

September 18, 2025

Defensive Coordinator Joe Whitt Jr.

Opening Statement:

“Alright, good morning. Alright, have a lot to unpack real quick and going to try to do it quickly. We'll talk about the first two games and then we'll get to this game versus Vegas. Okay, New York I thought we came out and played the way that we should. The defensive line played really well, highlighting [DT Javon] Kinlaw. He was violent, all over the place. We knew that [New York Giants QB] Russell [Wilson] had the ability as you saw this last game, to shoot the ball vertically. And I thought secondary did a nice job of not allowing the ball to get over the top. And the D-line did a nice job of pressuring. Alright, going to the Green Bay [Packers] game. We knew that misdirection and eye discipline was a must. We did not do a good job in the eye discipline category and that allowed some big plays. The tight end hit the big play of the seam. New York ran the exact same, well, a similar concept. They ran it slightly different. Covered the New York game and in this game we didn't, guys weren't as true. They had some insert boots that were ran pretty well. But once again, our discipline wasn't there. I thought the hitting in the running was still there that game. But when points were going to be at a premium and the score is 17-10 in the fourth quarter, we have to make sure that we find a way to get that thing done. Now transitioning to this game here, veteran quarterback and [Las Vegas Raiders QB] Geno [Smith] strong arm talented, can put the ball up, has eligibles on the outside that can really go and get in and stretch the field. A dynamic, young tight end [Las Vegas Raiders TE Brock Bowers] that when you talk about being one of the best receiving threats you have to almost treat him like a receiver. He's just a dynamic player. I remember watching him when he was at Georgia when he was a freshman and I was like, if he came out probably, he'd probably be the be first tight end to get drafted if he came out as a freshman. So, I have a lot of respect for him. The running back man, he's just good, man. Natural leverage, he has the ability to run through arm tackles, you have to get to his legs, have to get multiple people there. The offensive line's blocking very well, 74 [Las Vegas Raiders T Kolton Miller] is a really, really good player. He doesn't give up much, so we have our work cut out for us this game. But we just need to play our game. We play the way that we play the first game. And like I said, Green Bay, our eyes weren't true. The running, hitting wasn't there, but we just had to clean up our eye discipline and not allow those explosive plays of the field. But, one last thing, I just think that Kinlaw again played really well against Green Bay as I heard some people say they beat us in the trenches, they beat us because our eyes weren't good. The guys up front, they put the ball on the perimeter, they had receivers run the ball. It wasn't the running back run game that hurt us in that standpoint.”

On losing DE Deatrich Wise Jr.:

“You know, Deatrich on and off the field, he's one of those professional guys I talked about that's always studying first guy in the building. He's a guy that really is a solid factor in the run game setting edges. And then also in the pass game he can push the pockets. But you know, injuries in football is just like tackling and throwing and catching the football as part of it. So, [DE Javontae

Jean-]Baptiste and other guys are going to have opportunities to step up. [DE Jacob] Martin would get more reps and we will play well.”

On playing man coverage versus Green Bay and on what could've been done differently:

“You know the press man, the motions, we have some things grammatically that we can handle when they're going to go fast motion and try to get to the flat. But when it was just man coverage and vertical routes that really wasn't an issue. The eye discipline came from the insert boots, the switch verticals, the flow switch vertical where we, you know, let the tight end loose. And then when the tight end scored the last one, the eyes weren't true on that one as well. Once again, it was hard action pass. So, it wasn't a case of alright on the outside just getting beat, man. It was in the core, not doing a great job of our eye control.”

On what LB Preston Smith brings to the group:

“You know, we're still seeing, Preston's very new to the group and [Defensive Pass Game Coordinator] Jason Simmons has history with him. They were together in Green Bay, but he is a veteran player so we just have to make sure that he's in shape, ready to go learning the system. He's with [Defensive Line Coach Darryl] Tapp, he's with [Pass Rush Specialist Ryan] Kerrigan, so I have high anticipation that he will learn the system very quickly and then when we get him involved is whenever he's ready.”

On what makes Las Vegas Raiders DE Maxx Crosby successful:

“I haven't watched Maxx, so I'm worried about their offense.”

On LB Frankie Luvu:

“Frankie [laughs], we had some conversations this week. The first two games, people are treating him more like a big, so he's getting more protections turned to him getting more blocks by the tackles and the linemen other than the back where last year he got more of the back and that's what he has to, when you produce and you show what you did, have the type of season that he had last year you're going to be treated as such. And so, we have some things that we're going to do schematically to do, but understanding that they're still, when he gets up there, they're going to treat him as a big and they're going to put the back on somebody else.”

