



Oakland Raiders Transcript

Head Coach Jack Del Rio

Opening Statement: “Obviously, real proud of our guys. Great win to open the season on. I thought all three phases right away made their mark on the game. Opening kickoff coverage was excellent and the first two kicks were really good. Defensively, go out and get that fumble. Get them to third down, you’re going to get off the field, but even better yet, forced a fumble, a sack-fumble there with Bruce [Irvin]. Great to see. Then we got points. We like to make seven, but we got points there. The idea of starting fast, it was accomplished. We talked about having a lead at the end of the first quarter. Going into this game, last year, they were the best in the league at getting a jump on you in the first quarter especially at home. So that was important. Then we closed well. We really did. We made plays at the end, showed a lot of grit, showed a lot of heart. Really proud of our guys. Obviously, with that there’s a ton of things we need to do a whole lot better going forward, but I think we all understand that. Happy to have gone in there and get that win. Excited about having our home opener this week with Atlanta coming in.”

Q: Is closing out a game like that on the road the next step for the football team that you’ve been talking about?

Coach Del Rio: “Well, we talked in the offseason about the next step being to learn how to win. What it takes to win games. We learned how to compete last year. We learned how to be resilient and keep fighting and fight every play in games. This year, part of that next step, if you will, is to understand how to finish these games. You’re going to be in close games. If you’re in the NFL, how many of our games this weekend, this league, were close. They came down to the last possession. They came down to how you perform in the last possession, whether the guy makes a kick or not. It’s tight. The games are tight. Being able to function and thrive in those situations is huge.”

Q: Does winning like that give this season a jolt?

Coach Del Rio: “Sure. They’re all independent, but I do think there’s opportunity to build on a win. We’re going to correct either way, correct with a smile. (*laughing*) You go through things, it’s just the nature of our business. Half the teams today are happy and half are disappointed. We’re all going forward, I can promise you that. One thing we have to do in our league is you have to go forward. We’ll have this time here together, rehashing kind of yesterday a little bit, but really our full staff is already gone forward for Atlanta.”

Q: What went through your head to go for the win instead of the tie?

Coach Del Rio: “Well a lot of things are a part of that. I prefer to keep strategy inside, in-house. I would just tell you a lot of factors went into it. A lot of things were considered. At the end of the day, you have to go with what you believe is right for your football team. I believed that we would come back and win that game. I believed that going for it was the right thing to do. I let them know early, that that was what we were going to do. Derek [Carr] took that out to the huddle to start that last drive. It’s like, ‘Hey, we’re going to go down and win this game because after we score this touchdown, we’re going to go for two.’ Then Kenny [defensive coordinator Ken Norton, Jr.], get ready because defensively after we score two, they’re going to have a little bit of time left potentially, and we’re going to need to keep them from getting a field goal up. That’s what I set out and that’s what we did.”

Q: Are you a gambling person?

Coach Del Rio: “I’m not a gambler in terms of I don’t do much at the horse races or go to the track or casinos or things like that. I’m not a gambler. I’m not a gambler, but I do believe in having the courage to do what I think is best for this football team. I understand that with that, questions get asked. Good or bad, I’m willing to do that when I’m doing what in my gut I believe is the right thing and part of that was showing the belief in our football team – showing the belief in Derek Carr, showing the belief in Michael Crabtree. Showing the belief in our group to go down and do the things we needed to do to win that game.”



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Q: Have you been in that situation before?

Coach Del Rio: "I don't believe so. Don't believe so. I was asked that last night. I don't believe so. I mean I've been in some overtime games. I've been in some different situations. That exact set of circumstances, that came up last night." *(laughing)*

Q: How did Donald Penn handle playing at right tackle for the first time in 15 years?

Coach Del Rio: "I think [offensive line coach] Mike Tice did a phenomenal job. I think the offensive line did a phenomenal job. Guys adjusted and carried on. It was really awesome to see. We do work on contingency plans, that's probably as far [as we plan]. I mean, that's exhausting it right there. *(laughter)* We, in fact, had Lee Smith up next. If anything happens, what are you going to do? You have to go to somebody. So, yeah, those kind of things can unfold occasionally in our league and being able to have a veteran coach like Mike who's been in many of these battles and have him calmly say, 'Hey, here's what we're going to do,' and those guys buying in and going out and getting it done, that was big for us."

