



## Oakland Raiders Transcript

### Interim Head Coach Tony Sparano

**Opening statement:** "Alright, injuries today: David Ausberry didn't practice today with a foot; Vincent Brown was full today; TJ Carrie was limited today with an ankle; Chimdi Chekwa did not practice today, hamstring; Gabe Jackson is knee, did not practice; Keith McGill was limited today with a groin; [Jamize] Olawale was limited today with a shoulder; Carlos Rogers did not practice with a knee; Justin Tuck was limited today; and Kenbrell Thompkins did not practice today and that was an excused absence, he's dealing with a personal issue. Practice was outstanding today, probably two of our better days in a row here. Tempo-wise, guys worked really hard today, got some good third-down work today as we needed."

**Q: Do you see Kenbrell Thompkins being available for this game?**

**Coach Sparano:** "I see him being available for the game, yes."

**Q: With Carlos Rogers not being able to practice for an extended period, is there a concern that he will be out on Sunday?**

**Coach Sparano:** "At this point in time it's hard to tell. Again, we'll have to evaluate it tomorrow and see where Carlos is. He's making progress every day, but that probably looks less good than it does, less good in that he wouldn't make it."

**Q: If he can't go and TJ Carrie can, do you foresee taking some of the special teams stuff off of Carrie's plate?**

**Coach Sparano:** "No, I don't think so, not right away. TJ's a big factor in what we do in the special teams area, so we have to look and pick and choose some spots during the course of the game I think maybe where something like that would happen."

**Q: Do you think that the communication between the quarterback and wide receivers is where it needs to be?**

**Coach Sparano:** "Yeah, I think it's getting better. I think it's getting much better. I don't necessarily think it's really bad. I think it's getting much better. Again, I'm assuming you're referring to when you say it looks really bad, the play in the game the other day, but really that play was mostly on Derek [Carr]. Derek has already said that."

**Q: If Gabe Jackson is not ready to go and you have to use Khalif Barnes inside, how much does that compound the situation against DeMarcus Ware and Von Miller?**

**Coach Sparano:** "Well, it does. It compounds the situation in a lot of ways. Khalif really hasn't played inside this year, has played inside in the past obviously, but hasn't played in there. Khalif has kind of been a jack of all trades for me since I got here, so that doesn't really bother me. As far as the extra tight end stuff, if Gabe can't go, then there's some other options there if we need it and if that's part of the package this week."

**Q: Is Matt McCants the next guy up if you do that?**

**Coach Sparano:** "Yeah, usually. McCants is the next guy up at that point."

**Q: Any update on Rod Streater?**

**Coach Sparano:** "No, not right now."

**Q: After all these years, what could you possibly throw at Peyton Manning that he hasn't seen before?**

**Coach Sparano:** "Well, there's not much that you're going to throw at him that he hasn't seen, that's for sure, or that he hasn't studied and over-studied in some situations. That guy, he's a football junkie. He loves it, studies it and spends a lot of time at it and he's got his own routine I'm sure that he deals with each and every week, and he does a great job, there's nobody better at it than him. But, I think from our end, it's going to be about more what we do on that side of the football, how well we execute on that side of the football, some different looks maybe that we can throw at him, get him to think a little bit and just hold it for an extra tick, because he gets the ball out so fast and if we can get him to hold the ball just for an extra tick, sometimes that can mess with his rhythm a little



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bit. We need to do something, I mean because as I made this point yesterday, in two football games against us a year ago, although it was a year ago, he completed almost 87 percent of his passes, he threw eight incompletions in 65 attempts in two football games against us. In those two games, it was like for 650 yards, but 333 of them were run-after-catch yards, so that's something that we've got to limit. Peyton is a great player and he's going to make some plays out there, but we have to limit the yards after catch. We can't let these guys catch and run and have explosive plays in those situations too."

**Q: You've got to believe that over the course of 60 or 70 plays, somebody on the offensive line will make a misread or mistake and you would hope that a black shirt would be there.**

**Coach Sparano:** "Yeah, I mean, you hope that the black shirt is going to be there and can make the play. It was interesting, last week in their ball game, there was a turnover that occurred in the ball game and all of a sudden that changed the game a little bit and ended up in a short field and of course Tom [Brady] takes advantage of those situations too, and for us, I mean we have to be able to force some of those. We've had our hands on a lot of footballs here in the last few weeks. I just spoke to the team today a little bit about areas of improvement over the last four weeks and where we are since we put a football in the ground. The fact is we've lost four football games but our team is getting better in a lot of areas. One of the areas that we're not better in is that we had five takeaways in those first four games, we have one takeaway right now and had our hands on a lot of footballs. So, the reality is, offensively, although it looks like we've turned the ball over quite a bit because they've come in bunches in two games, we're two less turnovers right now in our last four games than we were in our first four games. The problem is we're not taking the football away and we've had our hands on quite a few. So if that happens, we have to take advantage of it because he's not going to make many of those."

