

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Najee Harris

Weekday Press Conference



**Q. Did you think the Steelers -- did you get a sense that they had you targeted all along and what's your reaction to coming here?**

NAJEE HARRIS: I mean, of course you hear a lot of mixed rumors of everything that was going on with -- especially in the draft with the Steelers picking you. I'm sure there were other teams, but me personally, like even all the stuff that you see online, I did not -- no, I can't really say I expected that, though, especially being a running back. You expect a bunch of stuff, but for it to actually happen, I didn't really think that was going to happen.

**Q. Steelers were last in the league in running last year. A lot of pressure being put on you probably to help that out. How much do you feel that you can help out right away?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Yeah, I mean, I understand that there was -- that they did finish last in rushing last year, but I feel like through a lot of stuff, through practice and hard work, I feel like that can be changed. I don't feel no pressure at all to be honest with you. I've been put in a lot of situation with that type of stuff put on me, especially in college. NFL is different, of course, but I feel like it's nothing that I can't do in time for sure.

**Q. One thing that Kevin Colbert mentioned that really impressed him and impressed Mike Tomlin in the draft process was the nine-hour drive that you made to pro day to watch your teammates working out even though you weren't able to do it or weren't participating. How did you decide to do that drive, and did they bring that up to you as something that impressed them and they liked seeing in you?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Oh, I mean, I don't think they talked to me about that, but my decision to support my teammates was solely because throughout the four years I spent at Alabama, I've got a lot of memories with them, especially in the sport of football. You go through a lot of stuff with training day, so it makes the bond become bigger and

bigger. My flight was canceled, so it was around 8:00 or 9:00 at night and I took it to myself, my agent was mad at me, but I took it to myself to say I really want to support my teammates and the juniors that's performed out here today because I know that people might not understand, but that type of support is big-time, and it can help you settle down all the nerves that you have if you look to the side and see your brothers are there. That was a no-brainer for me for sure.

**Q. What traits do you think you have that best fit in the NFL? What are your best qualities?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Yeah, I feel like now in today's game, some people say it's a passing league, so I've got to see, hey, Najee, can you be utilized in the passing game. I think I can line up out wide, I think I can line up in the slot. I think I'm a mismatch with the linebackers. I feel like if a DB or a corner is not sticking me there, then it's a mismatch on a linebacker.

So that's one thing. Running in between tackles I feel like is a big thing now in today's game. I feel like I can match all that because of my size. I'm 6'2", 230, but also it's because they added another game on, so now we're playing more games, so I feel like we need somebody to carry the load for sure, so I feel like I fit in perfectly.

**Q. Where did you spend your draft night --**

NAJEE HARRIS: I'm in Oakland right now. I'm in Oakland right now with all my people right now, so yeah, I'm in Oakland with a good friend of mine. That was Marcus. He just told me I'm going to be playing him twice a year. That's what he told me all draft day to be honest. He knew before me. He said, I'm going to be playing you twice a year.

**Q. Why was it special for you to be here?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Because this is where I'm from. I'm not from Oakland, but I'm from the Bay Area. I've been raised all across the Bay Area. Draft day only a certain amount of people could be there, and I have a lot of people that helped me out and helped me get where I'm at, so I wanted to make sure all of them could enjoy the special moment

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with me. I made sure I could bring as much people as possible during COVID and with the pandemic still around. So I tried to be safe, but me being around my family is for sure a big reason why I wanted to spend it with them.

**Q. I'm going to ask you a two-parter. Can you help us out and tell us what's Marcus's last name? We're trying to figure out who Marcus is.**

NAJEE HARRIS: That's Marcus Peters.

**Q. And then the second question I have for you is that we have seen that your family went through a little bit of a tough time when you were younger, and today you had this party at a shelter that you were actually at.**

NAJEE HARRIS: How did you guys see that? That's crazy.

**Q. Put in perspective what it means -- you are a first-round NFL pick who is supposed to save the run game for one of the trademark franchises in the NFL?**

NAJEE HARRIS: That's why I mesh with the Steelers a lot, because that's a run team; that's why I like them.

