



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing

Q: What's the biggest challenge for Derek Carr this season?

Coach Downing: "With him it's a matter of consistency. We've talked about it in the offseason, him being able to rely on his physical gifts to go maybe 8-of-10 on a route. But his mind and his anticipation can get him 9-out-of-10, 10-out-of-10 and better in ball placement and accuracy and all those types of things. So for him, it's just going to be a matter of things he's done the last few years. Transitioning into being an expert in those and not just good at them."

Q: When he gets better at those things, does it give you and the rest of the coaches the opportunity to be more aggressive?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, you know I think that's a game plan by game plan kind of thing. I think as we find matchups and want to exploit different matchups, we're going to have the opportunity to do that vertically. We're going to have the opportunity to do that in the run game and the intermediate pass game. I think that will be something that kind of develops with personalities as the season goes on week by week."

Q: There was one point where Karl Joseph came in and blitzed and Amari Cooper ran right past him on that side and Derek found him for a big play. Then later David Amerson jumped a route and could've had a touchdown. Would Carr take the second play with him more than the first?

Coach Downing: "I think on a case-by-case basis with those plays, what you see is Derek is kind of having the slowed down feel of the game. Each rep he takes the game slows down more and more and more for him. On a case-by-case basis and comparing those two plays, I think his rules and his progression takes him to a shortcut spot to get the ball out of his hand versus pressure. I don't want him every feeling like he's got to make the play. There would be game situations where we have to hang onto the ball for a little bit longer or we have to force the ball into coverage, but those are unique game situations. I want him to rely on his training, on his rule and then let the rest of it come by feel."

Q: Does he take the mistakes to heart more than he enjoys the big plays?

Coach Downing: "There's a lot more than meets the eye on some of those concepts and what might have happened on that route, but I know that Derek is definitely maturing and has gotten to a veteran state in analyzing his game and how he can be better. Certainly when there's a play like that where the ball is in harms way, he screwed down and makes sure he fixes whatever he can."

Q: How do you see Amari Cooper's larger physique translating onto the field?

Coach Downing: "I think at route taps, when you're a little bit more sturdy at route taps and you have that natural hand fighting with DBs, it helps you stay a little bit more in balance. It certainly helps you come back to the ball and play through the ball stronger. Those are two areas that I can say I've seen a big difference with Amari. Holding his route path as you're fighting down the field whether on vertical routes on a go or you're trying to hold your stem on a slant. When you have a little bit more girth to you, a little bit more strength, it's harder for the DBs to knock you off course."

Q: Are those areas that you identified with him in terms of improving?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, there's certainly aspects to that. I wouldn't say that I told him to get any bigger. That wasn't my choice, that's just his hard work and working with our training staff. For me, I just wanted him to become more consistent in his route running and staying a little bit more quarterback friendly at the top of his routes."



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Q: Is it fun to see a little glimpse of what Marshawn Lynch might be when you put on the pads?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, he's a fun guy to be around all the time. He's a great teammate. He's fun in meetings. He's fun in the meal room. It's certainly nice to see him out there and running around and moving the way he is. We're really pleased with where he's at."

Q: What are your thoughts on Donald Penn's situation and how do you approach training camp without him?

Coach Downing: "We absolutely love Donald, but I'll only talk about the guys that are here. That's kind of the approach that we have going in the meetings as well."

Q: Do you see the backup quarterback spot as being even right now?

Coach Downing: "I think it is even and I think there's a little bit of ebb and flow to that situation. Some days one guy might have a better day than the other. We're not going to adjust the reps accordingly and try to play that back and forth game. I like guys to develop some consistency in their pattern. That's why you see the rotation the way it was the last couple of days. We'll switch it the next couple of days. It's going to be a very fluid situation for quite a while here in the preseason."

Q: Have you seen EJ Manuel kind of reinventing himself here?

Coach Downing: "I don't care what the profession is, I think you can tell when somebody enjoys what they're doing. I can't speak to the past couple of years for EJ, but I know he's enjoying himself now. When you enjoy what you do for a living, you can show up each day with the right attitude and approach. He's certainly done that each day, found a way to get better every day."

Q: Is it a matter of getting him back in sync and executing better? How do you get his talents back out?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, I think with the quarterback position, the phrase knowledge is confidence comes to mind a lot. As he gets more and more comfortable with our system, he's able to use his footwork, the proper technique, the proper drops, the proper eye placement on zone defenders to help him be more confident in where he's going with the football. We anticipate EJ continuing the growing trend that we've seen."

Q: What progress have you see in Johnny Holton from his rookie year?

Coach Downing: "Johnny has done a nice job. He came in very, very raw. We joke about it as a staff all the time. The first time we watched him run routes in Phase 2 of his rookie season, we were sitting there going, 'Geez, this guy hasn't had much route training.' Where he's at now compared to where he was then is really a testament to his hard work and Rob Moore, our receivers coach, who's a great teacher of fundamentals. So seeing Johnny being much more natural as a receiver, understanding route stems, understanding hand placement, it's been neat to watch."