**Q: How do you balance your offensive play calling when you've got guys like DeMarcus Ware and Von Miller wanting to have Carr strike downfield occasionally, but also keeping him upright?**

**Coach Sparano:** "I don't think you can shy away from that. I think you've got to trust the protection a little bit in those areas. We know it's going to be a tremendous challenge. When you turn the film on and you watch those guys, they're probably hitting and affecting the quarterback 15 times a game right now in one way, shape or form – whether it's hitting the quarterback, being around the quarterback, disrupting the quarterback – somewhere around 15 times a game and that's pretty consistent. That's one of the things I do, I spend a lot of time looking at [that] for the line. That can't be a factor. Derek, he's been pretty good about not feeling that and our line has been pretty good about handling some of those situations, but we know it's going to be a huge challenge for us. We just can't dink and dunk the whole day though. When there are opportunities to take shots, we have to take shots, because they're going to take them against us when there's opportunities there, and we need to be ready to answer the ball on our side."

**Q: You've talked a few times about how important it is to be honest and blunt when you're talking to the team about what they're doing right and wrong. On Monday, you were pretty blunt about saying that Seattle had beaten you up front. I imagine that was relayed to the offensive line in those terms. How has the response been this week?**

**Coach Sparano:** "Really good. Their response has been really good. Listen, it is what it is. I'm not one of those guys that's going to come out here – I don't tell the team, stand in front of them and tell them lies and tell them things that they necessarily want to hear all the time. I have to tell them everything; I'm not going to tell you those things. At the end of the whole thing, that was the truth. We didn't block them well enough, and that's not a popular answer I guess out there, from what I can gather. It doesn't appear to be a popular answer, but it's the truth. In other words, we, collectively, me included, did not block the Seattle Seahawks well enough. Now that's a game in the past, we're moving on. We're at Denver right now and we have to do a better job. We just watched two games from Denver last year versus ourselves where we had an average of 14 rushing attempts a game. Now we were fifth in the league in rushing at that point going into the last game of the season and we had 14 rushing attempts. The score was 34-3 I think, or something to that effect, going into the fourth quarter, so you're not going to run it many times there. So we've got to be in a good, solid football game here; we've got to create some pace; and



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we've got to be able to run the football. Listen, I know those people are built on trying to stop the run, but we've got to be able to do that and do a better job of it, and it starts with me and trickles down to them. So the only way for me to make them understand it is to tell it to them."

**Q: There has been some criticism, "Why do they keep going up the middle when it's not gaining any yards?" When you play a team like Seattle, the attempt itself counts for something, doesn't it? You have to at least try...**

**Coach Sparano:** "Yeah. Listen, you have to believe in what it is you're doing. If at every point right now when something doesn't go wrong for a team in the National Football League, they switch offenses or they switch defenses, that isn't a philosophy, that isn't a belief. All of a sudden, your team looks at you like you've got two heads. That isn't what you want. You have a philosophy, you have a belief; you stand behind those things. We have plenty of ways to get the ball on the perimeter and some of those ways are not always conventional runs, but we have plenty of ways to be able to do that. There's some things in the middle of the defense that are core, staple plays for us that we have to be able to run. Up until last week, those core, staple plays – and again, I say this to you – have been efficient plays. Your version of efficient – again, and sometimes even a fan's version of efficient – I get it, they want to see Darren [McFadden] run down the field for 60 yards. I'm telling you, the team that we're playing this week is giving up about 72, 74 yards a game rushing right now; that's after eight games, there's not a lot of those. In fact, plus-four runs against this team are better; there's only 25 of them in the entire breakdown – that's 375 plays. So 25 times, the ball gained four yards or more against this team. Rushing yards in our league are hard to come by – they really are – and a lot of teams are built to stop the run. But we need to stay the course, continue to run the football. We're going to try to do that, but we're not going to be stubborn about it. When we get to a point where we got to be able to get the ball down the field, we're going to do that."

### Defensive Coordinator Jason Tarver

**Q: Can you assess DJ Hayden's performance from last week?**

**Coach Tarver:** "DJ did some really good things. He had zero true mental errors. He knows what he's doing. What he needs to continue to do, like all young players, the best way to get better at playing football is playing football. He's done a nice job this week in practice understanding times of penalties and controlling his hands down the field, things like that. He's been emphasizing it and it's good. He's right in his progression and he's improving every day."

