



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “Fast Friday, Thursday playoff week version. Good solid week of prep. It was a shorter week, but we had several of those this year. I felt like we were comfortable with that. We have a good plan put together and ready to go compete. Looking forward to the opportunity. It’s one of 12 teams still playing and want to be one of eight when the weekend is over. Questions?”

Q: Are there specific benchmarks you’re looking for in terms of improvement with Connor Cook?

Coach Del Rio: “Really not like that. It’s really just about preparing and correcting what needs to be corrected, encouraging where there needs to be encouraging. Just trying to get into the part of the plan where he’s the most comfortable and make sure that we’re featuring that.”

Q: What have you seen in his demeanor?

Coach Del Rio: “I think he’s handling himself well, very well. I think we’re ready to go.”

Q: Did you say anything to the guys with it being the first playoff game for most of them?

Coach Del Rio: “We have not talked about anything special about the first playoff game thus far. It’s really in my experience that the more that you can understand that the hype surrounding it changes, but the game itself remains a game. We’ll be ready to play as long as we just think of it that way. Take care of your business. Do your job and have fun. It’s a game.”

Q: Do you know if Donald Penn will be able to play?

Coach Del Rio: “He didn’t go again today, so we’ll see how he finishes the week.”

Q: Was it part of the plan to bring guys in with playoff experience and is there anything they can do for the younger guys?

Coach Del Rio: “I think, obviously, anybody that’s been there before has the experience they can speak from and help the younger guys understand. Younger guys play very well in games throughout the year for us. We just want them to be themselves and do their own thing and do like they’ve done all year. Really, it’s just be a good teammate, take care of your responsibilities.”

Q: Do you have any new plays for Cook?

Coach Del Rio: “There might be a few new plays, you never know. You never know. We’ll do the things he’s comfortable with. Look, it’s about our team going against their team. At the end of the day, you can talk about one position over another and totally understand that quarterbacks get a lot of attention, deservedly so. It’ll be the Oakland Raiders against the Houston Texans. We’ll be excited to see how the game goes on Saturday.”

Q: Has he said to you or have you asked about what he’s comfortable with?

Coach Del Rio: “He does a good job communicating. Not quite to the level that Derek [Carr] might be at. Derek is a little more comfortable and been through it a few times, but he’s done a great job. I think he’s handled himself beautifully this week. Now we just need to go play.”

Offensive Coordinator Bill Musgrave

Opening Statement: “Getting things done and getting on a plane today to head to Houston.”

Q: What percentage of the game plan changes with a quarterback situation like this?

Coach Musgrave: “There’s definitely an adjustment phase for all staff, but fortunately Connor [Cook] has been here all year. He’s been part of the process. Been pretty much just like we would with any other QB, whether it be



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Derek [Carr] or Matt [McGloin] last week. We've had a good week. It's been condensed. Had a good day today and we're looking forward to having more preparation, of course, once we get down there tomorrow and even the day of the game."

Q: How much more expanded will the play calling be this week than when Connor went in last week?

Coach Musgrave: "The way the game went the other day, we got down by three scores. I don't know how limited we felt. We wanted to do whatever it took to try to get back into that game. Connor has done a nice job. The preparation throughout the whole year has been sharp with [quarterbacks] coach [Todd] Downing. I think we all have a lot of confidence in what he can handle, volume-wise and complexity."

Q: You had so much success against them last time throwing to your running backs. Do you think that will be beneficial, especially for a young guy?

Coach Musgrave: "You'd hope so. Our backs have done a super job this year. They don't demand too much of pass protection, those types of routes, where you get it out of your hand and get it to the backs, they can catch and run. Not catching it too far down the field, with the exception of the Jamize [Olawale] touchdown. A lot of teams want to bring in extra DBs, go dime or quarter, instead of just nickel, so they can put DBs on our backs instead of linebackers. We'll anticipate that, just like we have the past few weeks."

Q: How do you feel like you guys have run against fronts that are designed to stop the run? Do you feel like you guys have executed well, generally speaking?

Coach Musgrave: "That's always a tough way to make a living, but we're all used to it. That's what happens in professional football. You have to be able to handle eight and nine man boxes and run it when you want to. We've experienced a lot of success in the run game his year, more than we did two years ago. Last weekend, we didn't have a lot of success running it, but we want to get right back on track."

Q: You mentioned teams using more DBs to cover the running backs. How does that open things up for you otherwise?

Coach Musgrave: "You have to give and take on offense and defense when you make adjustments. We'll hope that we can play the chess game with them and come out on top."

Q: Donald Penn hasn't practiced this week and that could cause a little bit of reshuffling. Do you feel pretty confident that they can move around, mix and match, that sort of thing?

Coach Musgrave: "Definitely some mixing and matching going on. This time of year, a lot of people are banged up. Going to put our healthiest five bodies out there and put them in a good place where they can work cohesively and we get a good end result."

Q: How much were you involved in evaluating Connor before the draft?

Coach Musgrave: "We have a good process here with the draft."

Q: What did you see from him in college that stood out?

Coach Musgrave: "Steady. Very accurate. Good height. Can definitely see the field and throws with anticipation. He's one of those guys that doesn't have to wait for the receiver to be open to let it go. He'll anticipate and get it there on time."

Q: Do you remember any particular game from college that you saw and were impressed by?

Coach Musgrave: "I'd have to think back. Tough to shift gears at this point in the year."



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Q: Did you put in any special plays for him?

Coach Musgrave: "We definitely have things that we want to fit his traits. We always think players first, then plays. While we have concepts that we're skilled at running, all 11 guys on the field, we want to do the plays that fit Connor as well."

Q: With Connor getting first-team reps for the first time this year, are you able to see tangible improvement from day to day?

Coach Musgrave: "In terms of tangible or benchmarks, I think we're working through the process. I think he feels more and more comfortable just like all of us do, the more times on task we get to do in a certain chore. This is his first week running with the ones, last week was his first week of receiving a uniform on game day and dressing out. We're working the process and we're really looking forward to watching him play. It's a great time of year to be playing football and we've got a young QB that is ready to get out there and have a great game."

Q: Their pass defense has been pretty good. What do they do well?

Coach Musgrave: "Schematically, they don't give up big plays. They've got huge people up front that know how to stop the run. [Texans defensive coordinator] Romeo [Crennel] has coached with a good friend of mine Al Groh for years, along with that whole coaching tree under [Bill] Parcells. They definitely know what they're doing. We're going to have to play sound and play better and coach better than them to get in the end zone."

Q: With Jamize Olawale, is he a secret weapon kind of deal? The less you use him, the more effective he is?

Coach Musgrave: "The thinking is use all of our guys the best we can. We're used to scoring a lot of points. We only scored six last week. We want to get back on track and get in the end zone and light up that scoreboard with Jamize and all his buddies."

Q: How has the dialogue been with you and Connor? A lot of young quarterbacks don't speak up about what they like and dislike.

Coach Musgrave: "He's a typical rookie. He's really, for most of the year, only spoken when spoken to. He's a good kid. Derek and Matt have really raised him right. I think he'll be ready to take this next step."

Q: Has he spoken up this week?

Coach Musgrave: "Most definitely. We have extensive meetings, get feedback from all of our players, not just the QB."