Q: Has there been extra work or reps for Holton to accomplish that in a short period of time?

Coach Downing: "Well he's hungry to prove that he's a professional wide receiver, so he's been putting in work. Both Rob Moore and [assistant wide receivers coach] Nick Holz have both been working extra with him. But that's all our guys. That's what's neat about what we have going on from a chemistry standpoint. Everyone is unsatisfied. They want to get better."

Q: Do you see Cordarrelle Patterson catching more deep balls as part of how his game is developing?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, I think his ceiling is going to be self-determined. However much work he wants to put in on developing his receiver habits, he'll be able to do anything he puts his mind to. The guy is a freak of nature athletically. He certainly has great long speed, so we're going to take the opportunity to showcase that a little bit in camp and see if he can handle it."



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Q: How does it benefit to have Carr still be working with you despite the coaching changes?

Coach Downing: "I'll tell you, we've had so many opportunities here in camp talking about adjustments, in-game adjustments. How we'll do things on the sideline. How we'll game plan. It's almost eerie sometimes how he and I can finish each other's sentences. That's something that're really comfortable to have your first time around as a coordinator. You don't have to always be the one to say, 'Hey, this is the way we're going to do things,' or 'Hey, this is the way I want to see this.' When you get to share that with your trigger man, that's a pretty special thing. So I don't take that for anything less than a blessing."

Q: How important are the tight ends in your system? Is that position a strength with the weapons you have now?

Coach Downing: "Absolutely. The tight end group has done a great job. We're really excited about adding Jared Cook. You guys have seen his length and vertical speed. Earlier we talked about being able to attack the field vertically. You have to be able to do that on the inside part of the field, too. A lot of times that's where the tight ends happen to line up. We need their speed. We need their size. Certainly, we'll give them the opportunity to make plays in the vertical passing games."

Q: What does Lee Smith add to that group?

Coach Downing: "First of all, he's a great teammate. A wonderful veteran. He's a great blocker. He works hard at everything that we ask him to do. He actually has really good hands. He's more than just a blocking tight end."

Q: Is there less unpredictability in his spot as a blocking tight end now that he's back?

Coach Downing: "Absolutely, and that's a good point. Last year when we had to put offensive linemen in that tight end spot, they would flat out disregard them as a receiver because even if we released him, they could recover and get back to him in time just because they weren't fast enough. With Lee, he's actually a little bit fast than you think and he has great hands. The guy catches everything we throw at him. It certainly adds that keep you honest element to our big 11 if you will, but Lee is more than just an in-line blocker for sure."

Q: What are your early impressions of Hood?

Downing: "I like Elijah. We had a great time in pre-camp with him, and working through some things. From a teaching standpoint, just helping him understand, shortcutting some progressions in his protections, setting up his blocks a little bit better in the run game. Bernie Parmalee has done an outstanding job with him and getting him a little bit more consistent in his tracks. We are really excited to see what Elijah has."

Q: Marshall Newhouse was brought here with right tackle in mind, and his versatility is no secret. How have you seen him respond and handle that left side and also speak to the bigger picture of versatility and where ultimately he will play this season?

Downing: "I think maybe other than center, everybody on the offensive line has to be ready to play the shell game a little bit, and Marshall certainly embodies that. He's done a really nice job filling in at left tackle right now. We have certainly been impressed with the way he has handled the competition he's going against every day. We are pleased with where he is. I think that selfless nature of, 'Hey just tell me where you need me,' is something that Marshall really showed everybody from Day 1. He said, 'Hey I don't care where you guys play me at, I just want to help where I can.' So we are very, very fortunate to have him."

Q: Do you have a sense of what you have with David Sharpe or is that something that will come on Monday and preseason games?

Downing: "You certainly can see the athleticism and the length. You can see his basketball background. I hate to cheat you with the cliché, but we will see when the pads come on."



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T Marshall Newhouse

Q: Is the switch to left tackle for the time being a big deal or not so much?

Newhouse: "No, I've done it a bunch in my career. It's not a big deal. I've always stated however I can help the team win. It's normal to me at this point."

Q: You started an entire year at left tackle in Green Bay. In recent years have you been at left tackle a lot?

Newhouse: "I have a lot of snaps. I've had reps, not as many in the game, but I've had a lot of reps at left tackle. It's just something that I played in college and flipping, which is normally not an easy thing to do, has been more comfortable because I've done it so much."

Q: Is it more mental or physical when you make that flip?

Newhouse: "It's both. It's physical. You've got your hips and your hands and the set is different, but it's mental. You're basically flipping on the plays. You have a different feel for the quarterback – one side is blindside, one side is not. So, both sides are important. There are good rushers on both sides, but there are some physical differences and a little bit of mental too."

