



## ***Oakland Raiders Transcript***

### **Oakland Raiders Pre-Draft Press Conference**

#### ***General Manager Reggie McKenzie and Head Coach Jack Del Rio***

**Q: With the news on Reuben Foster's diluted drug sample, what does that do to him on your board and your evaluation of him?**

**McKenzie:** "I mean, we just take everything into account. That's all part of the process. Where he goes and all of that, we kind of leave it in the room. All that information that comes when we do our due diligence, and he'll go on the board accordingly."

**Q: Does signing mostly offensive players in free agency change your approach to the draft as far as what guys are at the top of your board?**

**McKenzie:** "We're going to take the best player. There are some good defensive players in this draft, but we're going to follow our board like always."

**Q: Did knowing this is a good defensive class play into your moves in free agency?**

**McKenzie:** "That played into it great. It's nice to have good players coming out on both sides of the ball, but when you have good defensive players, that's good. It's not like we didn't try to get defensive players during the offseason. The best ones were on the offense that could help us, more impactful."

**Q: What do you look for in a guy who plays linebacker?**

**McKenzie:** "Well, we both love good football players, number one. We want good linebacker play. Both Jack and I know what a good linebacker is supposed to look like. We're going to get us a couple, I hope, at some point before we play in September. Whether they're in this draft or post draft or trade, somebody gets released, we're going to do everything we can to upgrade our team; every position, including linebacker."

**Q: How are you going to handle the players with the move to Las Vegas?**

**Del Rio:** "Well, maybe at some point it will be, but right now it's all about the here and the now. We're definitely here now. We know we're going to train here this year in this building. We're going to play over at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum. We're going to be here and be present in the moment. For us, it's all about it's a day-to-day, week-to-week league, really. Worrying about something three years from now, I think that's really more for other people. For us, for coaches, for players, we're going to focus on the tough schedule that just came out on Thursday. How we can dig into our preparation and attack each game with the necessary level of preparation and then go get it."

**Q: How does drafting low in the order impact or change how you're looking at this draft?**

**McKenzie:** "The one thing that's been more difficult, you have no idea who's coming down at 24. When you're picking four or five, you can have a clue, a few players that you can pick from. The draft is a funny thing. Players that you don't think may be at the 24, could be there sitting right in front of your face. We're going to study it continuously until that day. Then you never know how trades go. It's a different thing. But when you're down that low in comparison to where we have been the last few years, it's a different approach."

**Q: Do you need to know if Marshawn Lynch will be a part of the team before the draft starts to know where you stand at running back?**

**McKenzie:** "Yeah, at some point you'd like to know. Prior to the draft is that point. You would like to know that. Our door is open and we're not shutting the door until that time pretty much. But who knows after that. I'm not going to say never, but the door is still open."



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**Q: Do you need to factor the potential of Aldon Smith being back before the draft as well?**

**McKenzie:** "As far as Aldon and the draft, our thought process is just on the draft, not considering Aldon at this point. He's still on the suspension list, so we're not considering him at this point."

**Coach Del Rio:** "We're too early in the offseason to be worrying about a particular player, whether he's going to be with us or not. Obviously, as you get closer to the regular season, then you begin to tailor your systems to make sure you're taking advantage of the players you have available. Utilize their talents. At this point, you know, it's more of a broad base system instillation and teaching some of the basic principles and fundamentals that we believe in. We'll spend a lot of time with that and we'll tailor it down as we get closer to the regular season."

**Q: Have you discussed moving up in the first round?**

**McKenzie:** "Well you know, you really want to add good players and this is a good draft to add players. I will not hesitate if I have to move up a little bit to get an impact player that we feel is on our board. If we have to move up a little bit, I will not hesitate."

**Q: Do you know how the draft pick announcement in front of the Welcome to Las Vegas sign will go?**

**McKenzie:** "From what I understand that will be on Saturday. I don't know the particulars of it, but I do know that Saturday picks will be made in Las Vegas."

