

# Las Vegas Raiders Media Conference

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## Tom Telesco Antonio Pierce Press Conference



MARK DAVIS: It's a great day to be a Raider. Today I have the privilege of introducing two young men that are going to be leading this organization into the future, and I'm going to start off by introducing a new friend with a brand new name. His name is Mr. Tom Telesco, the general manager of the Las Vegas Raiders. (Applause.)

Now I'd like to introduce an old friend with a brand new name, Antonio Pierce, head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders. (Applause.)

I'm going to let these two gentlemen introduce themselves to you and allow you to ask some questions. I suggest that you ask all the questions that you want and make them the right ones because I don't think they're going to be talking to you too much after this. They've got some work to do.

Tom?

TOM TELESKO: Hey, thanks, everybody, for coming, media and employees. First, I just want to say thank you to Mark Davis. This is such an iconic franchise with a storied history, and obviously all starts with the legacy of Al Davis. I couldn't be more excited to be here, but also realize there's a tremendous responsibility with this job.

The fact that Mark and the whole leadership team is trusting me with this, I couldn't be more happy to be a part of this.

The last couple weeks I've had a chance to meet a lot of the leadership team as we went through the interview process. Obviously Mark was the leader of that process, but Sandra Morgan and Larry Delsen, Richard Seymour who's right here, Kenny Herock, who's a legend in our business, and Tom Delaney. It was a great process. It was fun to go through.

I could kind of tell from the first interview, there was a connection and a fit, and I think that's really important in

this league to feel that, and I felt that the first time through.

When I came back the second time, when Antonio was in there, I kind of felt that same thing. It's so important to me and my family to be a part of the right fit in this league, and there's no doubt this is it.

Again, just really thankful that they saw the same thing in me, that they saw that same fit, that same culture fit.

I haven't been here long, but when you talk about the Raider way or the Raider tenets of commitment to excellence, just win baby, once a Raider, always a Raider, I've heard of it, I know of it, I've seen it, but when you walk in this building, you can feel it.

I haven't been here long, but there is no doubt -- first of all, you see it tangibly. This football facility is jaw dropping for me. I've never seen anything like it. It's amazing. The resources are amazing here. That's a credit to Mark Davis and what he's put into this team. You see that right off the bat.

The second part is, and the Raiders are known for this as far as how they treat their alumni, how they treat the former players, how they treat the families, and it is something that other NFL teams and other professional sports teams, they try and duplicate what they do here, but nobody does it like the Raiders. You can feel it in this building, you can feel it from the employees.

Last night at 6:00 at night my wife gets a call from Ansley Moore who works in football operations and she gave my wife a rundown of what's going to go on today, what's going to go on in the future, and she was so nice, so detailed, so organized. My wife gets off the phone, and she's like, wow, they've got it there. They know how it works. That's important.

To win a championship is more than just the head coach and general manager. It takes everybody. To see someone like that right off the bat, hey, this is how you treat people and how organized and detailed we're going to be, it's just a great example for the whole organization.



Lastly, I'm really excited to partner with AP right here. You can tell in the interview -- it was really my interview, but you could tell he has that leadership trait that a head coach has to have, and to me it feels more like not so much follow me but join me, which I like in football, because he's right in it with the rest of us, and I think your football team takes on the identity of your head coach, and that's what we're going to have here. That's what we're going to build around.

I'm excited to start this partnership, and I couldn't be more excited to be a Raider. I'll leave it at that and pass it over to our new head coach. (Applause.)

ANTONIO PIERCE: I'll start off like I always do. We've got a great house here.

We end always all our victories a certain way in the locker room. We've got a packed house here. We're going to see how everybody's vocal cords work, so stay with me. "Raaaaid-ers!" That's what we're talking about. Antonio Pierce. Thank you, Tom, and I appreciate it. Thank you, Mark Davis, Sandra, Richard, Tom, Larry, Ken, the Raiders organization, our coaches, our players.