Q: How does it affect your preparation being on the left side now as opposed to being on the right side?

Newhouse: "I think at some point, I'll get reps over there and get prepared, but I took a lot in the spring. I got really comfortable. I was in a groove. If it's going to take a little time when and if things change, I'll be ready for it. If not, I still feel like I'm prepared."

Q: I guess it shows job security as well because they trust you enough to play both.

Newhouse: "I would hope so, yeah."

Q: With the pads about to go on tomorrow, what will the battles be like with the defensive line?

Newhouse: "You can just tell today how it ramped up a little bit and physicality is going to get even more and you're going to hear them popping. Guys are definitely eager to put our best foot forward. We've got a lot to prove this season, a lot of expectations to live up to. So, it's going to start with the fronts on both sides of the ball. I think we're absolutely ready for it. I think we're excited for it. It's going to be a lot of fun, I think."

Q: When a veteran like Donald Penn makes a business decisions and decides to hold out, what is the feeling within the team? Is it just a business and you all handle business your own way?

Newhouse: "Yeah, you kind of just stay out of other guys' stuff because at some point in time it might be you. You know that's part of it. It happens all over the place at every position, so it's just part of what this business is."

Q: What are your early impressions of Derek Carr?

Newhouse: "He's on it, man. He's playing at his highest level. Outside of the spring, I've seen him on film, but he is even more impressive in person and at practice. He leads. He expects a lot out of us. He shows up, so I'm looking forward to playing with him and seeing what kind of crazy things he can do this year because he is very capable. He's got all the tools, as he's shown. He's worth the money they're paying him, so I am just excited to play with him."

Q: You played with Aaron Rodgers, it may not seem fair on one hand...

Newhouse: "I won't get into the comparison, but as far as like the echelon of QBs, Derek is well on his way."



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Q: How about matching up against Khalil Mack and facing him in practice?

Newhouse: "I'm excited, man. Again, in terms of echelon, he's up there, if not the best in the game right now. It's only going to make me better and I hope I can challenge him and make him better as well. It's going to be fun, really physical. But it's going to get us both ready for Tennessee. It's been good so far. Tomorrow is the real telling day with pads and we'll go from there."

Q: What has it been like working in with this offensive line and fitting in with this group?

Newhouse: "It's been easy. They're all humble guys, they're fun guys. They're loose guys who know how to work. That blends perfectly with me and who I am. It's also just a challenge to me to continue to improve and up my game and try to take it to where they've been. Sitting next to Pro Bowlers and guys that have been paid, that's encouraging. I'm just looking to gleam as much as I can from all the guys, the older guys... I'm one of the older guys now, but still, I am always growing always learning, so it can only help me."

Q: How much of a draw was that no matter where you play, there are three guys in either direction that are entrenched in this league?

Newhouse: "Huge. It was a huge draw."

Q: Why?

Newhouse: "I think lines are at their best when all the guys are on the same page. As soon as I got here, you can just tell the attitude they bring and just watching them on film from other teams, the attitude they bring. When there are five guys working that way, especially with the talent they have, the sky is the limit for lines like that and I want to be a part of it. I'm glad that they allow me to be a part of it. I'm glad that they allow me to be a part of it."

Q: If right tackle is where you are Week 1, would it be helpful to get some reps in that spot?

Newhouse: "More reps anywhere is always helpful, but however it shakes down is how it shakes down and I'll be ready."

Q: What have been your observations of playing for Mike Tice so far?

Newhouse: "He treats you like a pro. He expects a lot out of you. I'm sure he's changed a little bit. I know he's changed from when he was a younger coach and just his demeanor and how he handles things, but it's a mutual respect thing. From Day 1, I showed him respect, he showed me respect. He pushes me. I like that, I need that. But he also knows how to rib you and keep things loose and keep guys motivated. So far, so good. I appreciate him."

Q: How are you liking up-downs?

Newhouse: "Up-downs aren't great. I haven't done up-downs since high school and I'm trying to keep it that way. I don't love up-downs."

Q: How does Napa compare to previous training camp stops?

Newhouse: "So this is my first camp that wasn't like at the facility, so this is different. It's not that far away, but it's still different, having everything here. I literally haven't had to get into in a car and go to a place you have to commute to or whatever. It's great. We've got a breeze. It's hot here. I'll put that in quotes because I'm from Texas. This is a different kind of hot, but it's nice so far so I have enjoyed it. I guess we're only here for a couple weeks but I'm going to try to soak it up and enjoy camp as much as you can enjoy camp."

Q: Did you ride a bike in Green Bay?

Newhouse: "I rode a bike every single year in Green Bay. As unique as that was, I'm not exactly excited to ever do that again." *(laughter)*