



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jon Gruden

Opening Statement from Head Coach Jon Gruden: “That was a lot of good work. Some really good things. Things we’re really excited about and obviously we have some things to clean up but two really good days. I compliment the Rams and their staff and their players and our players and coaches did a good job. We had one scuffle that was uncalled for but I thought for the most part our players played hard and we got a lot of work done.”

Q: What was your main takeaway from your guys after having the two joint practices with the Rams?

Coach Gruden: “We’re a better team. We’ve gotten better. That doesn’t mean much in terms of wins and losses but we’ve gotten better. Both lines of scrimmage, offensive line, defensive line. I think we competed better and I’m pleased. I thought A.J. Cole put on a punting display today. That was big. Carlson kicked the ball through the uprights, which we like. And I thought the effort was good. So we got some things to clean up and we’ll do that.”

Q: Do you have any information on Gabe Jackson regarding his injury today?

Coach Gruden: “We’re concerned obviously. Really concerned about him but we’ll get more information here when we can be specific for you. I don’t want to speculate.”

Q: Did you see how that happened?

Gruden: “Yeah he just got rolled up a little bit unfortunately. Hope he’s okay.”

Q: How are you feeling about the Hard Knocks cameras at this point? Have you felt it to be a distraction at all?

Coach Gruden: “I don’t, I try not to think about it honestly. They’re professional and you know [General Manager]Mike Mayock’s a guy you should talk to. He’s done a nice job collaborating with them on the proximity, who’s wired and etc. I got more on my mind than Hard Knocks honestly.”

Q: I’m not sure how much Gabe Jackson would have played in the first preseason game anyway but who needs to step up?

Coach Gruden: “Oh we’re missing Denzelle Good obviously. So it would be a great opportunity for a guy like Denver Kirkland who’s been here for a few years. We brought in Jonathan Cooper to help us out at left guard. We’ll have to put our heads together and take a look at where we’re going if we need to.”

Q: Can you give us an update regarding who will play or how much in the first preseason game?

Coach Gruden: “You’re not going to see some of the starters. You’re just not going to see them. You saw them today. You saw them yesterday. They took about 120 reps so we’re going to take a look at some young players, some guys that need the opportunity, and I don’t have that for you right now but I’ll have it for you tomorrow.”



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Q: Do you anticipate rookies that have been getting first team reps to be playing?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah a little bit. You know we got to see what the health of this team is. We had a hard time today. We only had one personnel group in. We had limited tight ends so we had to go with one personnel group almost the entire day with the exception of about ten plays. So we got to see who's healthy at tight end, which receivers are healthy and when we have that we'll go with our game plan."

Q: Have you heard from Antonio Brown yet regarding him gathering information?

Coach Gruden: "He's still gathering. I don't have any information other than that."

Q: Does he have frostbite? Is that an accurate report?

Gruden: "I'm not, like I said, I'm not going to get into the exact nature of the feet. I'm just not."

Q: Since the team is relocating, are you surprised that fans are still showing up in big numbers?

Coach Gruden: "It's just great. You know I think it just goes to show you, once a Raider, always a Raider. We have very loyal fans. It's going to be heartbreaking in some ways. It's going to be ultra-exciting in others to see the future of this franchise but Raider fans are Raider fans. They're the best. We appreciate their support today. It was fun."

Q: What do you think about Derek Carr and how he's operating the offense?

Coach Gruden: "I like Derek, you know we had some tough downs today. I called some plays that weren't designed for base defense and they outnumbered us a few times. When you play second and 10 and third down against the Rams for a 15-play period, good luck. You know it's a great lesson. Let's not have Aaron Donald and [Michael] Brockers and these guys get to all their things. So it was a great learning experience, but I think Derek's playing great for the most part. He took care of the football and made some big plays down the field again today."

Q: Coming into these joint practices you wanted to get a look at your DB's going up against their receivers. What did you see there?

