



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

OPENING STATEMENT: “We have some guys that are still being evaluated from the trainer, but I’ll answer any questions that I can.”

Q: Do you have any update on Rodney Hudson?

Coach Gruden: “No. The X-rays I believe, are negative, which is a good sign. But that doesn’t mean that we don’t know the severity of the injury. We’re still looking into it and will try to let you know something as soon as possible.”

Q: How do you think Andre James did?

Coach Gruden: “He did alright. He did a good job. Really pleased with his communication. He called a lot of the shots. We did a lot of different things offensively in this game. He showcased his preparation. He made some good blocks. He made some good calls upfront. I was proud of him.”

Q: He said he anticipated moving away from tackle when he turned pro, but didn’t expect center. What was it about him that made you think he was a good fit for that spot?

Coach Gruden: “Well [offensive line coach] Tom Cable has done this for a long time, he has a lot of experience. Not only with moving players around, but he’s taken guys from defense and made them conversion players onto the offensive line. Andre just has the athleticism, the size. He has the intangibles that you look for in a center. He’s smart, he’s athletic, he’s a good communicator, he loves football. So that was an easy decision by us, but it’s a credit to him to go out there and play this well this fast. He had a great preseason. We didn’t play our starters much, so if you look back on the value of preseason football it’s for guys like Andre James to get themselves acclimated to a new position. That certainly paid off.”

Q: This is the second time in two weeks you have had to replace a key part of the offensive line with someone that did not have as much experience. What is it about that room that allows those guys to move around the line so well?

Coach Gruden: “Well I think you can say a lot about our team in that way, not just the offensive line. You see Zay Jones come in, Trevor Davis come in, Andre James, David Sharpe. I think it’s a credit to the assistant coaches, No. 1. The way they prepare these players, the way we practice. And the veterans on this team. They push the right buttons, they challenge these young guys to know their stuff. It’s a combination of a lot of things. We’ve had a lot of young players step up and hopefully that’s a good thing for us down the road here.”

Q: Derek Carr has been pushing the ball down the field more in the last couple of weeks. Is that a reflection of his confidence in the system or the offensive line?

Coach Gruden: “Well we’re seeing more man coverage. Green Bay played a lot of man-to-man cover. So did Houston. With that being said, you have some one-on-one matchups outside, you try to take advantage of some of those. We made some plays, but we left way too much out of there, I think. We left a lot of big play opportunities out there, where I thought we should’ve made the plays. It’s a combination of who we’re playing on defense, often times that impacts your play selection.”



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Q: Do you have any update on Josh Mauro?

Coach Gruden: "He's being evaluated, too. So we have a lot of guys that are over there getting looked at. We did lose Justin Philips, linebacker, for the season. He had a knee injury yesterday. We're struggling at linebacker right now with Marquel Lee and Vontaze's [Burficit] suspension. We're going to probably be looking to shore up the linebacker position here in the next 48 hours."

Q: Is there a possibility that Marquel could come back at some point?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, but as you know there's a rule. It's not just when he's ready, it's when the rules allow you to put him back up. Hopefully we can get him back up soon."

Q: There was a third down play where it looked like it might have been short, and it seemed like you were considering to challenge it. Did you get a good look at that?

Coach Gruden: "I'm not very good at challenges. I threw the flag very well, though, yesterday. I launched it (*laughing*). I have people up in the press box that are helping me. At that point and time I didn't feel like it was a challenge we had a chance to win based on the information that I had."

Q: Philips has been really the only middle linebacker you've had. Are you going to be able to plug someone in there? Or is that going to be a case of using Tahir Whitehead and Nicholas Morrow with the nickel more?

Coach Gruden: "Well like I said, we're going to try to bring in another linebacker and train him. We have Dakota Allen who didn't play yesterday, also on the team. We're thin. We have to add another linebacker certainly. Hopefully Whitehead is ready to go. He came out of the game a little nicked up, too."