**Q: Did you talk to him about the taunting penalty?**

**Coach Tarver:** "That was a great hit. That is one of the things we talk about as a defense. It's one of the things that we emphasize a lot. You're going to do something good, so don't turn it into bad. Take bad and turn it into good. That's what we've been doing for four weeks as a group. We take the things that we didn't go quite as good and we've been making it better. Cleveland game, we didn't play as good after turnover. After turnovers in Seattle, they got the ball at the 18 and the 30 and they got one field goal. That's outstanding sudden-change defense. You make a great hit, young man, the rule emphasis this year is that you cannot stand over anybody, regardless of whether you say anything, so we talked about that. That's on the progression of becoming a good, solid football team. You know Tony [Sparano] says it, that's Oakland beating Oakland. We have to make sure that doesn't happen."

**Q: You made a pretty good quarterback pretty inefficient last week. Is that something you guys can build on?**

**Coach Tarver:** "One is, we're one game at a time. Two is, this is a new group that's progressing together. Really, it is. You've got from the start of the season, a ton of defensive players that are on IR, so it's a new group. Every week we're getting better. Any of that history doesn't concern us. What concerns us is getting better every week. The fact that we were able to cause some incomplete throws and get our hands on some footballs, now we need to come down with those. That's part of the emphasis this week. We're improving in those areas. It's a matter of,



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what's next and how do we handle it this week? What are we doing well and what do we need to improve on? Let's focus on that."

**Q: Coach Sparano was talking about the eight incompletions and the fact that there were 300-something yards after catch in the Broncos games last year. I assume with Peyton Manning and the way he gets the ball out of his hands, tackling guys immediately is paramount.**

**Coach Tarver:** "Yeah, it's paramount. The teams that can, when the ball is thrown underneath, go run and hit and know where your help is, know how to use where all the other players are within the coverage, are the teams that are able to limit yards after contact. That's obviously where we have to improve. Again, new group, new year, getting better, that's why you play the game. It's going to be exciting. I'm excited to watch our so-called younger players compete."

**Q: Miles Burris had a couple of those last week, where he rallied to a short pass and made a hit that we've not seen him do as often earlier.**

**Coach Tarver:** "Miles and Sio [Moore] are both improving. All of our linebackers are improving when the ball is thrown and understanding where guys are, as they continue to work together. What we're improving on is knowing where the first down markers are and setting up there, then rallying to anything thrown underneath. We're definitely improving in that area and we need to improve in that this weekend. That comes from working together. That comes from reps played together. We're excited about where they're headed in that progression."

**Q: When you face a team like Denver that has an elite pass rusher like Von Miller, do you take Khalil aside and tell him to specifically use him as an example?**

**Coach Tarver:** "Our pass rushers watch all of the sacks in the NFL every week, so we watch all of that together anyway. You're always trying to learn from the best in the world. We work on that every week, looking at those things. I don't know who had the stat, but I saw that Khalil is third in pressures, so that's pretty darn impressive. I know he's back there a lot and I hope that continue. We learn from everybody as much as we can. These pass rushers are the best in the world, so if you want to be the best, you look at it. But, you also have to understand who you are. Khalil does some things that maybe those other guys don't do quite as good and they do some things that maybe he doesn't do quite as well yet. You don't want to just copy people, but you do want to learn and progress and build it into your repertoire."

**Q: Do you see similarities at all between Von Miller and Khalil?**

**Coach Tarver:** "I think Khalil has extreme power and burst. We think Von has that extreme quickness off the ball. Khalil is very quick as well. The ability to flip their hips is very similar. The long arms for their body and things like that. There are similarities but there are also some differences. Khalil has extreme power. As long as he keeps throwing his hands at people and using that, he's right where we need him to be and he's very conscious of that. There are some similarities in their movements and things. I do know that both guys can cause havoc. We're really excited to have the one that we have in our program."

**Q: Do you have to tell Khalil to not get frustrated with holds that aren't called? It seems like even at a national level, people are recognizing that he's getting held.**

**Coach Tarver:** "If you're causing holds and you're making him hold you, then you're going where we need you to go really fast. He stays on that progression. This is a fast game. It's not that holding is legal in the NFL, but nobody can see it all the time, it's a fast game. What you have to do is, don't let them hold you. If you don't want to get held, get them off you. Use your hands. Some of that is controlled by how much you attack and some of it is that they have to do everything they can to slow him down. Any time the opponent head coach is talking about you, that's a good thing. He's right in his progression. He just keeps working. He keeps his mindset where he is. He's going to be outstanding and we're going to be just fine."