On how he sees the D-line struggling with eye discipline:

“You understand when the call is called, okay, where are my keys? Alright, what am I looking at? If I'm in man coverage, alright, make sure my eyes are on my man. If I'm in a combination where, alright, there's a possibility of a swap, the three guys that are in that combination, we're all keying the same thing. We go through our fast motion rules, understanding who's taking one out, who's taking two out, who's taking three out when they get into a loaded convers concept. So, it's not a simplistic answer because different calls bring different keys and reads, but it's nothing that we weren't prepared for. We splashed Green Bay plays in, now, we didn't tell the players that, but all during camp, because it was a Thursday night game, there was only going to be one game prior. So, the concepts weren't concepts that we didn't think they were doing, we just didn't play it well at the wrong time.”

On if eye discipline was an issue last season:

“I'm not worried about last year, just to be honest with you. I get what you're saying, but I'm not worried about last year. We didn't play well enough to win the Green Bay game. The reason we didn't play well enough, we didn't have great eye discipline. I'm trying to answer the question for

you.”

On why teams appear to be throwing more in the direction of CB Marshon Lattimore as opposed to CB Trey Amos:

“I don't know if that's an accurate statement or not. So, I don't know if they're throwing more at Marshon or not. So, I can't really answer that for you.”

On if the communication was up to standard against Green Bay:

“Yeah, the communication was fine. They made the proper checks, weren't a lot of missed assignments from a standpoint of, alright, I'm blowing the assignment. Once again, I keep saying the eye discipline of it and we knew that going in that was one of the key pillars. All the misdirection that they're going to run, and they do a very nice job of marrying their plays and the running in pass game and the play action game. They do an excellent job of it and that's what makes them difficult, and we can't allow a free runner to give up 57 yards because it leads to points. If we don't allow that play their point total is probably closer to around 17-18 other than the 27 that they got.”

On how to fix the defensive issues against tight ends:

“[Las Vegas] run[s] the same concepts and our offense ran the concept against them. It wasn't that and I think 85, [Green Bay Packers TE Tucker] Kraft, I think he's an excellent player. I don't think he gets the credit that he deserves. I think he's one of the better tight ends in the league, so I'm not trying to take anything away from him. We didn't play it properly. So, if I run it and we play it the way that we played it, I'm going to be open. We have to play it better. We have to just play the rules just like we did in New York game. So, there's no magistrate, just do what the call asked you to do and it doesn't matter who's necessarily running it, the way we played it up on that play on that particular time you would've been open.”

On if the 10 days in between games are a positive or negative after a loss:

“No, that's a good question. We do our due diligence with the Green Bay [game], looking at what happened because people are going to be copying some of the things that happened from that standpoint. But you can't let one game beat you twice. So, you flush it from that standpoint. The thing that's hard is you want to get right back because the only thing that gets this taste out of your mouth is a win. And so to be able to have to sit on this all weekend and then to come and the whole another week and it's 10 days before you can go to another game, that's difficult because when you don't play as a team the way that you expect it to play and against a really good team, it doesn't sit with you well. And so, you want to go back, be able to get back out there and show that hey, this is the type of team that we are and what we put out Thursday, we're more like what we put out last week against New York, but we have to show it. We can't talk about anything else, we gotta go short so that's what we're itching to do.”

On Las Vegas Raiders TE Brock Bowers and on his multiple alignments making him a challenging player to guard:

“It does make it challenging because the way they use him, certain times he could be in 12 personnel, and they'll put him in line as a 12. So, if you put nickel out there, you're going to be a little small, but there's times they'll put 12 personnel out there and they're going to put him as a receiver, and you don't want him matched up on certain linebackers in cases. So, that's where the difficulty of it is. Now, we just have to make sure that we're in calls and positions that are beneficial to the location of his that he aligns in in in each case. If he's in the line, alright, we're sound there in

the run game. If he's outside, we can help him in the pass game.”

On correcting the eye discipline issue:

“Yeah, the thing that we just did in our walkthrough. And to the point of the flow progression pass, the one that we let go, we ran it every way that we've seen run. And we talk about it, we pushed the concept through, but it's just not that one concept. It's day one teaching, you talk about your stance, your assignment, your alignment, your keys, just making sure you stay true to it. But we always talk about issue plays. I think last year we were top 10 in, to your point, I bring it up last year and I didn't want to talk about last year with you, I apologize on that one [laughs]. But we didn't give up a lot of explosive plays. In our time in Green Bay, we didn't give up a lot of explosive plays and because our eyes are true and we go over issue plays. And so, that time it was what it was. I mean, we did not cover it well. The ball up the sideline, you can say what you want to but the receiver pushed off and one to Marshon over there. I thought that should have been called, it wasn't but that's football. It is what it is. You play football and you go to the next down, you just keep playing. But we can't allow explosive plays because if we give up explosive plays, points are going to come up and we want to keep points at a premium. We keep points low it gives us the best chance to win.”