



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “Good couple of days. We’ll take the bye weekend and watch some football and heal up, rest up. Told our guys, get back here and be ready to go to work, and be smart about the choices you’re making while you’re gone. That’s what we expect from our guys, to handle themselves well. So anyways, questions?”

Q: Do you have to prepare for the altitude in Mexico City earlier? How do you approach that?

Coach Del Rio: “It’s kind of a combination. We know we have to travel to play well regardless of the circumstances. We understand some of the issues that are there, potentially. That’s been addressed. We’ll put our plan together and go down and compete. I know it’s going to be a great atmosphere. It sold out quickly. People are going to be excited to put on a good show down there. It should be a heck of a game.”

Q: Do you think it’s good for the Raiders to play in Mexico?

Coach Del Rio: “I think there are a lot of benefits for the league in that way. I think for us, honestly, I prefer for that not to be our home game. Travel a couple of time zones, be hours away from our own place, but again I don’t worry too much about all of that. What it is, we just understand what it is, prepare ourselves for it and go down there and have fun competing. That’s how we do it.”

Q: Do you plan on watching ‘RedZone’ on Sunday?

Coach Del Rio: “I’m a fan of the ‘RedZone.’ Yeah, I like the ‘RedZone.’ It keeps you right in the middle of the action. I typically like to have a game on and the ‘RedZone’ on. Pretty good at watching, but most of the time we’re playing, so I don’t get to enjoy it like I will this weekend.”

Q: Do you feel good about Sean Smith and Stacy McGee being back next week?

Coach Del Rio: “Well, Jerry [McDonald], that’s a really good way of putting it, but you know I don’t speak much on injuries. That was a good attempt. (*laughing*) The guys that can work, worked. We backed down a few guys of our own choosing. Really it’s about developing. We’ve really worked hard to develop the roster that we have. We have a bunch of young guys that are contributing. We’re continuing that theme. We’re going to develop as we go through the year and expect to be better as a team.”

Q: How valuable is self-scouting during the bye week for coaches?

Coach Del Rio: “Self-scouting is so valuable that we don’t wait for the bye week. We do a lot of self-scouting throughout the year. We don’t really pause and then evaluate ourselves and do a self-scouting analyze then; we do it weekly. We see what we’ve done over the last several games and how our opponents are going to look at us and see us. We want to correct mistakes right away and move on. You know when you make mistakes, when you put things on film that you struggle with, they’re going to come and try it and check you out to see if you fixed it. That’s part of what we do, but we don’t wait. We don’t wait for the bye week to do this.”

Q: Have you found that players who weren’t drafted have a sense of purpose for what they do?

Coach Del Rio: “They have a little grit, a little chip on their shoulder, and we look for that. We look for those qualities. Once guys get here, we don’t care how they got here, we’re going to let them compete and immerse them in our system and look to develop them and look for the things they can do and try to do everything we can to put our guys in position to do things they do well. And, avoid as much as we can, exposure to things they don’t handle well, and that’s our job as coaches. But, we’ve got a number of guys, undrafted that are contributing in a big way and part of that, hey, give the credit to the kid being really gritty and tough and finding a way and then as a staff, we’re going to develop.”

Q: Has anything surprised you in the first half of the year in terms of the players?

Coach Del Rio: “That’s a good question, Vic [Tafur]. I think as you go through the season, you go into camp, there are a lot of surprises that jump out. The number of undrafted that made our team jumps out. But for us, it’s been



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a process. It's not like all of the sudden we look up and we're shocked by it because we've been working with these guys and developing these guys and they've been giving great energy and effort every day. A guy like Jalen [Richard], to step up and play as big as he has, makes our team, which just to be here was a shock because it was a tryout, that's how he got invited to camp. Then, he comes into camp and he tears it up. The beginning of the opening game he makes huge plays in that opening game to help us win and he hasn't looked back. He was productive the other night in the big game against Denver, so those are great stories. You can look back and say you're surprised, because nobody predicted that. But, at the end of the day, what we're looking to create here – that competitive atmosphere where guys know when we call after the draft's over and say, 'Hey, you have a shot here. We're going to let you compete here and we aren't afraid to keep undrafted guys.' That's a reality, that's a legitimate message and we prove it by the way we approach things."

Q: When you have undrafted guys that have proven themselves, do you think that carries more weight in future drafts?

Coach Del Rio: "It should, it should. Because, we're a team that legitimately, when you get here, express yourself, be a great teammate, bust your butt and compete every day and if you earn your way, we're going to let you play."

Q: How has Rodney Hudson been a key part of the team?

Coach Del Rio: "Oh, Rodney [Hudson]'s been great. He's super bright, so handling the protections and making the calls, he's really on point. Obviously, he and Derek [Carr] work very closely with that, so I think it starts there with his brain. But, he's really athletic, he's got power, he's got the ability to pull and do some of the down-and-around stuff that we like to do and he's a really good athlete. So, he's a big piece of our success."

Q: What has Perry Riley Jr. added to the middle linebacker spot?

Coach Del Rio: "When Perry [Riley Jr.] got here, he just instantly brought a little bit of toughness, little bit of that grit I was talking about. He's done a great job fitting in. I think maybe having Bruce [Irvin] here, where he's got familiarity with somebody on the team, just really the way he's attacked it has been what a veteran linebacker should do. He's come in, he's been tough, he's been on point in his preparation and played good football for us."

Q: Is there any update on Mario Edwards Jr.?"

Coach Del Rio: "No, nothing more to add on that. So, that's kind of a wait and see."