**Q: Tell me a little bit about how draft day works for the coaches and the front office?**

**McKenzie:** "Draft Day is a fun day for us. The hard work is leading up to it. Draft Day is really for you guys, with the media and the hoopla in Philly. Now the work that goes on during the draft is calls and all of that stuff is made. All you do is sitting. We're sitting, waiting for the 24th pick. Phone calls are made, but many times they're not made, so you just sit there and wait until your pick and pick the player. It's not as, the way you say, 5 a.m. making phone calls. No, I'll be asleep at 5 a.m."

**Q: What do you see as the team's biggest need right now?**

**McKenzie:** "Well, as far as Jack and the team is concerned, I'll let him answer the question, what he likes to have. What we want as a team moving forward, we just want more impact players. You can never have enough playmakers on both sides of the ball and depth on both sides. That's when you come in and try to get you the best player that can do those things. We're not just going to plug holes if that's what you're asking. We're going to get some good football players regardless of who we have here."

**Del Rio:** "Yeah, collect good players. That's what you're all about. I think you always fill in with other guys that have an opportunity to compete and create roles for themselves and whatever they make it, it becomes. I mean, Jalen Richard is a great example of that last year. We let a young man come in and compete, he earned his way. We got even more than we thought we were getting in a free agent. This is the time of the year where it's a lot of fun, where we spend a lot of time, effort and energy evaluating these prospects and that's what they are. They're prospects. They're not any known quantities here, you're talking about projecting what guys are going to do coming from the college game into the NFL. It's an inexact science and it's a lot of fun. It's a little bit like Christmas for a coach. You get players and they're like gifts and the better you select and they better the impact they make, the better your team becomes. Reggie's done a great job of bringing in some good core players that are good people and good teammates. We look to add a few more next weekend."

**Q: What are your impressions of the schedule?**

**Del Rio:** "Well, tough schedule. You know, with nine road games is a challenge. Seven home, nine on the road. There are challenges there. We have three out of four to start the year on the road and three out of four to end the year on the road. So, those are tough things to get through playing in the East, a lot of travel involved. We have to handle our business that way and be real good with that. It's a challenging schedule for sure. We're going to need to dig in, compete, and be as strong as we can each week."



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**Q: Is it safe to say you're going to err more on the side of defense through the draft as opposed to offense?**

**McKenzie:** "Don't be surprised if I draft all offensive players. (*laughter*) How about that? Like I said earlier, it's a good defensive draft. Hopefully we can great couple of defensive players that can help our team. But, like we both said, we just want to help this football team, regardless of who comes at a spot whether it's first or seventh round. And hopefully we get some good players after the draft. That's the plan, we just want to keep stocking and let the chips fall."

**Q: What did you get out of the meeting with Marshawn Lynch?**

**Del Rio:** "Well, it's just part of the process. I mean, I've been familiar with Marshawn in the past. But it's just a part of the process and doing our due diligence, seeing where he is and talking about expectations here and how they match up and things like that. So, that's part of the process. I'll let Reggie handle it from there. But, we did spend some time with him, myself and with some of the offensive coaches."

**Q: Can you say if he wants to play football again?**

**Del Rio:** "Every indication I got was that he was excited to play for the Oakland Raiders."

**Q: How much of the pre-draft process is related to getting guys that stay out of trouble and how much of it is the culture in which the players enter here?**

**McKenzie:** "I definitely think it goes hand-in-hand. I mean, guys come in squeaky clean and they can turn one way or the other. So, doing our due diligence pre-draft and drafting good character, high-character players is definitely from Day 1, one of the philosophies that we uphold. But, you never know when whether it's vain, money, attention, it could go either way. And that's where the staff comes in, you know? I think Jack's done a great job of creating a culture within this team to teach players that it's family around here. You don't really want to disappoint your family. Culture is good and when you're around good people, that helps. It helps foster. Even with some of the bad, you know, guys that are floating in between, once they see what the leaders are doing, they kind of get in line. So, hopefully that continues. But, we're talking about 20, 22-year old young meant that are coming into this thing. Let's not be so quick to beat them up when they make a mistake."

**Q: Do you talk to Director of Player Engagement Lamonte Winston pre-draft or is that once the players are in the building?**

**McKenzie:** "He's involved in both aspects. He's involved in part of the culture which Jack helps create around here and they're always in constant communication and likewise with us before the draft when we go with certain players."