I said at the very beginning when I had the opportunity to speak in front of everybody the first time on November 1st, I'm humbled, I'm honored. I'm excited. I'm excited.

The challenge that this team took on from November 1st on and what they embrace and what they displayed out on the field is a hats off to our organization and our coaches and our players for buying in.

It wasn't easy. It was something that probably many people didn't think would happen, as you say, overnight. But when you have good people in the building, when you have the belief, when you have the trust, when you have the accountability, you earn respect, you do it the Raider way, you buy in, you understand that nobody is bigger than the shield, than the patch, and that you play for a lot more than just the name on your back.

There's a lot of people that we affect by wins and losses. We understand that. We don't take it lightly.

I'd like to thank my family here, Jocelyn, my father Perry, my kids, my uncle in the back came all the way from Bermuda. Bermuda, got the island people in here, too.

Appreciate everybody being here.

Where are we going forward? Tom just hit on it. It's great to partner up. I think it's going to be a partnership that we can grow forward for many years. Hopefully that comes with a lot of W's and a lot of Raider chants. Our vision is

clear. Win the division. Get into the playoffs and hoist that Lombardi Trophy. That's not a promise; that's our vision.

Our philosophy is simple. It's real simple. It's the Raider way. Pride, poise, passionate, a love for the game, and just win.

It starts with our DNA: Ill intent, physicality, toughness, speed, attitude, full-blown Maxx Crosby effort.

It goes to our staff with preparation and execution and putting a plan together and executing throughout the week with a smile and a purpose to get a victory on every Sunday that we show up to Allegiant Stadium.

It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be overnight. I'm not promising anything, along with Tom, but I do know this: You're going to get the best out of myself and Tom. We're going to exhaust every possible resource and ounce of sweat, tears and effort and night and minute and second that we have to turn this bad boy into a consistent winning organization that is used to and it deserves.

One thing we know and they're in the room is our alumni. As you guys saw the last game, open doors. Postgame, as well. Raider Nation, that bad boy good. That bad boy ready to rock.

They rocked the last game. We set the tone in 2024 what it would look like going forward. We're going to work this off-season, in the summer and in the fall until we get to that first home game to see Raider Nation again loud, rowdy, making it tough for the opponent, that black hole rocking and rolling, the win club doing its deal, Mark Davis in there clapping his hands along with Sandra, high fiving, and putting a product on the field that the Raider Nation is really proud of.

Like I said before, I am humbled and honored to be a kid from inner city Los Angeles, to be the head coach of a team that he grew up watching, rooting for, cheering for, rocking the colors, rocking the starter jacket, and now sitting here doing each and every day with the purpose of one thing only: Just win.

Thank you.

**Q. Tom, from your perspective, your track record, your history, the respect that you have in the NFL, I'm sure there were other opportunities out there for you. What about this organization at this particular time piqued your interest?**

TOM TELESCO: It's kind of what I said from the beginning. There's just such a storied history here and



tradition. I grew up as a kid -- I was obviously a football fan, NFL fan, been in the league a long time. It would be a chance to be part of an organization with the Al Davis legacy. It's just so exciting to have.

Then on top of that, you look at the resources that are here and the head coach that's here, I think we can win. That's why I want to be here.

There's two things I was really looking for. One was fit. I want to work with people that I like. And two, I want to win. Those two go together, that we can win and work together and really enjoy this journey because it's a tough journey. It's a hard job.

We all know the pressures that come with the job. But we can work side by side with a smile on our face and get things done. So it was two things; find the right fit and the chance to win, and that's what they have here.

**Q. Tom, how would you describe your roster building philosophy? And a second part of that, how do you go about involving the head coach in that process and making sure that they're consulted along the way?**

TOM TELESCO: Yeah, I wouldn't even use the word "consulted." When I said "partnership," it's a partnership. Obviously there's a lot of people that are part of the process. You've got a scouting staff and a coaching staff. You kind of bring it all together in the end and make decisions.

