

# Las Vegas Raiders

## Media Conference

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

### Josh McDaniels

#### Press Conference



**Q. Josh, as you've gone to evaluate film, when you look at Alex Leatherwood, do you see him as a guard or a tackle? What are your thoughts on him?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I see him as a guy that played a lot of football. There's a lot to evaluate. Playing as many games as he did as a rookie, there's good, there's bad. But when you're that young, you look at it as what can we -- what can we work with? What can we fix? There's a lot to do in that process.

I've already spoken to him. That process is under way. And I think what we'll wind up doing is whatever's best for the Raiders. He's shown the ability to play in both spots, more guard last year than tackle, but we see him being a contributor. We see him being a guy that we're really excited to work with. We're going to try to get the most out of him.

**Q. Josh, Derek Carr is in the last year of his contract. Any thoughts about extending that? And are you comfortable if you have to go into a season with him on his last year?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: No specific things relative to extending that at this point, but that doesn't mean it's not going to change. We're aware of where we are on that and in that process. I think we're trying to get everything kind of set now in the building. You know, our staff is obviously -- this has been a big chunk of this first three or four weeks is trying to put the right people in place here.

I've met and spoken to Derek a number of times now just trying to begin our relationship. I think it's really an important one. The head coach, the play caller, the quarterback, getting to know one another as people, kind of how we think, how we work. The football part of that will come later, which I think is the most important part of the puzzle. Really happy with the opportunity that I've had to get to know him. He's there in Nevada. He stays there in Nevada.

We're aware of where things are. Again, as I said when I was introduced, I'm really looking forward to working with him. He's won a lot of games. I feel good about what we can do with Derek as our quarterback.

**Q. A lot of experience on the offensive staff. Was that important to you?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: Kind of a mixture, as much as we could. I think part of putting together a staff is the continuity and chemistry that the group on either side of the ball will have with one another. So I think personalities are important. Experience is important. Youthful ideas and things like that are important. And room for growth. We try to consider all of those things as we try to put it together.

Not least of which is the opportunity to get them. So your familiarity with people is important as you try to put together a staff, but you're certainly not going to have working knowledge of everybody that you hire. So the biggest word we continue to use is patience. We feel like that's a virtue in this process in terms of trying to put together the right group of people to work together, and I think we're well on our way to doing that.

**Q. Brought in Patrick Graham as your defensive coordinator. The Raiders have been a four-three team for the past three years. Is that a big transition? Will there be a transition to a new scheme?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I don't think so. We've talked about this a lot. Any more in the NFL, 80 to 85 percent of your defense is in nickel or dime. So the concept of being a four-three or three-four is kind of almost -- you know, it's kind of almost out of the window now.

What we want to do is we want to try to be able to play to the strengths of the players that are on our roster. I know we have some really good players that played in a four-man line last year. We're going to try to accentuate their strengths.

And at the same time, we want to be multiple enough to be able to change some things from week to week if we need to or feel like we have to to give us the best chance to try

to stop the opponent. So there will be a level of multiplicity that hopefully we can grow and graduate to, but the biggest thing for us is to try to make our players successful by putting them in great positions.

**Q. You talked about your coaching staff before. You took a few guys over from New England. Did you talk about that with Belichick or anything before that happened?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: Absolutely. Everybody -- I had great respect for Bill in that process and spoke to him directly multiple times about any interest I had in people that were there. I'll keep those conversations private, but you never want to do the wrong things relative to those things obviously.

I feel very fortunate that I had an opportunity to add a few people that I've worked with before, specifically on the offensive side of the ball. But, yeah, just trying to do the right things relative to communicating with him or any other coach for that matter if you're interested in somebody that works in their organization.

**Q. With you and Dave, what is your kind of overall philosophy of roster building that you bring to this? In your second time as head coach, what are things you learn about building a roster in terms of collaborative efforts?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: You need to be able to look at the whole year as an opportunity to improve your team. It's not just small windows in March or April. There's opportunities in pro, free agency. There's opportunities in the Draft. There's opportunities after the Draft, players that didn't get drafted. There's opportunities that are going to present themselves later on in the spring, the summer, all the way through the course of the season and the trade deadline.

Being patient and trying to develop your roster over time and taking a longer term approach to it is something that we're going to try to do. We know we have areas where we've got to address them at some point, whether that's a front line player or depth.

But we're no different than any other team at this point in time. We have players that we feel pretty good about and spots on our team where we have a little bit more depth, and there's other areas certainly of need that we need to address.