**Coach Del Rio:** "I think part of the process is once they get here is the education piece, the expectation piece, understanding how we do things, what our culture is like and that's from the veterans that are here now. They take ownership. When I got here day one I talked about it being a player led, this is a player's league and it needs to be player led. So, the veterans are carrying the torch and when guys come in the locker room now, Derek Carr and Donald Penn, Khalil Mack, these guys are hitting them up right away about how we do it. So, expectations are laid out. Obviously, they're laid out by me as well and the coaches, but the leaders in the locker room, the veterans in the locker room is really the key. And I think that's where we continue to add good, quality people that are good teammates and we're going to continue to look for that. That doesn't isolate you and doesn't ever make it where it's impossible to have things happen, but it's going to be less likely. It's going to be less likely you're going to have issues. And, obviously, I'm very proud of our guys the fact that we haven't and we want to keep that going."

**Q: How do you find prospects that just hate to lose and love to win?**

**Coach Del Rio:** "That's part of what we try to do with our scouts and coaches and all the work that goes into knowing as much as we can about these prospects before they get here. Obviously, you love to have guys that love the game that are going to be good teammates, good players and have that refuse-to-lose mentality."



## ***Oakland Raiders Transcript***

**Q: Do you believe that over the years the cohesion between the scouting department and coaching staff has gotten even better?**

**Del Rio:** "It's been unified since Day 1. Reggie and I are very unified and much on the same mission and that is to bring a world championship home to this organization. Everything we're doing is attacking that, adding these impact players where we can. As you continue to strengthen your team, you have guys that you've drafted that soon will become free agents, and there's a whole different phase that we're about to go through as an organization as you begin to mature, some of those players have to be re-signed or not. Those are decisions you have to make in all of this. This is year three for us working together and I feel like the relationship with the scouts and the coaches and the sharing of information is excellent. We want to continue to work that way."

**Q: Derek Carr said he wanted his contract done before training camp. Are you confident you guys can get that done in that timeline?**

**McKenzie:** "I feel good about it. When both sides want to get it done, that's a great first step. I'm looking forward to getting it done by then."

**Q: For both of you guys, does it seem already like it's been 32 years since you went through the same draft? How different is the whole process now, as opposed to when you went through it after college?**

**McKenzie:** "Way to make us seem old! We were kind of kidding about some of that stuff in the draft room yesterday with the scouts. I always tell stories about 'back in the day.' The draft has come a long way but the excitement never changes. I can remember like yesterday. The media part of it has changed drastically, but trying to figure out where you're going to be as a 21-year-old, 22-year-old, that doesn't change. The excitement to play football as a job, I still feel that adrenaline to be a part of football at this point in my life. Time has flown by. Thirty two years, that's a long time but it doesn't feel like that. It's a great feeling to be a part of it still and to see young men like that, we've been through this. We kind of know what they're going through so we can share stories. It's a fun time, I still feel it. It's a great feeling."

**Del Rio:** "It's a great time in their lives. A lot of emotions, a lot of unknowns. Your life is getting ready to change. You're headed somewhere. Sometimes you go to a place where you are familiar with the market, sometimes you go where you have no idea. Your family and your friends follow you on your journey. It's an exciting time for these young men. It's a lot of fun for us as we evaluate them and see how they do. Their lives are about to change dramatically."

**Q: Back then it was only one day, right?**

**Del Rio:** "That's how I remember it, a long day."

**Q: Do you remember getting that call and who called you?**

**Del Rio:** "Yeah, Bum Phillips. Bum Phillips called."

**McKenzie:** "Yes, I remember that. I got drafted way later than Jack. It was almost bedtime for me but I couldn't sleep at all. Mr. Davis' secretary called and put the defensive coordinator on. I do remember that. Bob Zeman, I talked to him."

**Q: Your owner has been outspoken about a zero tolerance policy against domestic violence. How does that impact you guys if a player comes up that you're considering?**

**McKenzie:** "What we do, we research everything. We get all of the information. We will not make a decision until all the information is in front of us. With certain issues, like domestic violence, we consider that and we really look into everything that is surrounding that. Every decision will be well-researched so if it's one way or the other, we are going to make it where that decision is based on all the facts, all the research and on the kid moving forward."



