coach Downing:** "Yeah, even if it's not a play where we expect Derek to make any adjustments at the line. Even if it's a call it and run it play, I'd like to get the play in as quickly as possible and give those guys time to digest the play call in the huddle. Then get up to the line of scrimmage as quick as we can. I never want to be up against the clock."

**Q: Did the whole getting the plays in go as smoothly as it seemed?**

**Coach Downing:** "You know, [Head] Coach [Jack] Del Rio does such a great job of setting up practice to be a game like environment. So I call the plays in to Derek with the walkie-talkie at practice and get plenty of reps at that. At this point, it's second nature, our communication via headset. Always looking for ways to improve that, but I was certainly comfortable with the way it went."

**Q: We've seen in the past where Derek seems to be rushing the play call and we didn't see any of that this past week.**

**Coach Downing:** "I think the game situation for us played out in our favor and we were able to maximize our communication both in between drives and during the drive. Pleased with the way it went and hopefully we can continue to take steps forward there."

**Q: How conscious are you of spreading the ball around?**

**Coach Downing:** "We have a really talented offensive staff. Throughout the week in the game plan that we put together, we have designs on featuring different matchups throughout the game. During the game, I'm not thinking, 'Oh boy, so and so hasn't gotten the ball in a couple of drives,' but we do put a game plan together with that in mind."



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### **Q: How would you assess Amari Cooper's game?**

**Coach Downing:** "I think everybody fits into the same category as Amari, that we're looking to improve each time we take the field. I think Amari would own up to the things that we expect him to do next time but he had a good start. It was a good first game. Made a play early to get us going and get the juices flowing on the sideline, so we're expecting big things out of Amari this year."

### **Q: Does it work out well from an effectiveness standpoint to have the variety of weapons?**

**Coach Downing:** "Absolutely. [General Manager] Reggie McKenzie has done such a great job with Coach Del Rio putting this team together and this roster together. It's nice to have different options and different weapons, whether it be in the run game with spelling Marshawn [Lynch] or whether it be in the pass game, being able to create different matchups when one is taken away, it's nice to have an arsenal, that's for sure."

### **Q: What would you say is the best thing Jared Cook brings to your offense?**

**Coach Downing:** "He's certainly a weapon in the pass game. He's got a lot of size, a lot of length to make contorted catches and things like that. His speed in the middle of the field is huge. He's a complete player. You can't get a beat on Jared as just a receiving tight end. He's going to get in there and he's going to scrap in the run game and in protection. His versatility is paramount to our success offensively."

### **Q: When you self-critique a game and look at the goal-line sequence, do you think, 'I should have ran Lynch,' or what do you do?**

**Coach Downing:** "I certainly look at every play call and wonder if that's the best position I could have put the offense in to have success. I look at that whether it's third-and-goal on the two or the first play of the game. That whole sequence, I won't reveal too much with you, but there are certainly thoughts to run the ball there. What they did defensively kind of changed our approach and we had some built-ins because of that. But, we're really comfortable as a staff with the game plan we put together for the red zone."

### **Q: All three plays could have succeeded, right?**

**Coach Downing:** "Correct."

### **Defensive Coordinator Ken Norton, Jr.**

### **Q: How will the rowdy home crowd play to your advantage this weekend?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "No question. Anytime you get a chance to come home and play [in front] of your home crowd, it's really exciting. The opener at home, exciting, and the hometown and the crowd being behind us. As exciting as playing at this level is, it takes it up a whole another notch when you're at home."

### **Q: Did the defense surprise you at all in the first game? What was your overall assessment?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Did they surprise me? Oh, my goodness. There was no surprise. We're with these guys every single day. We watch them study, we watch them work, we watch them practice, we work with them and coach them. There is a lot of teaching going on. It's the professional level. These young players are really talented. It's a matter of a lot of things are involved in playing your best football. I think the way the young players have grown, the way the older players are leading and making their plays, I think there is no surprise at all. We expect to play well and to play solid football."

### **Q: How important is it to get a good start and get some confidence going for the younger players?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Younger players, older players, players that are in the middle, confidence is really important for all ages. That's what the preparation, that's what practice, that's what film study, the coaching, the teaching, all those things during the week, they are connected to your confidence on Sunday. You can't have confidence at the



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end of the week if you aren't handling your business in your practice, in your preparation during the week. It's all connected."

**Q: The Titans scored on their first drive and didn't score a touchdown after that. What did you tighten down?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "It wasn't tighten. If you really watch closely when they made the catches on third down... First and second down, we were really effective. Third down, our guys were all over them. They were really competitive throws, really good catches. They had to make really great catches. We really feel like if you have to compete at that high level, they are going to make some catches; they're pros too. But at the same time, they're not going to make those throws and catches all day long. We were very encouraged by how hard we were playing, about the way we were scrapping, clawing, competing to get the ball. So with that setting the tone, we knew that we were ready to go."

**Q: What did you see out of Sean Smith?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Sean was very effective. Sean is a good football player. Again, it's a matter of everybody working together. I think the team, the unit, is really close. Everybody really cares about one another and everybody really helps each other out. We only want the best for each one of us. Sean is a very good professional player. He has reemerged, as you can see, ready to play high-level football."