Q: Outside of the media, has Donald Penn taken a snap once in a while on the right side of the line?

Coach Del Rio: "Outside of the media, a lot of things have happened." *(laughter)*

Q: Are there any updates on Matt McCants and Menelik Watson?

Coach Del Rio: "Nothing to update. I know they had tests done today. I don't think anybody is in a significant category. We'll just see whether or not they're going to make this week."

Q: How was the run blocking on the 75-yard touchdown run by Jalen Richard?

Coach Del Rio: "I saw a lot of really good efforts up front. I saw Kelechi [Osemele], in particular, he mauled some guys. I mean, he really was powerful. And, you know, the receivers were blocking. You look down on that run, take a look at Seth [Roberts] and the blocking he did and did throughout the game. So, yeah it was a good effort. We've talked about wanting to run the ball. I was really pleased with [offensive coordinator] Bill Musgrave. I thought he called a phenomenal game yesterday. He stuck with the run, we had balance, we protected well, we adjusted well. I told the whole staff, I said, 'I think that was the best game you called.' It was pretty darn good. A lot of good things happening and yet so much work to do. We think we're just scratching the surface of what we're capable of. We have a lot of work to do. We'll dig in tomorrow with the players and make the corrections and move forward and start getting ready for Atlanta."

Q: Are the chunk runs you earned yesterday important to have in order to keep defenses honest?

Coach Del Rio: "Sure. It's a big factor when you're able to run the ball, I think, in this league. It allows you to have some balance. You go through a game, your run it effectively and the efficiency was pretty high and your quarterback doesn't get sacked. The main offensive goal was to protect the quarterback and protect the ball, and we have zero turnovers and zero sacks. So, that's a good day at the office."

Q: Do the short-yard touchdown runs open up the playing calling for two-point conversions?

Coach Del Rio: "Well, I think so. It's good football. It's good football when you can do those things. So yeah, I think it does open up other options. It's going to create almost mandatory one-on-one situations. And, a guy like Michael [Crabtree] one-on-one is a pretty good bet there."

Q: There were some pass interference calls that looked like they could have gone either way...

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, there were some judgement calls."

Q: How do you assess the number of penalties with some of them being questionable or judgement calls?

Coach Del Rio: "I don't like the number. We're going to work hard to have as few as possible. There are some judgement calls that are going to be made and it doesn't always go your way. So, you just keep playing. I think for us, we are a disciplined football team. We take pride in that. We work hard to play smart and we'll clean up where



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we can and coach it up. But, we love the effort. We got great effort out of our guys yesterday. They played really, really hard, 60 minutes worth and I'm very proud of that."

Q: Have you talked to Sean Smith? Obviously he was disappointed.

Coach Del Rio: "Briefly right after the game. I said, 'Hey, you've got to own up to that. That certainly wasn't anywhere near where it needed to be and I know you'll bounce back. Be ready to face the music because they're going to be coming at you.' He's a big boy. He'll bounce back. He's going to be a good player for us, I said that yesterday. It was not what we need and he knows that."

Q: Is he going to start versus Atlanta?

Coach Del Rio: "Sure."

Q: How do you determine to make a call like that on a veteran? A lot of guys were giving up yardage. He made the huge one, but it's probably not an easy decision to make and you made it pretty quickly.

Coach Del Rio: "I have to make those kinds of calls and guys have to trust my judgement. I'm going to always do what I think is best for the football team and that's what it was. That's all it is."

Q: How do you think DJ Hayden did in there?

Coach Del Rio: "I really thought he fought his butt off. I think he's been very consistent. This year and this camp, the way he's approached his work and the way he played yesterday, I think he's been very solid. I think he's ready to have a good year for us."

Q: How did you see the penalty against Michael Crabtree for excessive celebration?

Coach Del Rio: "Have you ever seen the guy that gets his pitch back? 'Eastbound & Down,' something like that? I'm serious. That gesture's what he's doing. Anybody ever seen that movie? I've actually shown that clip with our guys about getting our pitch back and having that concentration. That's what he was gesturing. It wasn't a throat slash. Take a shot at that movie, and then see what he did after the play and you'll see that's what he was doing. Maybe you can't do that move either. The amazing thing was, that after that penalty, we get that kick in that coverage which was unbelievable. It was really almost a nonfactor, right? They got the ball on the 23, 24? It was a huge play by our special teams, who kicked and covered all day yesterday very, very well. Very proud of our guys for doing that."