Coach Gruden: "I'm pleased. Unfortunately I don't think Nick Nelson got the work. Nick Nelson's been a real surprise for us the last couple months. But I think Conley's getting better. I really am excited about Isaiah and Treyvon, our two rookie corners. They're not intimidated. It's not too big for them so far and they have progressively gotten better and they can do a lot of things with their length and with their size."

Q: Josh Jacobs showed a couple of nice runs during the inside running period. Are you eager to see him in a real practice game?

Coach Gruden: "Yeah, you know we have to use this as preseason in some ways. We're not going to go out and give Josh Jacobs 35 or 40 carries in August. But he carried the ball a lot in the last two days. I think you see vision. You see patience and you see burst. And what you haven't seen is live full speed



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tackling and hopefully he gets a couple shots in August, but our fans will have to wait to see most of that when the Broncos come to town.”

Q: You also said you wanted to see your O-Line against the Rams defensive front that’s pretty stacked. How do you think they fared against them today?

Coach Gruden: “Pretty good. You know we got to look at the tape. You know, I’m going to be honest with you, we have to go back and look at things. We had some very good running snaps today against a very good defense and a loaded box and I like that. We ran into some tough looks against some good players and made yards. We also have some things we got to clean up. It’s not just the offensive line, it’s the tight ends, the backs and the receivers and the play callers.”

Q: What do you see from J.J. Nelson at receiver?

Coach Gruden: “Good player man. You know he’s a guy that’s getting to run all the routes. I think he was more of a vertical stretch guy the last couple years but we’ve put him in the slot, we’ve put him everywhere with Antonio out and Ryan Grant didn’t play, so somebody has to step up. Every day, if you look at the film, Nelson is making big plays deep and Derek likes him and I think that’s something we’re going to continue to probe.”

Q: Ryan Grant looked like he was favoring his back a little bit?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah he got kicked in the back. He got a back contusion of some kind and those can be day-to-day. Hopefully he can play in the game. If not, we’ll see some other young players.”

Q: Are you down a couple linebackers in Nicholas Morrow and Kyle Wilber?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, Wilber unfortunately pulled up with a sore back. Couldn’t play yesterday, couldn’t play today. He’s day-to-day. And Nick Morrow has a tooth, has a dental appointment today that we couldn’t pass up. So he’s excused. I talked to the dentist.”

Q: There were some military personnel today. I saw Charles Woodson talking to them. What’s it mean to have them out here?

Coach Gruden: “It’s great to see ‘Wood’ [Charles Woodson] out here too. We’re trying to bring Woodson back to the Raider organization and the military is always great. You know, their support for this country, what they do, is well documented and we love having them here. Love it.”

Q: Was Warren Sapp out here too?

Coach Gruden: “Yeah, Sapp’s out there so it was a little loud in the hotel last night. It’s great to see Warren. He’s one of the best players I ever coached.”



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LB Tahir Whitehead

Q: What do you feel like the defense got out of these two days of joint practices against the Rams offense?

Whitehead: "I think the last two days were great for us because you are going against, obviously, a top ranked offense, great team, went to the Super Bowl last year. Had the opportunity to open the season last year against them and the last two days was definitely a good challenge for us to see where we were as a whole, as a defense see how far along we are, and I think things went well. There was a lot of back and forth. In year two of the scheme I think we are a lot further than we were last year."

Q: It seemed like the intensity today was higher than yesterday with the Rams. What was your take on today's joint practice?

Whitehead: "It's always like that the second day, man, because day one if you lose, which I say we took the 'dub' yesterday, and then the tempers are flaring and the coach is going to get on your case a little bit more, so you are going to go out there and try to get a little extra chip in, but at the end of the day it was all competitive. It was good. It's the nature of the game and no one really went after each other seriously, but it was a good day."

Q: How much can this really help you evaluate where you're at playing against a Super Bowl team like the Rams?

Whitehead: "It goes a long way, like I said. Top ranked offense. They are firing on all cylinders. They pretty much have the same guys, same offense intact from last year. So, for us to go out there and be able to go out there and see how we measure up, I think we did a good job the last two days."

