



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing

Q: What happened at the end of the season in becoming the offensive coordinator?

Coach Downing: "The process was as the season starts to wrap up and there's changes going on around the league, there was some interest in my availability to either interview or get a coordinator job in other places. In a variety of ways that became evident and apparent to [Head] Coach [Jack] Del Rio. At the end of the year, once our season was wrapped up after the Houston game, we had our year end wrap-up meetings with Coach Del Rio. Defensive staff went first, offensive staff was after that. It was shortly into the offensive staff portion of those meetings that he informed me of his intention to make the switch. I wouldn't characterize it as a surprise because I'm ready for anything that comes my way in this profession, but I was looking forward to the opportunity to run an offense somewhere in the NFL in 2017. I just feel really fortunate that Coach Del Rio has the trust in me, moving forward, to have that opportunity be here."

Q: Was your contract up?

Coach Downing: "I had one more year on my contract, but I had the ability to interview in other places."

Q: What are some of the steps Derek Carr needs to take for next year?

Coach Downing: "I think Derek made big strides in 2016, just in terms of his command of the offense, being the field general, being able to get through progressions more efficiently. His footwork took big strides. I certainly want him to remain focused on all of those attributes. You don't want to feel like you've arrived in a certain area of your game and then have it go backwards when the next season starts. Certainly, I want him focused on all of those. There's been a lot made about his command at the line of scrimmage. There's certainly going to be opportunities for Derek to do that. That's not something I feel we'll even have to get into until we're much further into this offseason and into training camp. Where I see him needing a little bit more command is just being able to share his thoughts of game plans. Being a student of the game, as he already is, but vocalize what he likes and doesn't like. I think my relationship with him is something that's going to give him the opportunity to voice his opinions. I look forward to him really taking charge of expressing his thoughts on the offense."

Q: How is this offseason different given your new position?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, you know, the scope is certainly broader from a talent evaluation standpoint. Not only our own roster, but it's free agency and as we head into the draft and things like that. So, the scope is much more broad. It kind of makes you be much more efficient with your time in terms of how much time you're allotting to certain position groups and certain ways you used to do things. Charts you might put together at the end of the year, they're all somebody else's responsibility now. But, you know just as a whole, I think working with the quarterback position as long as I have, you're kind of forced into knowing the whole offense and in part seeing the whole offense. Meaning, you get a feel for what good receiver play looks like. You get a feel for what a good running back looks like and offensive line and tight ends and so on. So, it's not like it's a whole new world for me where I'm having to evaluate the things that I've never evaluated before, but it's certainly a time management challenge."

Q: How fortunate do you feel to come into this type of situation after the success of last year?

Coach Downing: "It's an incredible blessing to have my first opportunity this way. I know everybody on the staff very well, I know how to communicate with them, I know what makes them tick and what is the wrong way to approach things with them which kind of gives me a great head start in that. We're going through offseason cut ups right now, evaluating the stuff we did last year and we're able to have real and honest conversations about that without them feeling like I'm just critiquing them or taking shots at their position because I was in the trenches with them. So, that really helps from that standpoint. You know, I have a long history with a few guys on the staff and that has certainly been a great resource for me to be able to feel like I can rely on those relationships to get some good, honest feedback and keep things going in the right direction. Overall, it's just an incredible opportunity that I feel extremely blessed to be in."



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Q: How big are the changes going to be from the past?

Coach Downing: "Oh, it will be very subtle. We're going to keep the same system terminology. There's no reason to change any of that stuff. All we're doing right now is finding the ways that we can all individually do our jobs better, prepare our positions better and how we can just quarter turn a couple things to make the offense as efficient as possible."

Q: There were a couple instances last year where Jack Del Rio mentioned running the ball more. He was pretty insistent and determined to run the ball. Where does that fit in for you?

Coach Downing: "I would like to continue our success in the run game by doing the things we did well and the things that we didn't do well, we evaluate how we can adjust those things. If we can't adjust them easily, then we move on to different schemes or run more of what we're efficient at. I'm as committed to the run game as I am to the pass game. I think my vision for this offense is right in line with how we see it as a staff and how Coach Del Rio sees it as the leader of our staff. I don't anticipate that being a rocky road to walk down."

Q: Did you speak with teams or hear from teams about their interest in you as a coordinator before you accepted this job here?

Coach Downing: "There are rules against that. Teams can't reach out to you in person before the expiration of your contract or before they are able to receive permission from our organization to talk to me. All I can tell you is that I do know with certainty that multiple teams were interested."

Q: If there were teams interested, and obviously this team was as well, in your words, why are you ready for this position?

Coach Downing: "I've been extremely fortunate to be around some great offensive minds. I've spent a long time working for Scott Linehan, who is the offensive coordinator in Dallas now. I've had the opportunity to see game plans put together the right way by hardworking staff. I've been around some very well-rounded offensive coaches, collected a lot of information and learned as much as I could over my time in the NFL. I believe I'm very in tune to the quarterback position and the needs of the quarterback position to be successful. I believe this is a quarterback-driven league and we're very, very fortunate to have the one we have here in Oakland. You combine all of those things, and I think I'm up to the task to lead an offense and be able to call a game on Sunday in a very efficient and hopefully explosive manner."

Q: Did you think Carr deserved to be the MVP?

Coach Downing: "He had my vote, but nobody called and asked for it."

Q: You mention that there will be subtle changes. Do you consider yourself a "if it isn't broke, don't fix it" type of guy? Also, if you're in the Super Bowl, and you have first-and-10 at the 22-yard line, are you running it three straight times and then kicking the field goal to win the game?

Coach Downing: "You know what? *(laughing)* Let's have that conversation once we get to the Super Bowl."

Q: Do you see yourself as a "if it isn't broke, don't fix it" type of guy?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, I definitely think that that's a phrase you can tag to me. I believe – and you guys have heard me say the term a couple of times now – I believe in efficiency. And if we're efficient in a concept, I am not going to go changing it just for change sake. If we're inefficient or we failed to live up to expectations in a certain concept, then I am going to figure out a way to tinker with it and make it work. If I can't make it work, we simply won't do it anymore."

Q: How do you attack the problem of dropped passes?

Coach Downing: "We're very fortunate to have the wide receiver coach we have. Rob Moore is a guy that I've experience in two different stops, here and in Buffalo. I was with him with the Buffalo Bills and Rob is a great coach



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of technique and he's very detailed. He will have a plan for our guys to eliminate that problem. Sometimes, I'll be honest with you, what statisticians might categorize as a drop, we categorize as a bad pass in the quarterbacks room. I think just equal accountability across all groups, from the quarterbacks room on down, I think that's going to help us be a little bit more proficient in completions and a few less drops along the way."

Q: Is there anybody from your previous stops that has really helped shaped your offensive philosophy?

Coach Downing: "I mentioned before Scott Linehan. He's really my mentor in this profession. He raised me, taught me how to coach quarterbacks. He taught me how to put together a game plan, so I certainly will use a lot of what he taught me. I think what's unique about the situation here is I'm not installing an offense from the ground up. There is already a system in place and there is a lot about this system, to use a phrase before, that's not broke. So, there will be things that we do a little differently than I did in my time with Scott, but he certainly is probably the biggest shaping influence in terms of how I will play out as an offensive coordinator."