



Oakland Raiders Transcript

LB Derrick Johnson

Q: How did you end up with Oakland? Were there other teams involved?

Johnson: "There were a few other teams involved, but Oakland was the best opportunity. Jon Gruden was a big pull in me coming here and visiting and talking to the coaching staff. It just went off well. Oakland had the best plan for me at my age that I'm at now."

Q: What was that plan?

Johnson: "The plan is evolving. The plan is a full kind of process kind of deal, so I'm at the beginning of it. Just in general, just from talking to the Raiders, they had a better plan for me. At my age, you have to be more specific as far as game planning and actually being a part of winning. Being a part of winning and Jon Gruden, his tenacity and intense motivation. His mental aspect of the game is off the roof. When he told me about that plan and he told me about the plan he had for me, I had to jump on it. I had to jump on it. I don't want to get too specific about the plan. Plans don't always work, but at the end of the day, it's a process and I'm learning everything right now."

Q: How much do you feel like you have left in the tank?

Johnson: "The main reason I'm still playing ball and chasing a championship ring just because I believe I have a lot left in the tank. I have a lot left in the tank. That's the only reason I'm back. When I get to a point where I'm like, man, I'm hanging on, I'll get out. I'll get out of the NFL. But right now, and I expressed this to Coach Gruden, I wasn't interested in some type of rebuilding atmosphere. As soon as I said that, he had that look in his eye like, you're talking about the sense of urgency to win. That's exactly right. As soon as he said that I said, 'Yes, that's what I want.' My timing, I want to win now. We're on the same page as that."

Q: What gives you the feeling that Oakland can win?

Johnson: "Talking to the defensive coordinator, Paul Guenther and the linebackers coach and the defensive coaches in general. It's a 4-3 scheme, a linebacker friendly scheme. It's a scheme that's built for linebackers to make plays. We have a lot of responsibility in this defense. With my wisdom from playing for 13 years... They ask the linebackers to do a lot mentally, just so we can make plays and that is right up my alley."

Q: What will it be like playing against Kansas City twice a year?

Johnson: "It'll be interesting. It'll be interesting. I think I've gained a lot of respect over my 13 years in Kansas City. I don't think it'll be anything crazy, but I do play for the rival team. I do understand that. I'm not blind to that, oblivious to that. I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to it. At the end of the day, you have to shut the crowd out. You have to shut everything out. The game is played on that 100-yard football field. That's where my focus will be mostly. As far as fan wise, it's kind of a big deal going to the rivalry team."

Q: Do you feel like you can be a three-down linebacker?

Johnson: "Yes, yes. Depending on mentally how I pick up the scheme. Me making plays out there on the field during practice and during the games. I'm sure that will come, more or less depending on how that goes. But I've always been a three-down linebacker. That's nothing new to me. I'm here to do whatever they want me to do. Put it like that."

Q: One thing that maybe doesn't show up on stat sheets is who you were as a person and teammate in Kansas City. What do you look to bring to this young, developing Raiders defense?

Johnson: "That's another reason why I'm here, to bring that leadership to the defense, to the linebacking corps and to this team. Being in a position playing in the NFL, we're role models. We have to conduct ourselves in that type of way off the field, too. As far as the community, I can't wait to dive into this community. Throughout the world, there's always cities and states that need help, especially unfortunate areas, lower income areas. My passion is working with kids. I've always been that way, even in Kansas City. Even though I'm in Oakland, my mind hasn't changed. I'm still an NFL player. I'm a person that has great influence and kids look up to that. If I have that influence



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and that platform, I'm going to use it to the best of my abilities and set a great example, especially in this community. I can't wait."

Q: Since you have taken the field this week, who among your new teammates has made the strongest impression?

Johnson: "We've just been with the defense. I've been out there half the time. I haven't been out there that much. I don't even know everybody's name. But I'll tell you what, our linebacking corps, when you talk about inside linebackers, I'm usually the tallest inside backer every year for 13 years in Kansas City. I'm like third or fourth when it comes to height on the linebackers chart when you start measuring us up. Just to say that, just to let you know that there's great statue when it comes to the linebacking corps here and the guys we have on this defense. Just tall guys, rangy guys, athletic guys from 54 [Emmanuel Lamur], to 59 [Tahir Whitehead] to 55 [Marquel Lee], it's pretty cool. I don't want to mess anybody's name up, that's why I'm calling numbers. They've really accepted me well even though they respect me in the league and knowing I'm coming into their linebacking corps, they're really like putting their arms around me and talking to me and making me feel comfortable, which is cool. This is different for me. I've always had to do that [with] people coming in new, but it's pretty cool to be on the other side of it, so I am up for the challenge."

Q: It's been said that it's the second year after returning from an Achilles injury that you get your burst back. Have you noticed during offseason workouts that some of that burst is back and maybe even better than it was last year?

Johnson: "You know what, that is true. That is absolutely true. This offseason I was working out and I was like, man, it's a lot different from last year coming off an injury. My burst is back, it's better than ever and it's a good feeling because it's going to help me make plays, it's going to help me be explosive, and the longer you're out from your season-ending injury, it usually gets better and it helps you out mentally. This will be my second season out from my last Achilles injury. I was healthy last year. I'm even better this year because I got a really good offseason training that I really didn't get to do last year because I was coming off of the injury. But man, I'm excited, my body is healthy. At this age, being healthy is big. That's one of my goals – if I can be healthy, I can help this team win – be an impact player."

Q: Was it or will it be strange putting on the Silver and Black and being on the other side of the rivalry now?

Johnson: "No, it was different, I don't want to say weird. It's different to put on the Silver and Black – even shirt – because we haven't put on jerseys and helmets and all of that stuff yet. Even to put on the shirt, it was different for me. But you know what, when we got in the middle of the field, when you talk ball and you start running around, tossing the football around and calling plays and going over backs, I'm very familiar to that. So, that went out of my mind really fast. And there's some great guys on this team. Derek Carr was one of the first guys to come up to me and we were just talking about the memories we had going against each other. He already said, 'I hated when you did this' or 'I thought you were going to do this and you were just playing mind games with me.' So, it was a pretty cool deal. Just a lot of people, even Marshawn Lynch, coming to you and saying, 'Finally we link up, baby. We're linked up. Try to get this thing done.'"