**Q: When Khalil Mack is drawing double and triple teams and Eddie Vanderdoes is clogging up the middle, what does that do for you as a coordinator in terms of not needing to blitz every snap?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "I'm not sure what your strategy is, but it's just a matter of understanding we are a physical team. We play really hard and the guys are really executing. The coaches are really doing a great job teaching and really working with the guys and preparing them. I think that we're looking for consistency. It was a good start, but by no means are we finished. We're just going to be very consistent, physical, hard-working team. We have a lot of high expectations."

**Q: What did you think of the job Marquel Lee did?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Really excited. Marquel did an excellent, solid job. He was making all the solid calls, getting everybody lined up, always in the right spot, tackling really solid, tough tackles. Playing middle linebacker on a team like this with some really good football players, that's a really challenging position to be in, especially a team and from the leadership on down, there are some high-profile former linebackers on this team, so he has a lot of expectations, but really, really pleased with his development and we have always been a developmental staff. We want to take the guys and really develop them into the players that they can be. So far in his development, Marquel is doing a really good job."

**Q: In terms of making the calls, is that something that something that initially you had to give to him slowly?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "When he got off the plane, he was making calls. He's been making call his whole football career. Just because now it's in the NFL, it doesn't change. He's been making them in college, high school, little league. He's a talker. He's clear. He's confident and he's an NFL middle linebacker."

**Q: What did Cory James do to help Lee with some of the pressure in his first NFL game?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Well, they work together. Cory and Marquel work really well together. Cory's another outstanding, young athlete. I think their duo, working together, doing a really good job of communicating, executing, understanding and really, the work is done during the week. We can tell early in the week how they approach the week, how they sit in their chairs, how they take notes, how they practice, how they discuss and communicate in practice. By the time the game comes, we have a really solid idea about the type of performance we're going to see."



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**Q: How important is it to you to see the type of attention to detail the players give throughout the week? Is that something you stress having been a former player?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "There's no question. We've seen a lot of really good players. We've seen a lot of not really good players over the many years. I've been fortunate enough to play with a lot of Hall of Fame players in my time. You kind of get the mannerisms, the ideas and understanding and different ways people approach the game, how they act and the things that are common amongst the really good defenses, the really good players. Focus, attention to detail, guys really understand they get to be here and they find a way to work together and really have an understanding of why. Those are the guys that are usually your best players."

**Q: If you see a guy whose body language isn't good throughout the week...**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Well, it won't happen throughout the week. The very second you see it, you clean it up and then you move on."

**Q: Is that something you clean up?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "We all work together. I think that we all make it clear what our standard is and then myself, my coaches and the other players, we all make sure that standard is upheld."

**Q: What would you say is the most challenging thing about the New York Jets' offense?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Well, they're really good. I think for us to understand our idea is to always worry about us. I mean, the Jets throw the ball well, they run the ball well. They have really good skilled players, the offensive line is very physical. But, it all comes down to our execution, our ability to show up, our ability to really play well and tackle the way that we're supposed to tackle. So, our execution and our importance is, it's about us. We're worried about how we show up and are ready to go on Sunday."

**Q: What on Sunday did you see that made your defense effective?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Well, stopping the run. Going into it, they had two really good runners, really good offensive line and they've run over 100 yards at a high level throughout the season last year. We really felt like it was important for us to take that away from them and make them really one dimensional. We knew going into it, we're talking about Tennessee, if they rush for under 100 yards, they didn't win as many games. They were 0-14 or something like that. So, we felt like stopping the run was really important to us and it put them in obvious situations, gave us a chance to really get our coverage and our rush to work together and we felt like we accomplished that."

**Q: On that third-down play where Nicholas Morrow made the stop, what stood out to you about that?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Well, just the focus, the linebacker really tracking down the runner, the way his speed... And a lot of people just see the tackle that Nick made, but [David Amerson] 29 turned the ball back and gave his body up and turned the ball inside, made the runner jump up. The defensive line chased it down and knocked off the pullers. [Tyrell Adams] 58 jumped in there and knocked off a guy. The team worked together. It was a team stop. A lot of guys just see the hit at the end, but all 11 guys had a part in that big third-down stop."

**Q: Do you believe the interior line showed improvements in the first game?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "We'll see, it's just one game. This one game doesn't make a reputation or a season. I think it's important to have the consistency. I want to see how they respond. I think it was important for the young players to see what NFL ball is like. Now they have a great idea of what it's like. We have a standard we want to set and I feel like our direction is going in the right way."

**Q: Do you feel like you have a good mix of talent on the inside for every situation?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "We'll see. We'll see. Again, it's still early. It's one game. So, we have a lot of situations left. We know that each game brings up different challenges, different struggles, different situations. And this game will be no different. We're doing a good job of trying to do a great job of preparing our guys for all the situations."



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**Q: Canelo Alvarez or Gennady Golovkin?**

**Coach Norton, Jr.:** "Oh, a boxing question? (*laughter*) I want it to be very competitive. You like competitive, entertaining fights."