Q: Sebastian Janikowski can kick it through the uprights from the tee, but he's been pretty good about putting it right on the goal line and making them make those tough choices. Is that something he's been working on?

Coach Del Rio: "It is. He's a good kicker for us and [special teams coordinator] Brad [Seely] does a great job with those guys. It was a good start for us, the way we kicked and covered."

Q: Did you have 10 men on the field for their first touchdown?

Coach Del Rio: "We did."

Q: What happened?

Coach Del Rio: "Communication error."

Q: Can you tell us who was involved?

Coach Del Rio: "I'd prefer not to single out a guy right now. I think it's been addressed. To me, it's my responsibility first and of course things roll downhill, stuff rolls downhill when an error occurs. But it starts with me. It's up to me to make sure my coaches are on top of things and it's up to them to make sure the players are on top of things. We want to play with 11."



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Q: With Keith McGill's ascension, when did that start to formulate that he was going to be a starter?

Coach Del Rio: "I think last week was the week where we said, in reality, 'This is the guy that has had the best camp. This is the guy that's really earned it.' There are a couple different ways you could look at it. You could go with the veteran guy, you can go with the young guy who has the draft status or you can go with the guy that's earned it on the field and we elected to go with the guy that earned it on the field."

Q: How did you think he did yesterday?

Coach Del Rio: "I thought he did pretty well. As a group, we have a lot to improve. I thought overall he was pretty solid in the game."

Q: He was a corner until you guys moved him to safety last year, right?

Coach Del Rio: "Yeah, a little bit. Kind of both."

Q: When did he start to look like a safety in your eyes?

Coach Del Rio: "Throughout this offseason I think it came pretty quick for him, in terms of becoming comfortable there. He's been a lot more physical, even on special teams. It's almost like putting the position switch to his name, it's like he embraced the whole idea of becoming more physical as well. He's a big man, he's athletic. He goes from a guy that's a questionable footspeed at corner to a fast safety with a lot of range. We think he's got a future there so I think he's done a nice job."

Q: Drew Brees is a very tough guy to rush, but what did you think of your pass rush? Could they have put a little more pressure on him?

Coach Del Rio: "Sure, there are things we could do better, right? We hit him a bunch. We hit them more than they hit us, I know that. Bruce [Irvin] had the second sack nullified by penalty. We were really close on a couple others. Malcolm [Smith] had him in his hands on one. There are a lot of different things... When we look at the film, we see a lot of opportunity for growth and a lot of things we'd like to improve and be better at. With that, we also say, 'Hey, we went in there on a mission to get something done and that was a win and we got that done.' Now we'll turn our attention to improving."

Q: What do you think about your quarterback taking flight to get a first down?

Coach Del Rio: "We eliminated the straight-arm, so I said, 'Look, no more straight-arms.' So, now we have say, 'OK, let's avoid the frontal flip unless it's to win a Super Bowl like John Elway did.' The guy is an unbelievable competitor. He played a whale of a game. He really did. Back and forth and the way those two teams went at each other yesterday, back and forth, a lot of explosive offense. I know both defenses want some of those plays back, but those are two really good offenses that went after each other yesterday, and I'm really proud of our guy."

Q: He's always had a strong arm, but it seems like the ball is coming out faster and with more zip, especially on those plays where he was pressured. Are you seeing similar things like that?

Coach Del Rio: "I see it all the time – I do. I think he, again, is still going to continue to improve. He is a younger player that continues to work on his skill level; the timing of things, the understanding of what defenses are trying to do and what his answers are, the timing with the receivers, all of those things. We should continue to improve as we go throughout the season."

Q: It seemed like there was a large contingent of Raiders fans in New Orleans. How did they impact the game?

Coach Del Rio: "They were a presence on Bourbon [Street] and they were a presence in the stadium. There were times where no matter how the play went, there was a cheer, whether they were cheering for their home team or whether our fans were cheering for us on the road. The Raider Nation, they showed up. It was awesome. It was awesome to see. That's a tough place to get that done. New Orleans, typically, is pro-New Orleans and you don't have another fan base that can be that loud, but the Raider fans were there and did an awesome job."