



Oakland Raiders Transcript

General Manager Mike Mayock

On his first months as the Raiders general manager:

Mayock: "It's a little different, I'm not going to lie to you. It's been kind of a whirlwind couple of months. I've known [Head Coach Jon] Gruden for a couple of years, but you walk in at 5:30 in the morning and he looks at you like, 'Why are you late? I've been here an hour.' It's been awesome. It's a little different. I'm really excited about the week."

Q: How difficult is it to find a trade partner in the draft if there's not a quarterback projected to go at your pick?

Mayock: "It's an interesting question. I think what's happening is obviously quarterbacks drive the process. I think as a we become more and more pass driven league, we're seeing more and more potential trade partners with people who can stop the pass – defensive linemen, corners. Obviously, the wide receiver thing is a different conversation. I think defensively, I'm hearing more and more from coaches about how do we stop this spread offense? Where are the priorities now on defense? I think that conversation is part of it also, not just the quarterbacks."

Q: How much of your personal process has changed from what you used to do in the media to what you do now?

Mayock: "You know what, at the end of the day evaluating is evaluating. When I sit in the room by myself and watch film, which I don't get to do as much of as I'd like right now. But when I do that, it's no different than what I've done the last 20 years. What's different though is evaluating free agency this year, for instance. While I had my scouts in for two weeks. We went 15 straight days, 12 hours a day sitting in a room with the scouts putting together our first draft board, but I'd have to jump in and out for free agency, for instance. I think the difference this week for me is I get more access to the kids, which is helpful. That's the biggest difference for me this week. We had two interviews last night. We're going to have eight more tonight, 60 overall. The 15 minutes with those kids are critical. The 30 visits in Oakland are critical, the local visits. The more time you get with the kids, I think, the better job you do scouting."

Q: Is there a difference in evaluating the draft from a wider perspective like you did in the past to now focusing on what your individual team wants?

Mayock: "Absolutely. What I like is for 20 years or whatever I've had to do every scheme fit there was, both offensively and defensively. What works in New England, what works in Philly or what works in Chicago. Try and understand how a GM drafts around the league. What coaches look for. Now that I get to sit down with Jon Gruden and Paul Guenther and define who we are and what we want in our building. That's been a fun process. I think it helps our scouts redefine what they're looking for when they're on the road. Understanding what Paul Guenther's defensive end looks like. What Jon Gruden's 'X' receiver looks like. I think everything over the last 18 or 20 years has helped me get to a point where I feel comfortable stepping in a room and talking about scheme with Jon."

Q: What makes this the right time and place?

Mayock: "Really what made it right for me were the people. I've had some opportunities in the past and it just maybe personally wasn't the right time for me, or I didn't feel like I had the right fit in that particular organization. The nice thing for me is I can walk over to the coach's side of the building at whatever time of the day or night and have a conversation with Jon, with Paul Guenther, with Rich Bisaccia, with Jimmy O'Neil. Go right to Tom Cable, just go right to [him] because I've known them all for 15, 20, 25 years. I've always believed the biggest disfunction in NFL buildings is the inability for the coaching staff and the scouting staff to be philosophically on the same page consistently. I think what happens is I can walk in the building Day 1 and know all those coaches. Immediately there's a bond. I think that's been the biggest thing we've been able to do in the couple of months is just build that philosophy and understand that there's really only one way to do things in our building."

Q: What characteristics are you looking for specifically in these prospects?

Mayock: "I think that's a hard question to answer because you're looking for physical characteristics when they workout. There's always the height, weight, speed measurable component and that's really important. By position,



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what you're looking for whether it's change of direction, straight line speed. Every position is a little different. I think you're also trying to take the temperature of all the players. That's again, where I'm most excited this week. We met a couple of kids last night. We have more tonight; 60 overall. How do they react in the interview room when you challenge them a little bit? How do they react after they run a 40 and they don't think they ran well? There's a lot of nuance to it. We're just trying to figure the kid out. What makes the kid tick, I think, is more important than anything coming out of this week?

Q: You said that you and Coach Gruden are looking for a Raiders star. Is that your philosophy that you want to continue, to look for the next Raiders star?

Mayock: "Well when we talk about a Raiders star, we're not talking about a star in the sense of a star in the NFL. We're talking about somebody we think fits what we're looking for ideally as an Oakland Raider. I think every team has it. They call it something different, but every team has the same philosophy. Simplistically what we're looking for is big, fast guys that can run and love the fricking game of football. That love it. They're professional. They show up every day and give you a full day of work and they can't wait to play and compete on Sunday. That over simplifies it, but that's what for us a Raider star is."

Q: Can you give us an idea of what Gruden looks for in an 'X' receiver and do you have one on your current roster?

Mayock: "I mean Marcel Ateman is our 'X' right now. Typically in most NFL systems the 'X' is the bigger wide receiver. Ateman right now is a guy that we like, but again at all positions we think we can get faster, more athletic and that's what we're going to try to do. Not just at 'X', but everywhere throughout our roster."

Q: How's the integration going with your new team? You're the rookie right now.