Q: Arden Key said yesterday that when they were trying to bring down Deshaun Watson yesterday, they were worried about not falling on him. Do you find that you're teaching how to sack differently now?

Coach Gruden: "The pocket passer, obviously you can't sling them to the ground. You can't put your weight on them forcefully and plant them into the ground. That's something everybody coaches. But when you play a guy like Watson or [Patrick] Mahomes, a guy that's all over the place, you just have to do everything you can to possibly get them down, period. I just walked away from the tape looking at Watson, he's something else. He carried 10 times. He scrambled another 10 or 12 times to throw the football. To answer your question, we try to enforce as much etiquette as we can within the rules, but you also have to be relentless in your pursuit of the quarterbacks, especially when they're able to extend plays like Watson is."

Q: I think DeAndre Hopkins had five catches with linebackers in coverage. I'm guessing that is something that you are going to want to avoid.

Coach Gruden: "You play zone coverage, that's what happens. We don't ever play man-to-man coverage with a linebacker covering Hopkins, but we do play zone coverage like everybody else. When that happens, sometimes these slot receivers they catch passes. That's how these slot receivers make a living really – working inside against linebackers and safeties underneath coverage."



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Q: What did you think of Trayvon Mullen's tape?

Coach Gruden: "Pretty good. I thought he played pretty good. He played 58 plays. He had a couple really good breaks on the ball. He's just got to stay low. Stay true to his fundamentals. I thought he did a good job. He got an IV, I don't think he was used to playing that much, but his debut went a lot better than mine, I'll say that."

Q: Any differences this week with not having to travel?

Coach Gruden: "I'm going to actually have dinner with my wife Friday night. I kind of miss her. *(laughter)* It's been tough. I've sarcastically had fun with it. I've never seen a team go six weeks without a home game, but we were able to withstand it. We won two out of five. We would've like to win three out of five, but our guys are playing hard. I think all the travel helped our team bond a little bit. It'll be pretty neat to play in our home stadium. We have eight or nine players that have never played there. So it'll be a foreign experience once again for us."

Q: What is the message for those guys who weren't on the team when you first started this road trip?

Coach Gruden: "The message is pretty much the same. We're just going to continue to work hard. From the way we lift weights to the way we sit in the meeting rooms. The way we practice. The way we keep learning football and getting to know each other. Hopefully raise the standards of this football team. That's what we're after."

Q: What is it about this offensive line that you've been playing so well despite all the changes up front?

Coach Gruden: "We've been playing pretty good. We got balance. When you have balance, I think it's the hardest thing that there is to defend. We're running the ball with some good success. We have a really good, young back. Our tight ends can all block. They're not all one dimensional players. We're staying out of third-and-ridiculously long situations. We've been in tight football games, and Derek is playing good, too. Don't under estimate how good Derek is playing. Kolton Miller has had a heck of a year. The right tackle is everything we thought he was. Our two guards, those two guards are players. Hopefully Rodney is back with us this week because he's the catalyst for everything. We're balanced. We have good players. The guys prepare hard, they have a lot of pride and Derek is playing good."

Q: Overall how are you guys approaching the trade deadline?

Coach Gruden: "How are we approaching it? Realistic, you don't just turn on the NFL Network and listen to all the rumors and believe they're all possibly achievable. We're listening to the phone and we're making calls. We're seeing who's really available and what the price tag is. When you do make a trade, you inherit the contract and the ramifications of that. Some of these guys are going in on the last year of their contract, that's why they're being shopped. When you do make a trade, you inherit the responsibility of paying the players. Sometimes that's a decision that's tough to weigh. Then you have to decide how much you want to give up. Do you want to give up your draft picks. There's a lot of stuff here in the next five or six days. But we've made three trades. We got Trevor in here, we got Zay Jones in here and we traded Gareon [Conley] to get a third round pick. We have been pretty active compared to other teams."