But as far as building the roster, you're working through the vision of the head coach. How does he want to play on offense, how does he want to play on defense, how does he want to play on special teams, and you build it that way. There's a lot of discussions; you work through things. We're going to be able to bounce ideas off each other.

As far as roster construction, there's no one specific way to build a team. I do believe in the draft, and everybody always says that anyways, but I do believe in the draft. But you also have to supplement that with free agency. You have to supplement that with trades. You have to supplement that with signing players that maybe are out of work or are on the street looking for jobs and see if they can come in and fit.

You have to use every possible avenue you can under the constraints of the salary cap, which is basically every move you make, even a draft pick, there's always cap considerations that we have to work through.

But I think in this day and age in this league, you'd better be flexible with how you build your team. It's so

competitive, and we all really have the same resources when it comes to money and the cap.

But like I said, it's a partnership for a reason because it's not a one-person job, and I don't have all the answers, so we're going to use all these people that we have, scouts, coaches and head coach are going to make the right decision for the Raiders.

**Q. Tom, most general managers when you come in, it's a place in shambles. AP has it rocking, has it rolling, and it's his team. He's put his stamp on that franchise. How big of a blessing is that, that you're not coming in looking and hoping to find a coach, you've got him?**

TOM TELESCO: Quite honestly, when I interviewed for this job, I didn't see it that the head coaching job was open. Like he's the head coach.

AP came in in short notice and produced on the field. Didn't do anything to not have the job, so he had the job at the end of the year. He was the head coach when I came in and interviewed. That's the way I looked at it. Just the way he galvanized the team, he galvanized the building, he galvanized the fan base. So that is a huge part of it because you have to get that right.

So to have that in place, yeah, obviously a big part of taking this job is to have that, to have a leader like this that we've already seen on the field what he can do, so it's exciting.

**Q. Secondly, Drew Stanton told me last night that one of your strengths as a general manager is relationship, that players can trust you in your word. Will you talk about your philosophy of relationship with players, please.**

TOM TELESCO: Yeah, to me relationship with the players is no different than relationship with your family, with your friends. You treat them well. You're honest with them. Doesn't necessarily always mean that what you tell them they're going to like, but if you're honest with them and straight with them, I think they appreciate that.

What we'll do here, which I know they do already, but these players for us, they're not just a player with a helmet on. They have families. They have lives off the field. It's important to us to know that and work through that.

Really when you're in this spot and when you're the head coach and you've got players out there battling for you every game, practice and games, training room, weight room, and I realize that they're paid for their job, but you

can't help but have relationships with those guys. They're going to battle for you every week. That's the way this business is. That's the way football is. That's why it's so great. It's the greatest team sport in the world.

The players are important to me, to make sure they know we care and to make sure they know that what they need, come see us because hopefully we can get that done and find the right resources for them.

But yeah, it's important. I think everybody in here, you treat the players the way you treat your family.

**Q. Antonio, I don't know if you guys had a relationship before, yourself and Tom, but how quickly did you mention the 63 points you guys put on the Chargers?**

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ANTONIO PIERCE: Right away, you know it. Told him I was going for 71. We were going to go for two.

**Q. How important is it to you as a relatively young coach to have a guy who's been a GM for a decade already in the NFL?**

ANTONIO PIERCE: Yeah, me and Tom had never met prior. Obviously I've watched his body of work with the San Diego Chargers and then lastly with the Los Angeles Chargers. But obviously when we met, when he came in the other day, I could see that he was genuine. He was poised. He was calm. He had a plan. He presented it. It was well thought out.

He knows I was poking at him trying to get him going, trying to get that AP juice out of him, but he stayed very poker faced, which I was like, okay, cool, this is good.