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But yes, we hold that very dear to what we do, as far as who we bring in, absolutely. We will not tolerate that at all."

**Q: At this point in the process, is your draft board cemented barring player injury or character issue that might arise between now and then? Is it done at this point?**

**McKenzie:** "You're saying is the hay in the barn? For the most part, yes. We're not going to play musical chairs. We know where we want the players. The final touches are what they are, but most of the work has been done."

**Q: Some teams have X number of players that they consider draftable players. Some teams have said they have 175 players on our board, some have said 75. What number does that look like for you?**

**McKenzie:** "Next question. Thanks for asking." *(laughing)*

**Del Rio:** "I could answer. It's a lot."

**Q: A lot of love for the Raiders nationally, the Monday night game on Christmas, three Sunday night games. What does that say that you'll be on the national spotlight?**

**Del Rio:** "I think we have an excellent schedule. It's a very challenging schedule. We look forward to playing in some of those prime-time games that the league has placed us in. I think you come off a year where you're doing some good things and there's some excitement and you get those opportunities. We're proud of that."

**Q: A few years ago you took a player that maybe had some issues in the past, and when we asked you about it you said at the end of it, you went with your gut. How much of it is that, the feeling you get when you're looking in their eyes?**

**McKenzie:** "You have to feel the guy. Like I said earlier, we're dealing with young men, whatever the case may be, you try to gauge and see, 'Is this a malicious situation? Will it continue to be an issue?' If your gut is telling you to give this young man a shot, I try to lean towards that. I'm not going to discourage the kid for a mistake."

**Del Rio:** "The one thing about that, too, that I'd touch on is that the scouts spend a lot of time over years collecting information. You have good relations, you know the janitor, you know the trainer, you know different people that interact with these young men on a day-to-day basis. Not only that, but then you come in and you've got that information and you see how they respond to other people in your building, in the interview process, with the coaches during spring, with the scouts during spring. So much goes into it. At the end of the day, it may come down to making that kind of call, but there's a lot leading into it that helps with that decision."

**Q: It seems year after year that you guys sign an undrafted free agent that comes in and contributes. How rewarding is it for you to find those diamonds in the rough that aren't drafted?**

**McKenzie:** "It's very rewarding. If we sign him as a free agent, we may have had him on the board as draftable, but getting guys post draft, that helps you down the road. To maintain a consistent winner, you have to hit on some of those guys. You have to. The way that the contracts are these days, you have to have some of those type players to help you win football games year in and year out."

**Q: What was your impression of Joe Mixon when you guys met with him?**

**McKenzie:** "We thought he was a really good kid. He came off very well and explained each and everything, the questions that we had. He had an explanation and he was up front about everything. The kid really came across as a good kid."

**Q: How is the organization prepared to handle backlash if a situation were to occur with him?**

**McKenzie:** "When stuff like this happens, whether it's domestic violence or drunken driving, whatever issue that comes up, we'll be prepared to answer questions. We'll do our research and if we make a decision, we're going to prepare to have answers for each and every decision that we make."



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**Q: What do you think having John Pagano in this building will do for Derek Carr and what kind of role can he have on Derek's development?**

**Del Rio:** "I think everything adds up. When I coached in Denver and joined up with Peyton Manning, there were some exchanges there about things that he saw that we did and maybe some things that we weren't doing anymore. There's always that exchange of information that can benefit both sides."

**Q: Is the situation with Marshawn Lynch something where you have to figure it out before the draft so you know if you have to draft a different style of running back than DeAndré Washington and Jalen Richard?**

**McKenzie:** "Like I said, I would like to have an answer, but it's not going to be the end all. If it's a good back that we like, and we're not going to go out of our way to just grab a certain big back, if that's what you're asking. We feel good about the young backs we have and if we can add another back, we will. Like I was saying earlier, we're trying to get some more impact players and if it's Marshawn, if it's whoever, we're going to do it."

**Q: In regards to Marshawn Lynch, is it between you and him at this point before it reaches the Seahawks?**

**McKenzie:** "That's just part of the process. The Seahawks are still involved too. The league is still... He has to reinstate. It's a process. It's just not one little thing, one little hurdle. There's a couple of things that have to be done."