Mayock: "Yeah, I am the rookie. It's ironic that you kind of walk in as the rookie and you inherit a staff of scouts and personnel people. That's been really fun. I mentioned that we had draft meetings for 15 straight days, 12 hours a day. Get to know people. You're in an enclosed room with no windows, it gets kind of interesting after about eight days of that. You get to know people. I had them over to my place on Super Bowl Sunday. We worked from about 6:00 in the morning to 2:00 in the afternoon and went over and sat down, had a beer, ate some barbeque and talked about why those two teams are in the Super Bowl. You get to know people pretty quickly in this industry. I think what I missed more than anything, kind of being a lone ranger, is it's awesome to sit in your office and watch film all day long and get on the phone and talk teams and all, but having a team that you're associated with that you have skin in the game with to me is the reason we're here. I can't wait for the first regular season game. I can't even imagine what that'll feel like."

Q: What's your impression of Chris Warren?

Mayock: "Chris Warren is a big strong kid, man. I remember scouting him when he was at Texas. He was a tight end, then he became a tailback. What do you do with him? How do you play him? I think he's challenging. It's interesting with a lot of big running backs, sometimes the challenge is to be consistently physical. You've always been the bigger guy, you want to show people you're quick and all those things. I think what he did in training camp last year was he came in and he knocked a linebacker from Detroit on his back in one of the practices. He was consistently physical until he got hurt. He's a guy we can't wait to see this summer."

Q: How do you evaluate the quarterback position?

Mayock: "The quarterback position in general? In this draft? In free agency?"

Q: In this draft.

Mayock: "I think every year at this time of year there's more questions than answer at the quarterback position. I think we had a chance to work with Drew Lock. Boy, he gets the ball out quickly. [Dwayne] Haskins I think is a prototypical drop back guy that has all kinds of upside. I think the Oklahoma kid [Kyler Murray] is fascinating. Like the rest of the league, I think the kid is fascinating. It's kind of where are we going as a league at the quarterback



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position. Is he too small? Is he dynamic? I think we're all trying to figure him out. I think all 32 teams in the league are trying to figure out the entire position."

Q: How different is it to evaluate the safety position overall?

Mayock: "I'm not sure it's entirely different because I don't think there's 64 interchangeable safeties in the league right now. A lot of teams by scheme are high and low. Sometimes the other team forces you to readjust. Anytime you get a skill set where you can play both, I think it's an advantage. I just think those guys are kind of rare. You have to plan sometimes for...At the safety position you can get a big box guy that's tough as nails and can get in the box and tackle. Then the guy on the backend with range. I personally would like to have to interchangeable guys. I just don't think they're out there."

Q: Do you have to change how you evaluate the quarterback position?

Mayock: "I think over the last eight to ten years we've had to change how we evaluate almost every position and because quarterback is the primary position that's what everybody talks about. Just to give you an example, we are evaluating left tackles that have never put their hand in the dirt. Two-point stances instead of three-point. Is the left tackle going to be able to come out of his stance and block a man that doesn't want to get moved? Ten years ago, you didn't have to worry about that, same thing with tight ends. We are evaluating tight ends now that never get in line, they are out at slot receivers. Zach Ertz catches a 100-and-something passes, he's a tight end. On defense we have gotten smaller and quicker. So as we kind of bring more and more of the college spread system into the NFL we're changing everything that we do offensively and therefore defensively. I think the quarterback is at the front end of that. We are certainly changing how we look at the quarterback position, but I think it affects every position overall."

Q: How do you grade the edge rushers in this draft?

Mayock: "What I would say about the defensive line in general is that in the last ten years I'd say it is the best defensive line group we've seen, both edge rushers and inside guys. I think when you start talking about the first round of the draft, I think it's going to be dominated by defensive lineman."

Q: Anything you can share about Derek Carr and the other quarterbacks on your team currently in terms of self-scouting?

Mayock: "We've got a young quarterback that we think is a franchise quarterback that's going to be 28 years old in March. So, we are pretty happy with where we are, especially with our backup quarterback who we signed last year, [AJ] McCarron. We feel like we are pretty good at the quarterback position."

Q: The last couple of years you have had a visit from Bill Belichick during your broadcast, are you expecting a visit this year?

Mayock: "I was fortunate enough to play for coach Belichick for a couple of years, and he's been great to me over the years. I'm guessing that at this point, as good as a relationship as we have, it probably won't be as quite the free exchange of information as in the past."

Q: When you look at the Raiders long-term plans, how important is it to hit on these first round picks this year?

Mayock: "You know, people ask me that and it's really intriguing. We have to hit on them, obviously. What I keep trying to tell our staff, from A to Z, is those two seventh round picks are just as important as the three first round picks, and the college free agents that we sign after that are just as important. We are trying to build a culture and accountability and talent. We are trying to do all these different things. I think the important thing is it is easy to focus on the three first round picks, but we need to hit throughout the entire draft. We got 10 picks, that could be more or less at the end of the day. But we've got 10 picks, and we value all of them. We need to hit on a high, high percentage. We've got more needs than I can even tell you about right now, and that means we've got to hit everywhere. Free agency, draft, college free agency, everywhere."