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**Q: What fundamentals go into being a small defensive back guarding a large receiver like Demaryius Thomas?**

**Coach Tarver:** "Yeah, body position. Starting the down correctly, based on whether you're up or off and those things are critical. Playing through his hands are critical. You can't catch the ball until the hands come up. We have a lot of drills and plays that simulate that. All of our DBs do it, so we're continuing to get better in those phases. We have shown that the last few weeks. It's going to be a great challenge and we're looking forward to it."

### Offensive Coordinator Greg Olson

**Q: How do you balance keeping Derek Carr clean and upright when you have two pass rushers like the Broncos have? Does that affect your play calling at all?**

**Coach Olson:** "Obviously, they have a very talented defensive front, and we have faced some talented defensive fronts thus far this season. They have two special edge rushers. They've got some good defensive tackles as well, so it's hard to really ... When you're playing a team that has four players that can rush the passer, it makes it difficult to double up on any one guy. I think the line and the quarterbacks, running backs, everybody that is involved in protection is taking a great amount of pride right now in what we're doing to try to help Derek and keep Derek clean. I think they like the plan, and they've done a good of executing and playing for the most part of the season. Certainly, we're aware of those guys. We've got to be aware of them in terms of the timing in the passing game and in terms of the protection and the different types of protection that we'll carry into this game."

**Q: How has the offensive line responded this week to Tony Sparano's assessment of how the team got beat at the point of attack against Seattle?**

**Coach Olson:** "I think we've had two good days of practice. Again, it was a hot day today, but we got a lot of good work done, especially on third downs – today is a big third-down day. So, it was one of our better third down days, as a matter of fact, of the season. We always track completion percentage and the number of third-down conversions and it was actually one of our better third-down days. I think they've responded well. Nobody, obviously, was happy with the results last week and nobody has been happy with the results through the first eight weeks. But, they've maintained a real good attitude. They've come to work every day and they responded well after this last loss."

**Q: Peyton Manning talked about how valuable his rookie season was. Do you think that each experience – good, bad or indifferent – for Derek Carr is really helping him?**

**Coach Olson:** "I believe it is. Certainly you'd like to come in and win football games. He would tell you the same thing. It's been invaluable for him thus far. You compare different experiences with different players. But again, he came in as a mature player. It would be one thing if he maybe wasn't as experienced of a player, wasn't as intelligent of a player wasn't able to get himself out of harm's way. But, he is an intelligent player, and again, we've put a lot on him in terms of what he is doing in both the run game and the protection game. He is handling it well. There have been some calls and some things he'd like to have back, but I'll promise you that he's learned from it and he'll be better down the road."

**Q: With Carr's two interceptions last week, how do you keep him aggressive without forcing things>**

**Coach Olson:** "I thought it was important that he came out in the second half and play well. I think he was 11-of-22 with two interceptions in the first half and 14-of-18 with two touchdowns in the second half. To me, that was a real important half for him. Then having a chance to go back and look at it this week and realize that those decisions on the first two weren't great decisions on his part. He has a chance now to look at them and learn from them. Just the way he responded in the second half, I think was critical for him in terms of his development and I think that there is a lot of belief that he had in himself in the locker room at halftime that, 'I am going to get this thing fixed and I will play better this second half.' And he went out and played better, so that was very encouraging."



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**Q: He said there is no difference in his demeanor if he is 0-8 or 8-0. Has that been weird for you?**

**Coach Olson:** “He has a hard time sleeping like anybody else. He understands his role as a leader and that he can’t be a guy that gets real down. It would be real easy for a guy to get down on himself this year, but in terms of the leadership role that we’re asking of him, he’s got to motivate and stimulate the other guys on the team. I think it’s more so that. I also think because of where he is at in his life in terms of being a father and a husband, I think that he wants to make sure that he’s not taking a lot of his work home, much like all of us do. But when you get home, you try to make sure that your kids understand that this guy is a father. You’d hope that he his kid is 12-years-old or 13-years-old, ‘I didn’t notice a difference when my dad came home. He was still a great dad to me.’ But it hurts Derek. I can promise you that. We talk about it – the lack of sleep, playing the different plays through in your mind, especially on a Sunday night after the game in a close game, a competitive game. You can go through every single play, really, over and over again. I think it’s just that in his mind, he has a lot of faith, obviously. He relies on his faith to get him through this tough time, but it hurts him.”