



# CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

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## *Head Coach Freddie Kitchens 5-15-19*

### **Head Coach Freddie Kitchens:**

#### **Opening statement:**

“I don’t know what you guys know and don’t know, but we just delivered helmets to a local high school [Berea Midpark High School]. We had three assistant coaches (running backs/run game coordinator Stump Mitchell, senior defensive assistant Chris Jones and defensive quality control coach Alonso Escalante) and myself talk at the Northeast Ohio Youth Football Summit last weekend. Last week we put another field turf in, which makes eight or nine that we have done over the last few years. I know you guys weren’t interested very much about that but we are. We enjoy having these high school coaches and these high school programs come out because that is where everything we do starts.”

#### **On his fondest memories playing high school football:**

“Really, it is truly what I told them. When you sit in a locker room – it is no different than this locker room here; the locker rooms never change – a you are creating relationships that are going to last forever. Some of the best friends that I have are guys that I played with. And you can’t replicate that in any other profession. any other form of life of anything, you can’t replicate it. I just wanted to make sure they understood that because it is gone before you know it. Your playing days are gone before you know it. There is going to come a time for everybody that it is the last time they put a helmet on. That is why a couple of weeks ago the minicamp was so important. It is the last time some of those guys will put a helmet on. You want to give them every opportunity, and they need to know that everybody has been where they are. When it ends... I still remember walking off of Etowah High School football field for the last time. I went on to play at Alabama and all this stuff, but I still remember that. I still remember the guys that were hugging after the game. It was the semifinals against Russellville High School. I still remember it to this day. The field was sloppy. It was raining and cold. I remember all those things. I feel like I’m pretty well traveled, alright? For me to still remember every aspect of that night is something special that they need to realize.”

#### **On how it was to have WR Odell Beckham Jr. practice field yesterday:**

“It was nice. It was good. We are continuing to build our team. Getting better. Each individual is trying to get better. We are not a team yet. We are a bunch of individuals trying to get better and try to make the team. Then once we make the team, then we will become the Browns. That is what we are interested in.”

#### **On characterizing Beckham’s OTAs schedule:**

“I’m not concerned with it until it becomes mandatory, and that is June 4.”

#### **On if presence if valuable in trying to build a team now:**

“I think we are building. Collectively, we are trying to come together and help each other out as we practice. That started back during meetings and stuff like that. Listen, I have never disputed the fact that it is not important for him to be here, but it is also also important for him to be mentally ready to be here. I’m not giving him an out by any stretch of imagination, and nobody here knows the conversations that Odell and I have. I’m just saying it is better for him to be here when he can present his best self – emotionally, physically, everything. Odell Beckham is going to be here in the fall, and he is going to be a good football player in the fall just like he has been. We just need to incorporate it into a team setting and move forward with the Cleveland Browns, and that is what we are going to become. Are we there yet? No. Whether Odell is here or not here, we are not going to be the Browns yet. We are going to be the Browns when we line up in September.”



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**On if Beckham and WR Jarvis Landry are at a point in their careers where they can just step in and contribute when needed:**

“Well, it is not that easy. Odell understands that he has a lot of work to do in minicamp and in training camp. He understands that. Jarvis understands that. Jarvis isn’t just sitting out of practice either. We don’t have to issue any kind of statements as far as why people are out or in or whatever. It is not like you are going to step into it. There is still work to be done. We still have six weeks of training camp. That is where we are going to build our team. Let me say this about this time of the year: me, personally, this time of the year is for knowledge more than anything else. It is for learning how to compete when you get to training camp because that is when the team is going to be made. That is the way I have always viewed it. That is the way I was brought up. You are just getting these young guys ready, knowledge wise to compete, technique wise to compete so you can see what you actually have in training camp and so they can actually compete with the possibilities of making the team.”

**On QB Baker Mayfield’s development in his second year:**

“It is understanding of protections and coverages. I think everything, like I said before. It is a continuous process with the quarterbacks. Baker is no different. There are going to be things that he wants to get better at 15 years from now, and he is going to retire one day and still wish he had gotten better at something. It is a never-ending process, and he is going to continue to get better.”

**On expectations for Mayfield’s leadership:**

“I want him to keep being himself.”

**On what the Browns are looking for from guys like G Austin Corbett who have opportunities ahead of them:**

“For him to understand what he is doing, first of all. Understand the stepping and punching. Maybe I shouldn’t say punching because it is no contact but understand hand placement, footwork and his assignments. You can’t really tell much about the offensive line until you get the pads on.”

**On his first impressions of RB Kareem Hunt:**

“I love Kareem. He is putting the work in. What I really love more than anything about Kareem is he is handling his business off the field. He is being the person and he is continuing to try to be the person that he wants to be and that everybody here wants him to be, and we are going to continue to support him in every way possible to do that. Like I said before, that is first and foremost. Everybody knows what he can do on the field. The thing that doesn’t get publicized a lot is what he is doing off the field and trying to get better as a person. He is doing that, he continues to do that and I don’t expect anything different from Kareem.”

**On examples of Hunt’s work off the field:**

“Kareem is out in the community now every week. He is either involved in the community or he is actually doing some hosting of events in the community trying to reach out to kids that could be headed down the same path. Everybody in life has messed up. Not everybody gets second chances. He understands the gratitude of the second chance and what he has to do with it. I think he is making the most of it. He really is. There is a difference in coming back, getting a second chance and just doing what you are supposed to on the field and going home and just being good; but he is doing more than that. He is trying to have some outreach about him about what he is doing and his mistakes. He hasn’t denied anything. He owns up to it, but he also understands that is a platform to get better and affect other people.”