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Q: The way the Saints use quarterback Taysom Hill, can you see that becoming a trend in the league?

Mayock: “Taysom Hill is kind of a unique guy. He ran 4.4 at his pro day at 218 pounds as a quarterback. A lot of people, like myself, looked at him as a safety and I think what [Saints Head Coach] Sean [Payton] has done with him is just been amazing. I think the kid on his own merits could be a potential replacement for Drew [Brees] whenever he retires. I think he has that much ability. So, by definition, if you are trying to bring in a Taysom Hill, there aren’t many of them. I don’t know of any more of them right now. I think what they are doing is unique. I think teams around the league are always copycat. When the wildcat started everybody wanted their wildcat quarterback. The difference is that this guy is different. He can throw, he can run, he can block. They use him in different ways. I give Sean a ton of credit just for the way he’s devised a scheme to incorporate that young man in what they do.”

Q: What kind of challenge does Patrick Mahomes and the AFC West division present to what the Raiders want to do?

Mayock: “I think our division, from a playmaker perspective, might put more pressure on the defense than any other division in football. To the point where in my office the first thing I did when I went in was I had them take all the blinds down and everything else, and I’ve got an entire wall of just the AFC West. Their rosters, their practice squad...everything, depth charts, all up on one wall. Magnetic names, just to reinforce to me every day the challenges we have, and you start talking about Mahomes and [Travis] Kelce and Tyreek Hill. The entire division when you look at depth charts of both sides of the ball with their rosters, we got a huge challenge ahead of us. I think we probably face some of the best edge rushers in football on the other side of the ball. You start talking about what Kansas City has had, you talk about what the Chargers have, you talk about that monster [Von Miller] in Denver, so we are very aware of the challenges in our division. We think they might be the most significant in the league.”

Q: Can you talk about defensive lineman who were playing out of position in college, like an Ed Oliver, and how do you project how they will work into your scheme?

Mayock: “Oliver is a tough conversation because most of us can’t wait to see what his height and weight is this week because we don’t even know. The obvious comparison is the guy that’s had a fairly good career for the Rams so far [Aaron Donald]. If you look at historic data, at analytics, it tells you that that height and weight probably shouldn’t work in the NFL, but when a guy like that runs 4.5 something at the Combine that changes the analytics a little bit. When you talk about Oliver, you are talking about a different defensive lineman, you’ve got to kind of evaluate everything he does, how he does it, what does he weigh, how fast does he run, and can he impact your scheme. I think he’s one of the guys this week that most the teams are really intrigued, not just with his height and weight, but how the kid works out and how he handles himself. He is really an interesting case because he’s a little different than the other potential first round lineman out there.”

Q: Is it more difficult to find edge rushers or interior rushers on the defensive line?

Mayock: “I think we are getting to the point in this league where we’ve become such a pass first league, that you take those guys wherever you can get them. Over the years I’ve talked to almost every top quarterback in the NFL, and I’ve asked them all the same question, ‘What bothers you the most?’ Almost every top-flight quarterback says immediate pressure up the middle. If you have a couple good edge rushers you can step up inside a pocket if it is sound up front, if you are getting pushed and some of those guys that don’t move as well, especially if you are getting pushed up the middle, that’s difficult. It disturbs sightlines, forces you to readjust your feet. I think we are at the point now where people are throwing the ball so much that you got to find a way to effect it regardless, and I think there is more emphasis on inside guys, so it is at least as equal to the outside guys.”

Q: Did you find that guys offered up more information to you when you were in the media?

Mayock: “I think one of the things I value over the last 18 years is the relationships I’ve developed around the league. I think when you are a coach’s son and you kind of grew up going from field to field to field, breaking down tape by the time you were eight years old. I think the coaches and the scout’s kind of open up to me because of that around the league. Those relationships I value, but at the same point now it is a little bit different, and I think it’s already changed. We kind of lie to each other a little bit instead of just sitting there and opening up our draft boards.”



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Q: Do you consider quarterback a position of need for your roster?

Mayock: "I think Derek Carr is a franchise quarterback, I truly believe that. Now, do I also believe it's a general manager and head coach's job to keep their eyes open to improve any position on a football team? Sure, but I think it's really difficult to try and improve over a franchise quarterback like the one we have in our building right now."

Q: Who are some of the young guys on the Raiders defense that you are excited about?

Mayock: "I'm excited to see year two development in some of our rookies last year. Arden Key, he had to play more snaps than he probably should have had to play as a rookie last year. He hung in there, especially in the run game. We'd like to see him take a big jump, especially in the pass game this year. That's one guy. Maurice Hurst and P.J. Hall, our two defensive tackles that we drafted last year. Really excited about both of those kids. P.J. is an explosive guy. He needs to take a big jump in year two. We are expecting a jump in year two. Thought Hurst had a solid year, looking for more this year. I think those guys that we drafted last year early...I think the biggest jump you can get in an NFL career is typically year one to year two and we are looking for that jump this year."