



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening statement: "Good morning, good afternoon. Real quick injury update. Martavis Bryant has a PCL injury in his knee. Don't know the length of the injury but doesn't look like he will be available for some time. Jordy Nelson has a knee that's being further examined. Kyle Wilber is also in the evaluation mode right now. We think he has a chance to be okay, but I'll be happy to answer any questions I can."

Q: Are you guys activating Eddie Vanderdoes today?

Coach Gruden: "I believe we are going to put Eddie on season-ending injured reserve. We had a chance to look at him for a couple weeks and although he has made progress he has had a couple injuries to the knee in his background. We want to make sure that we give him the proper time to get ready. We are going to be very precautionary with him. I believe his season will end unfortunately, but it's the right thing to do for him and his future."

Q: When you look back at the fourth-and-1 play at the goal line, are you still happy with Derek's [Carr] decision?

Coach Gruden: "It was a terrible call by me. It was a design for Jalen Richard against man-to-man coverage. There wasn't a lot he could have done. He could have been [QB] Fran Tarkenton and done a 360 and reversed the field a few times. There wasn't much there. You got to credit the play caller with that outcome."

Q: How is the wide receiver group looking after losing some guys to injury?

Coach Gruden: "It's tough, obviously, with Amari gone and Martavis out. Jordy out. We will knock on Marcell Ateman's door and perhaps give him an opportunity to step forward. We will bring in some receivers to work out tomorrow and if we need to make a roster spot we will."

Q: What have you seen from [Marcell] Ateman in practice?

Coach Gruden: "Steady progress. He is a big guy. Has played well. He's played multiple positions. As I have said last week, he is also a guy we think has the size and strength to contribute on special teams. [Brandon] LaFell played well. I thought Seth Roberts stepped up and made some nice plays. Hopefully, Jordy is okay. If not, Marcell will get a great opportunity against Arizona."

Q: What was the conversation like with Vanderdoes about him being placed on season-ending injured reserve list?

Coach Gruden: "I talked with him on the field last Friday. The clock is ticking. You got so many days to evaluate the player before you make the decision to activate him or put him on injured reserve. He did have a setback in training camp, a tough one. We expected him to be ready in camp. I think right now it's not 100 percent. He hadn't had enough padded practices and been in the trenches enough to activate him, perhaps reinjuring that. I think it's the wise thing to do. We will try to move forward without him and get him healthy for next year."

Q: Was the fourth-and-1 call the right look in terms of what the defense was in?

Coach Gruden: "It wasn't blocked exactly the way that we put it on a card and expected them to line up. Had a chance, but I credit the Chargers. They are a good football team and [DE Melvin] Ingram strung it out a little bit and [S] Derwin James made a very good play. Once again, it was not a very good play call because it didn't work. A lot of people are running that play, as you know, in the tight red zone for obvious reasons. My first time using it wasn't a great experience."

Q: What did you see from Brandon Parker yesterday?

Coach Gruden: "There was some good things. He and Kolton, together, they had their physical ailments against the 49ers. I thought Parker, other than a few plays, handled his own, did well. Showed some



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progress. We had David Sharpe ready to go if need be, but I thought Parker warranted the start and warranted to finish the game. I thought he did some good things against some good rushers.”

Q: What about Nick Nelson’s snap count increasing? What kind of progress have you seen from him?

Coach Gruden: “Pretty good, pretty good. We like him. He had five or six coverage opportunities yesterday. You saw for yourself what he’s capable of doing. He has some quickness and size and strength to play the nickel position. I think he played 25, close to 30 snaps, something like that. Leon Hall’s snaps were down at the nickel position, but for his debut I thought he played pretty good. I was excited about it.”

Q: Is Nicholas Morrow someone you want to see more of in the second half of the season?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, yeah he is. I thought Marquel Lee, we moved Marquel to SAM, the strongside linebacker. I thought Marquel had the best game playing that position. Morrow, we’d like to see more and more from him. I thought [Jason] Cabinda did some good things at the middle linebacker, too. I was pleased with a lot of things I saw from our young defense.”

Q: When you’re in cover zero and the running back goes into the flat like he did on the 66-yard touchdown, is there anyone who’s assignment it is to cover him?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah. I’ll just say that when you’re the coach you take responsibility for the bad things that happen. We had a man that was in coverage who didn’t peel off and cover him. It put [Gareon] Conley in a tough spot. Conley was covering his guy. We tried to read out of our coverage and make a tackle in the open air against Melvin Gordon is a hard thing to do. We had an error on that play and it cost us.”