Q: Was there an area that surprised you of how ready you are or how close you are?

Whitehead: "I think in all phases everything went well. There's nothing that pretty much stood out to where you go, 'Man, we need to work on this.' Obviously, it's never perfect, but you just keep working at it. We are all pros. They get paid like we get paid. They are professionals like we are professionals. They are going to make plays, we are going to make plays. It's just a matter of limiting their big plays and how many plays they make, and we come out on top."

Q: You played more snaps than anybody on this defense last year on a team that didn't have a ton of depth. As you look around you now what do you see with some of the additions in terms of potential defensively?

Whitehead: "Experience. Experience goes a long way. I think even the young guys that were on the team last year that played a bunch for us, experience goes a long way, and whenever you have opportunities to get more familiar with a scheme, or anything to that standpoint, is that you feel that much better the next year. So, this year you get to see year two guys, year three guys with that experience that are just coming along a lot better."



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Q: How would you evaluate as a group the way you guys did covering their tight ends?

Whitehead: "I think we did a great job. Definitely improved yesterday and as the day went on today. It's a matter of just putting your eyes where they need to be and just locking in and doing your job. That's really what it all boils down, especially with all of the things that they run in their offense. Run a lot of jet motion, a lot of orbit motion and everything, so you really have to be locked in to where your keys are and doing your job and not really trying to compensate and do other people's jobs."

Q: Have you seen Nicholas Morrow make strides in that area?

Whitehead: "Definitely. Nick is extremely athletic, he's smart. Being as though he used to play safety he has a great understanding of route concepts and things. He does his homework. He understands what routes are coming, he reads the quarterback, breaks on the ball and I think as a group we definitely came a long way in that."

Q: What do you see from Vontaze Burfict as an on the field, fly to the ball type player?

Whitehead: "He's in great shape. He's running around. Like I said, experience goes a long way and with him being familiar with the scheme for really pretty much most of his career, he comes in and there's not like there is a learning curb or anything like that. He comes in, he's able to hit the ground running. He's able to bring the whole group along with some of the stuff that he's familiar with from when they played in the scheme in Cincy. And then playing a lot of the defensive snaps last year I am able to give him some of the new little kinks that we have in the system now, so we are able to piggy back off of each other, teach other some stuff and we'll go out there and have a good working relationship."

Q: Has it been nice to add some veterans to your position group?

Whitehead: "At the end of the day, you got to go out there and do your job. It doesn't matter what's going on around you. My job is to do my job. I can't worry about doing the other 10 guys jobs, so if my job is to call the play, get everyone lined up and then execute that from there, that's all I can do. So, I'm not going to say what's better, what's not. At the end of the day, the experience we have in year two is a lot better."

Q: What did you think about the support from Raider Nation out here?

Whitehead: "I expect nothing less. It runs deep. They are die-hard Raiders fans through and through and that's what I love about it. They never waiver. They might talk a little smack, get on your case a little bit, but at the end of the day they are not going anywhere and that's what I love. They are going to be right in that stadium through thick and thin, rooting and chanting and raving about everything throughout the whole game. Just going to take it one step at a time. Right now we out here, have another year in the Coliseum and we're just going to embrace it and just put on a show."

Q: Do you notice the Hard Knocks cameras?

Whitehead: "No, you don't notice them at all. They do a great job staying out of the way. If you are that type of guy, you want to be in the camera, you want to be seen, you want to be heard, then that's when



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they ask to mic you up and they'll follow you around and they do that type of stuff, but outside of that I think they do a great job of doing their job and just staying out of the way in the back and haven't really noticed them at all."

Q: How difficult is it to watch a teammate get injured and taken off the field when you are trying to prepare and have practice?

Whitehead: "Obviously, Gabe [Jackson] is a great player and I didn't see what happened. I didn't hear about it until after practice, but hopefully he's okay and we just go from there. I think he'll be fine."