



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening Statement: "Goof afternoon. I'd just like to say to all you guys, it's been fun seeing you. Sorry I'm rarely in a good mood, but for those that I won't see very much in the future, I'd say it's been a fun year. I've enjoyed being around you guys. That was a tough loss. But proud of our team, I said it last night. Darren Waller had thumb surgery today. He's going to be okay and I don't really have any other medical updates. Jalen Richard's foot was in a boot, Will Compton had a concussion, but I'll be happy to answer any questions that I can."

Q: What can you tell us about the process going forward now? You will not actually leave for Las Vegas until after Napa, is that correct?

Coach Gruden: "I believe that is, yes. We're going to have our offseason program here starting around April 15, whenever the league allows us to start. We'll have our offseason here and then we'll have training camp in Napa and my understanding is after we break training camp, we will formally move to Las Vegas. So, I guess I will get to see some of you guys some more. *(laughter)*"

Q: How important was it to re-sign Richie Incognito now and have that offensive line set?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, I think he's a big part of this team and to get Incognito for two more years is big for us. He's a leader on this team. He's an excellent player, he has a lot of life in his legs, in his body. He has the passion to still keep going and we think he's one of the best interior players in football. So, to get him back in there with Rodney [Hudson] and hopefully a healthy Gabe Jackson, the return of Trent Brown and Kolton Miller's emergence gives us, I think, an offensive line we can really be excited about."

Q: To have all those guys locked up for next year, and in some cases beyond that, how important is that in terms of continuity?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah it's huge. I mean continuity is a word that we'd like to live by here, and it's something we have struggled to do obviously. So hopefully the young tight ends, the young backs, the offensive line, we're starting to collect some pieces in the secondary and on the defensive edge of our defense. Hopefully those guys can play together for four or five years and that's when I've seen teams really take off and become competitive, really competitive when they have some continuity."

Q: Are the wide receivers a group you are going to have to address again this offseason?

Coach Gruden: "Yes. Yup, we are going to have to take a good look at it. I had a meeting with Tyrell Williams. He couldn't go yesterday, he only played a few plays. We still think he's an excellent player. We go back and I watch him in training camp and Week 1 when he was healthy against Denver, and he's a talented guy. But it's hard to play when your feet are on fire and his feet were hurting bad. It's a credit to him to play through it, but we need to get him healthy. We got to get his situation resolved, that was a lengthy discussion we had today. But we think he's an excellent football player, he's just got to get right. And I think the young kid from Clemson is special. I think he's a real fun guy to coach, [Hunter] Renfrow, and we'll see what happens. We still have some young guys that are still somewhat unproven, but we'll be looking to strengthen that group, yes."



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Q: We've seen Renfrow taking a leap the last two weeks, why was he a different player the last two weeks?

Coach Gruden: "No, he was doing well before he got hurt. He had some good games. He strung some nice games together against Detroit, Cincinnati. He had become more prominent in our plan as he was developing, and when we lost him that was a big loss for us. But we asked him to do a lot in the last few weeks and he delivered. He ran some routes yesterday that were outstanding, but to answer your question, I just think he's earned that status. When you practice the way he practices and you do the things that he does, you can't help but try and feature him a little bit more and more."

Q: You had a couple games slip away from you this year. Have you gotten better at letting that go and looking forward, or are you chewing on those a little bit?

Coach Gruden: "I'm bad at that. I'm just this miserable person. For us to play like I thought we played yesterday and not get a win is very unfulfilling, unsatisfying. It's a terrible feeling. We had two great drives to start the game and get no points. We had some tough officiating breaks certainly go against us and you got to take responsibility for that and I'm the head coach."

Q: When you hit on the draft like you did last year and some of the free agent moves you made to close the gap from last year to this year, how excited does that make you to attack it again this offseason armed with what you guys do have in the draft?

Coach Gruden: "It's exciting man, we're really excited. We are excited to know where we are going to be playing and excited to have a city that is excited about having us, and we can't wait to keep improving our team and we're very fired up. We have some resources like you say in the draft and we think the Las Vegas Raiders, the Raiders is a great brand for any player to want to play for. And we can't wait to continue building our team and I know [General Manager Mike] Mayock and his group of guys are excited as well."

Q: Losing five of the last six games after starting 6-4, is there a theme or something you could identify that was linking those games together?

Coach Gruden: "No. I think the cold weather is one thing. We got to prove we can exercise that demon. We got to play better in the bad weather. I remember when I went to Tampa Bay, they hadn't won a game in the history of the franchise in temperatures that were below 40 degrees and every single game we played that's all we heard. And we are going to continue to hear it, hear it and hear it until we prove as a West Coast team we can go out on a cold day and win."