Q: It seems necessary for Paul Guenther to dial things up when trying to get to the quarterback because of what the four-man rush has been this season. Are those the sort of plays you need to do as coordinator to try to affect the quarterback?

Coach Gruden: “Well it helps to call those plays when you have them behind in the down and distance. We finally did a good job, I think, of getting some at bats. We had some second-and-10s and second-and-longs and we had some third down-and-longs. When you have those situations, you can get your pass rush or nickel blitzes dialed up. I thought that was what you saw yesterday. Guenther is really good at doing that. I think our ability to stop the run in some early down situations led to that.”

Q: What allowed Rashaan Melvin to re-enter the lineup? Was there something he showed in practice recently?

Coach Gruden: “I think so. I think Conley and [Daryl] Worley, those are the two guys that started. I think you saw Nelson emerge a little more as the nickel. We’re going to rotate Melvin in there. He’s a good player. We’ll try to be smart about when we do it. At the same time, only two can play.”

Q: Jared Cook looked frustrated out there sometimes. Is that because of the stretch you’re going through?

Coach Gruden: “I think so. I’m frustrated, he’s frustrated, a lot of us get frustrated. To have three opening drives like we had yesterday and have three points, it’s hard to swallow really. He’s a great competitor. Heck of a tight end. I think his frustration is pretty logical.”

Q: You said that you rely on the trainers to tell you if they’re unable to go. Is there any concern with Miller about how playing less than 100 percent could affect him mentally?

Coach Gruden: “No. I think what you’re dealing with with Miller is one of the most mentally tough kids that you will find. I think he’s gaining strength from playing. I think he’s really learning a lot about this business the hard way. Not only losing, not only playing hurt, playing from behind a lot, but learning how to play well against great rushers when you’re not at your best. That’s really the definition of a lot of these great pro football players. A lot of these guys don’t feel good after Week 2 or 3. For that young man to go out there and give us all that he’s given us under these circumstances is really exciting.”



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Q: From an outsider's perspective, it looks pretty bleak. What gives you optimism that this is going to work out?

Gruden: "The Chargers came in here yesterday as a 7-2 team. A lot of people feel they're the best team in the AFC. I thought we hung in there with them pretty good. A lot of young guys playing. I know we can play better and I know we will play better. I'm not going to make any predictions. I know it's dark right now. It's tough. It's tough on our fans. I thank our fans for showing up and being with us. We're going to bring this thing back. I've been a part of it before and we've got some great people to build around. We've got some resources to keep building. I'll leave it at that."

Q: How much of a learning curve is there when you have to jump back in the coaching after being gone so long?

Gruden: "It's tough. It's tough for all of us. Every year the rules change. Every year the roster changes. Every year something changes. The Oakland Raiders, as I've said earlier, we've had a lot of change in this organization in the last 15, 20 years. Change is tough on everybody. I'll put a big exclamation point behind that. We've got a long way to go. I thought there were some good signs yesterday. Some signs that really excited me. I'm really happy to be back. I know we've got a lot to prove and I'm sure we have our critics out there. That's all part of this."

Q: Is Marcell Ateman ready to be called upon if the situation dictates?

Gruden: "I think so. We'll see. He'll be another rookie that we call on. We've had some rookies step up. We'll need him to do the same."

Q: You look at the offensive production over the last few weeks. No touchdowns. What's been the biggest problem?

Gruden: "Obviously, finishing drives is a big issue. We get down to the one-yard-line, we don't finish. We get to the redzone, we fumble the football. We've turned it over in the redzone a couple times. I think injuries upfront in the offensive line really hurt us in the 49ers game, being honest. Not just a couple, a few. I think yesterday... Chargers were a heck of a team. You tip your hat to the opponent. We lost a couple of our receivers again in the football game. There was some questionable playcalling honestly. You couple all those things together, you'll probably have a good story there."

Q: When the owner says you are his endgame, how much comfort does that give you?

Gruden: "I feel Mark's pain. I talk to Mark after every game. These are unpleasant conversations. It's tough, man. We also want to do right by this organization. Some of these decisions have been really tough. I want to deliver for him and his family, certainly, and this organization. Right now it's tough. It's great to have him support me. I appreciate it. I feel the same way he does. I just want to win."