But I think as this relationship grows, like anything else, it's going to have its ups and downs. We've got to be adults and grown men about it. We've got to hash it out. We've got to understand our roles, check our egos at the door like everybody else in the building, but understand that we've got a plan, and that plan is to do it together, be hand in hand with it. Obviously if he goes down, I go down. That's just how it is. That's the nature of the beast. We get it.

But that's not our plan. Our plan is to win, put a team in place that is competitive each and every week and gives ourselves an opportunity to win.

TOM TELESCO: Appreciate the question, though.

ANTONIO PIERCE: I did tell him that. We talked about that. He didn't see Jack's play -- can I tell you the story? Boom, here it goes. I'm going to tell it anyway.

Yeah, he's like, oh, I was getting mad, I'm coming down the elevator, and we're at where we're at score-wise, and we're pushing it on defense, and he said he was in the elevator, and I think Jack Jones had just intercepted the ball while he was up there. Like why? Why? That's enough.

TOM TELESCO: Never seen anything like it.

ANTONIO PIERCE: But we talked about it, hashed it out, said, look, we'll do that now together going forward.

**Q. Tom, obviously you've been in the league for a long time. Could you give a little bit of a scouting report on Antonio Pierce as a player, what you believe are those qualifications and qualities that he has as a player, and what does translate to him as a coach?**

TOM TELESCO: That's a great question. If you look at his career back to high school or junior college first, then goes Division I linebacker, then undrafted and then wins a starting job and has the career he had, obviously he's a grinder and he works because nothing was given to him, which yeah, you can hang your hat on that as a head coach because there's a lot of players on the roster, they're the same way. Not everyone on your roster is Davante Adams. So to have that mentality, that dog mentality that I'm going to outwork people, it's great to have.

Now, my scouting report on him, I may have to go look -- I kind of lost track. I may have to go look that up.

ANTONIO PIERCE: He was with the Colts --

TOM TELESCO: That was way back. I think my files are gone from the Colts. But he was a player to be reckoned with for a long time because of his instincts, his smarts, and he could run to the football. As we were looking for defensive players, if you can just point to the head coach, hey, if you can play like him, you can play for us.

**Q. Mark mentioned there's work to be done. What are you guys looking for in an offensive coordinator?**

ANTONIO PIERCE: Minimum 24 points. (Laughter.)

No, I'll be honest, just like everything else that we've done throughout this process, I honestly believe this. I don't think everybody is meant to be for the Raiders. I don't think everybody is meant to play for the Raiders or coach for the Raiders. I think that's going to be something I really dig into as we go into that process, but more importantly, somebody that's -- the way the game is, and AP wants to run the ball. No, AP just wants to run a style of football, the football style a certain way.

But it's the approach. It's being a teacher. It's being somebody that can stand in front of this room and the men that's looking at them like you're looking at me, that they believe in the plan and the process and that they're a teacher and that they can adjust on the fly because that's what this game is about.

Style of play, I think that's always going to vary. There's a lot of things that goes into that. We know that we've got some positions on our roster that we need to look at and evaluate even more with Tom and myself as we go forward.

But you know what you see in the National Football League. You've got to be able to run the football, play action pass. What are the Raiders known for? The vertical passing game, right? We want to see the shots down the field. We want the explosive plays. That has to be a part of the creativity.

You look at the shifts, the motions, all that stuff goes into it. I'm not going to give my whole hat away and tip, but just think of when Raiders were playing really good football, and that's going to be your offensive coordinator hopefully as we go forward.

TOM TELESCO: I'll just go with his answer.

One thing I talked about in the interview is you want to have an identity. The Raiders have an identity on offense. It's speed and get the ball downfield. I think that's going to definitely want to be at least part of that. But there's more that goes along with that as far as being able to run the ball when you have to run it and play action pass. But we'll find the right offensive coordinator that's going to fit this team at this time.

**Q. Tom, with that being said, with it being the end of January, how do you attack this off-season knowing the draft is right around the corner, and how important is it you're coming from the AFC West so you have a familiarity with the division already?**

TOM TELESCO: Yeah, I think it helps. Like AP said, the first goal is win the division. I do have some experience there.