Q: What does that take, experience or toughness?

Coach Gruden: "I think it's a combination of a lot of things. Talent, better coaching, experience, toughness. I don't know. Travel plans, pregame meals, something. We got to play better. We got to get wins on the road and we got to look forward to playing when it's hot, when it's cold, when it's nasty, when it's awful. You got to learn to love the misery and maybe we got to leave on a Wednesday next year and get acclimated to it. I'm not making excuses, but that's one theme is pretty obvious and noticeable. We got to play better in lousy weather and we got to play better period in all three phases."



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Q: Derek Carr was talking about how excited he is about where the team is right now and how close it might be. Is that a certainty at your quarterback position?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, he played good. I'm not going to get into all the next year scenarios. I'm just going to say 7-9 is a step forward. We took a step forward. Statistically, I think we took a step forward. We got to get a lot of guys healthy and we got a lot of things to look at it and evaluate before we start making any assumptions."

Q: Where did Carr make his biggest strides this season?

Coach Gruden: "I think earlier he played more of a role as a coach on the field with all the change that we had around him. We had different receivers almost every week, different tight ends, different backs, different linemen. And I think his patience and his ability to coach guys in practice and on the grass on game day was a real area of improvement. He did some good things, no doubt."

Q: What strides have you seen from the defense the last three weeks?

Coach Gruden: "Well I think you know stopping the run. Everybody talks about our sack totals being better this year. I think [Maxx] Crosby had 10. You know, that to me is a jaw-dropping number not a lot of people know about. I mean he had 10 sacks as a rookie. We got more at-bats. We got more opportunities to rush because we stopped the run better. And when it's second-and-9 or third-and-8, it's a lot more fun to rush the passer than when it's first-and-10 or third-and-1. You know what I mean? So, I think our ability to stop the run helped us, and the emergence of Crosby, Cle [Ferrell]. I think our sack totals were a lot better than what people think."

Q: How do you evaluate Clelin Ferrell's rookie year?

Coach Gruden: "I think it was ok. I think he played pretty good. I think he had five sacks, recovered a fumble yesterday, batted down some balls, played good against the run. We asked him to do way too much early in this season. We had him playing inside quite a bit. I think if you, I don't know that focus group that they have that studies all that, if you decided how many plays he played as an end and an inside interior defender, I think it would be surprising to some. He didn't do a lot of that at Clemson. So, I think next year when he becomes more of a full-time defensive end acclimated to the scheme better, I think he'll show even more and more improvement, but we're happy we have him. We're really happy to have Ferrell and Maxx and our rookie class. Proud of them."

Q: It seemed that Trayvon Mullen started to really come on towards the end of the year. How do you evaluate his rookie season?

Coach Gruden: "He is the brightest light of the whole thing for me. You know we traded [Gareon] Conley, which was hard to do early in the season. It kind of opened the door for Trayvon. And I think after the Tennessee game when you watch the Jacksonville performance, when you watch him play against the Chargers in L.A. is impressive. What really impressed me is he got carried off the field on a stretcher in that game and he's ready to practice and he's playing on the road in Denver, and he played good again. So, he's a tough guy. He's I think improved his level of play, his overall consistency. He's got a huge upside and to get our second rounder playing well is something I'm mostly very excited about."

Q: The team clearly made strides this year but 0-6 against teams with winning records.

Coach Gruden: "Not many teams have a winning record first of all. So, you need to remember that. You know not many teams in the league have winning records. I remember I got fired I was 9-7. We had a



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winning record. There's only like six of us. You know what I mean? It's a tough league to have a winning record. Chicago is 8-8. We're 7-9. I think the Colts are 7-9. I'm not going to put a lot of stock in who we beat. We beat Denver when they were undefeated and we beat Chicago. I think they were pretty darn good then. That's all I know. It's a tough league. We'll take every win we can get. Hopefully we can close the gap on Kansas City. They're clearly the best team in our division."

Q: Are you going to talk to anyone such as coaches that have experience transitioning a team to a new city?

Coach Gruden: "Not many people have done it. Maybe I'll call Jeff Fisher. I think we'll certainly try to seek some counsel from some people. But we're going to do this together. It's going to be fun. It's going to be exciting. We're going to do everything we can to get the Raiders back in the Super Bowl. That's all I know. We're going to keep working. We got work to do. But I'm proud of the progress and I know we got to play better in the cold and better against teams with winning records, but we also play pretty good at times."

Q: Do you plan to keep the coaching staff intact?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, that's the plan. You know, there's a lot of things that come up. Some of these guys are going to be offered jobs. I'm going to treat it all today just by saying that we'll see what happens and we'll do what's right and what we feel is best for our team."