**On if Hunt has personally taken the initiative to contribute in the community:**

“I think it is totally him. It is not us. We support him and everything he does, but this is Kareem. He wanted to do that. He talked to us about him wanting to do that. That is him not us, which is even better because



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that is where it needs to come from. It needs to come from his heart and his words. I have been impressed with the ways he is going about things.”

**On if he can ever be certain that negative situations won’t happen again with a player that’s had past issues:**

“I try to live my life day to day and get better everything. I’m sure that is what Kareem is trying to do is get better day to day. That is what all of us do. Even you guys, I think we wake up in the morning and try to be better than you were the previous day. That is as a person, a player, everything. The rear view mirror is a lot smaller than the windshield. I would rather focus on the windshield than the rear view mirror.”

**On how Hunt looks on the field:**

“Good. He is very intelligent. He understands what we are doing offensively, rotation wise and in the run game and then his ability speaks for itself. He is doing really well. I’m really pleased with Kareem.”

**On how much WR Antonio Callaway can improve this season:**

“Callaway has come back and he has been here most of the time. He is in good shape relative to what he was in last year during training camp. He has added some explosiveness. He has been catching the ball really well. He is doing a good job. Just like everybody else, he has to continue. It is what can you do for me tomorrow, not today; today is over. “

**On if he has to consistently tell players not to make predictions, specifically in reference to Beckham’s comments in GQ Magazine:**

“I think maybe Odell was saying that he wanted to get to that point. Hell, I do, too. I want to get to that point. I think the New England Patriots have played 587 playoff games or something like that (*laughter*) with the collective team that they have on their roster right now. (Patriots QB) Tom Brady has played in nine Super Bowls and won six of them. I want to get to there so we can print that. I want to get to be what the Patriots are. Everybody in the National Football League, if they don’t tell you that they want to be what the Patriots are, they are lying to you. I think that is what he was saying. He wasn’t making predictions. We are not going to be in that business of making predictions. We are going to predict that we are going to work hard the next day and put our efforts into that.”

**On if the Browns know how much time Hunt will be able to spend with the team after training camp:**

“We do not.”

**On if the Browns have asked the league to work with them on Hunt’s ability to be in the facility during his suspension:**

“That’s above my pay grade.”

**On his communication with RB Duke Johnson Jr.:**

“I communicate with Duke often or a few times, a couple times a week probably. It is voluntary. There is nothing I can say. I think what we need to do as a league if we want to keep bringing these things up is make it mandatory. It is voluntary. Duke is another one. He can show up and he will know what to do and be ready to play. I fully expect him to be here in minicamp. He knows what is on the line, and he will be back with us in training camp and I guess we will see where we go from there.”

**On if there is a sense of disappointment Johnson is not present:**

“I would be lying to say that I wasn’t disappointed that we don’t have everybody here. I’m not going to fool you and try to trick you into saying I’m happy-go-lucky fine with it. I want everybody here because I do think it is important to be here, but it is their option. They understand what they have to do once they come here. As long as everybody is on the same page as that, I’m fine as long as they are ready to play. Odell is going to be ready. Duke is going to be ready. All of them are going to be ready to play.”



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## **On RB Nick Chubb compared to his rookie year:**

“Is he out there (*laughter*)? Just kidding. I was trying to be funny again. Nick is ready to roll. I don’t know if you guys got the AP Wire. Is there an AP Wire still going on these days? Anyways, we signed some defensive guys that can play some football. We really did. (DT) Sheldon Richardson, (DE) Olivier Vernon, (S) Morgan Burnett, we added some pieces on defense, too. Hopefully, you guys in the fall start talking about them a little bit.”

## **On Vernon:**

“Olivier is exactly what we thought he was. He takes control on the field, takes control in the locker room and he is the leader of the team. We just need to continue to mesh people like that and see where we are.”

## **On seeing ways Vernon can help DE Myles Garrett:**

“I think that is one part of it, and he can also help No. 95. He can also help Myles by him being on the other side. The more good football players you put around Myles, the better he is going to be, just as is the case with anybody.”

## **On most noticeable aspects of the rookies practicing with the veterans:**

“That they can play. That they can actually compete with guys. If you look out there and you don’t really realize that a guy is a rookie, then that tells you something as far as what they look like. They passed the eyesight test, but other than that not much of anything. This is more about learning and seeing who will compete a little bit but such limited action as far as how they can compete. You can’t really tell much about that. We will get to that in training camp.”

## **On Burnett:**

“He is a definition of a leader. He kind of gets those guys together. He has been through the fire. I like guys that have been in fights – like been in the fight, not in fights. We had one out there today that we are not going to deal with. You guys need to be around the next time that happens. I like guys that have been in the battle or battle tested. Coach (Bill) Parcells used to say all the time that he wants to leave training camp and his team be battle tested. That is what we want to get to. You just can’t do it right now.”

## **On his message to players when fights occur:**

“I’m not telling you that. You will have to see.”

## **On how Chubb can learn from Hunt:**

“Anytime you put different players in the room and they are at the same kind of level as far as they done it before – Nick has done it before; Nick has done it now – so Kareem can learn from Nick. It doesn’t have to be the other way around. Anytime you put two guys that are competitors like they are, it benefits the whole team. It benefits the room first and then in turn benefits the team.”

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