Yeah, it's going to be -- thankfully the draft is in April, so we have some time, but we've got a lot of work to do. I need to get caught up with our guys here, and more than likely what I'll do, I'll kind of adjust to them from here through April rather than having 10, 15, 20 people adjust to me. We started on that this morning. We'll get moving on that.

Looking forward to really getting in depth with the pro staff, the college staff, but we've got plenty of time. We'll be good.

**Q. AP, the last time we spoke to you, you talked about not enjoying the moment, you were just grinding. Can you take us in that moment after Mark told you you got the job, your dream had been reached? That first time you had to reflect after you got it, can you take us into those moments and your thoughts, please?**

ANTONIO PIERCE: Yeah, I did probably like I did on October 31st when I got the first phone call. I walked outside to our practice field and just looked around. It was quiet. It was dark. Looking at the stars, just kind of looking up there and just saying, wow, surreal. Then just really taking in the moment.

As you can tell, enjoying the moment. Today is about -- today is a celebration. Today is the first step. You remember what I said when I first got in front of you. I said, my worst day is going to be my first day. Well, this is my first day. This is going to be my best day and I'm going to celebrate it and I'm going to enjoy it. I'm going to have fun with it because I know there's going to be some ups and downs. There's going to be some days where you want to go hide in a corner and don't want to talk to nobody. That's why when I first got the call from Mark that I went outside by myself and looked up to the sky.

**Q. Tom, I know you said it's going to be part of the process to really dig into what you have here, but I'm sure some of that's already started getting ready for the interviews and things. What stood out about these rosters and some of the decisions you'll have to make coming up?**

TOM TELESCO: Yeah, I'll tell you, the one thing that's kind of jumped at me, obviously in the division I know the Raiders pretty well, but I know them as an opponent, which is just completely different than knowing this team from being in this building, the practices every day and everything that goes into being a football player at this level.

I've got a lot of learning to do right now to get up to speed with everything in the building and then to get up to speed with the whole roster. It's just a big difference knowing them as opponents and knowing them as the GM of this team. Got a lot of work to do coming up here.

But thankfully AP is here, so that's going to make the transition a lot smoother.

**Q. People always wonder about the quarterback.**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**What's your evaluation of Aidan and what do you think about the position going forward?**

TOM TELESCO: I'll tell you, like I just said before, I have a lot of learning to do to figure out this team from the inside, not from the outside. Obviously Aidan played pretty well against us, so that's a plus.

But I need to get a lot more in depth with this team as far as more than just a couple games and then talk with the staff. We've got to do that at every position. That's really probably No. 1, at least for me. I have to get to know this team as well as I knew the team I just came from, which I don't yet, but I'm going to get there pretty quick.

ANTONIO PIERCE: I thought we saw growth with Aidan. I thought at the end of the season he was playing some really good football that led to some wins for us. But taking care of the football, being responsible, being more vocal. I think he put himself in a position to learn what it's like to be a pro in the off-season because he could reflect on what he just did. If he didn't have those opportunities, he would never know what mistakes he made. So I think it was a great learning tool for him, now that we have it on film, like Tom said, to evaluate it and really look at it going forward.

**Q. Antonio, now that it's come to fruition, what did it mean to you, just the support you guys from the guys in your locker room pushing for you to get this job?**

ANTONIO PIERCE: Yeah, there's nothing like it. The reason the National Football League is the greatest sport in America is because of the players. Most of the time when the players speak, we listen. When the players play, we watch. They did both this year.

To have that support, being a former player, to understand what it's like, and now the way and the day of the age we're in where your voice matters and you have a lot of platforms to do it. You've just got to be careful. You've got to be careful. You love the support but never take it too far.

But it was humbling. It was a special moment, but it was even more special when you get the phone call from Mr. Davis that you're the head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders.

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