**Q. When you're evaluating prospects, is there a certain different level of process that you go towards when you're looking at guys that are FCS prospects or kind of group of five guys? Is there a certain thing you**

**look at that's different than someone at a bigger, high profile school, or is it about the same?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I think you can factor that in, and the level of competition certainly is one of the factors you can consider, but I think the evaluation of the player is rather large. There's a lot of things to consider. Honestly, there's certain players that may have a level of experience against competition that's significant.

But every one of these guys that's coming out in the Draft that you add to your football team are going to need to grow and improve and learn how to play at our level regardless of where they played college football. So we're going to try to sink our teeth into each guy and each opportunity to learn about them and digest that information as best we can and make the best decisions possible.

**Q. Josh, how different is your first month on the job this time around versus in Denver a while back?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I'd say rather significant. Having the opportunity to come with Dave, I would say knowing more about what to expect. I don't think there's been many days where I've been shocked or surprised at this point, or learning brand new things to me at this point is a little different than what it was 13 years ago.

I'm at peace with the things that we do each day. I know what my plan is when I wake up in the morning. Really trust the people that are in positions to do their jobs really well and try to be the best support system I can be to them while I'm trying to do the best I can at my job.

So rather different. I would say rather significant.

**Q. (No microphone)?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: Nick's a really good coach. I was fortunate to be surrounded by a lot of those guys there for a long time. They're a big reason why we had success. But Nick's players are always well prepared. He's a really good teacher. He's a motivator. You never have to ask him to work harder or longer because he always does everything he can to help the team win. I think Nick has a bright future ahead of him.

I don't know necessarily about the roles and everything. I don't want to comment on somebody else's situation. But really fond of Nick. I think a lot of Nick. He's got a bright future as a coach.

**Q. Josh, you're working with a new starting quarterback. Have you found ways to play to different guys' strengths over the years. So how do you**

**balance playing to those strengths while maintaining some of the core principles that you want to implement?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I think you do them both at the same time. We'll try to teach our foundation and our terminology so that we understand the language. I think everything starts with what language are you going to speak, and we'll teach everyone that together in the spring or whenever we get that opportunity.

But once we know the language and we're able to talk it together, I think the next thing we do is start putting things out there and trying them and figuring out what your players do well, what do they handle the best. Then if they do some things well and you add to it, if they do some things that you don't feel like we can make better, then maybe we move away from it.

But each year to me is really similar in terms of the approach overall. I don't think I've ever had one year copy the next as we've gone through my coaching career. Just trying to evaluate the team that you're going to put together this year and see what they all do well together and then try to do it as many times as you can. Understanding there's going to be challenges and obstacles as we go forward, but that's going to be the plan as we head into spring here.

**Q. It's pretty clear several years ago that the team, the Patriots made an effort to want to keep you around, back in 2018. Was there any similar effort made this off-season when conversations started with the Raiders or you started looking at other opportunities?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I don't -- it really wasn't about that. I don't think it was really -- to me, this is just an opportunity that I felt like I couldn't pass up. I've waited a long time to try to have an opportunity to do this. I wanted to really try to improve and take whatever time necessary I needed to try to do it really well, as best I could, and I felt like I've done that.

I don't think they really owed that to me. They've done -- I can't even tell you how much they've done for me in my career and my life and my family. So what they've done for me and the opportunities that they've given me and what they've rewarded me with personally and professionally, there was no need to do anything like that. This is really a decision about what was best for me at this time and the challenge that I could take on here in Vegas, and I'm excited to do that.

**Q. (No microphone)?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: Mac's a great kid. Again, I don't know the situation, what is or isn't going on anywhere else, but Mac's a great kid and works extremely hard. I was really fortunate to have a chance to coach him.

And the people that had touched Mac Jones prior to him coming to New England deserve a tremendous amount of credit. The people that coached him in high school, the people that coached him at Alabama, the parents that raised him, they did a great job with him as a human being. I'm not sure I've been around a more mature young football player in terms of understanding the game and being able to process at such a speed and such a level that Mac was.

I don't have any doubt that Mac's going to meet the challenge head on. I wish him nothing but the best, and I'll be pulling for him except when he plays Vegas next year.

**Q. Are you excited to go back and coach your first game?**

JOSH MCDANIELS: I think there's a lot of benefits to this game for us. The number one thing is really to have an opportunity to be with our players. To get them in there and really try to take our time and go through the process of building our football team and our foundation this summer together, have a couple extra days to do that.

I know it doesn't sound like much, but to us, I think it's a great opportunity, especially as we're starting this year together. And to be able to go there back home in Canton, Ohio. I've been in the NFL, this is my 22nd year, and I've never had the privilege of coaching in that game. So very lucky to have that opportunity to go back home and to put our football team in that position to try to learn and grow early in camp and to go out there and play the exhibition game there, I'm really looking forward to it, and I think our organization will too.

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