But for me to give back to the community, though, before I went to the draft day party I was at the homeless shelter and then I was -- literally I came here actually late, but I wanted to make sure that I could give back to the community and show them if y'all still need anything, like I'm never too big or too whatever to help you guys out. I'm always going to be the helping hand.

I wanted to make sure that happened, so I had a party over there, passing out food and pizza. I feel like they didn't think that was serious enough, which they did, but in my mindset I didn't think so, so I said I'm going to pull up and actually show them I'm really here if you guys need anything. I know I'm getting drafted today, but if you guys need anything, I'm literally right here. I've got my marketing team, my agency is out here, and since I'll be in Pittsburgh they'll be back here. If they need any support they can reach out to them if I'm busy and eventually it'll get back to me.

That was important. Us as a family, we went through a lot of stuff. That was actually one of the places I stayed at, in the homeless shelter. I just want to make sure they know that if they need a helping hand I'm always here.

**Q. It seems like you're pretty up on things with the current state of the Steelers, but how familiar are you with their running back history here in Pittsburgh, especially since they've already had a running back**

**named Harris who's in the Hall of Fame?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Franco Harris, they had Jerome, obviously Le'Veon, had James recently. But I mean, yeah, one thing about the Steelers is recent history has always evolved around the run game.

I always thought it would be a perfect fit to be there, but like I say, with a running back everything bounces around, what's going to happen. I know a little bit about it because I am a football junkie, but I'm always open to learn more.

**Q. One of the things that Kevin Colbert talked about was your decision to go back to Alabama and said that that impressed him. What kind of went into that decision for you, and was there any point during this time period that maybe you thought it wasn't going to work out so well? And do you feel like in the end that was a fruitful decision for you?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Well, the decision was for me mainly because when I went to go on -- when I look at tape and film I want to be satisfied with myself. My junior year I was not satisfied with myself. There was a lot of things I felt like I needed to improve on and work on, me personally.

A lot of people were saying was it a hard decision. No, it wasn't. It was a no-brainer to be honest with you. I didn't really care about what other running backs in the draft class, it was was I happy with what I put on film that year, and no, I was not. I couldn't say I was, so I wanted to go back and improve on all those things that I felt like I needed to work on.

I think I showed that I'm a three-down back and stuff like that, but I guess the stereotype, any big back can be a three-down back, blah-blah-blah, so I wanted to make sure is that question answered, and I feel like this year I answered a lot of those questions. There's still a lot of stuff I need to work on, but I was more satisfied with what I put on film for sure, though.

**Q. In your first response to the first question, you said, as a running back in the first round you never know. For you, for Travis Etienne, for Javonte Williams, good players at that position, was this sort of a frustrating process to keep hearing that over and over again; you're good players but, hey, the running back has been devalued. Do you carry that as a chip on your shoulder?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Yeah, it was extremely frustrating, especially having this draft party and inviting everybody out and not knowing what's going to happen. But yeah, I don't like it. I don't agree on it, but I'm not making the decisions.

But running backs are devalued. I personally -- therefore I can give numerous reasons why we shouldn't be devalued, but just knowing that, hey, you're better than all these guys, it's just that you play running back, so we don't know what's going to happen, when they're going to start drafting running backs. Just to finally see it happen, I'm blessed.

**Q. Obviously a lot of people can tell what your skills are and know your talent on the field, but when it comes to off the field, how would you describe yourself off the field? What traits do you possess that would make Pittsburgh fall in love with you off the field?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Oh, man, shoot. I'm me, though. I guess I'm a very giving person. I do a lot of stuff in the community. One thing that I went to Alabama from the West Coast, and one thing I was doing was seeing how was the poverty rate and was there things I could do in that situation. In Pittsburgh I have never lived there, I've never been over there before. All I know is about the football. I'm always hoping to learn new things. I want to see what ways I can help in the community and ways and stuff like that, having food banks, just doing stuff in the area where I can just help out people off-the-field wise stuff, too. Just really stuff like that, giving back to the community.

**Q. Going back to the question on guys like Jerome Bettis, I know you're probably right on the cusp, but did you get to watch any Jerome Bettis growing up?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Hell yeah. What you talking about? Hell yeah. At Notre Dame, too.

**Q. You will get an opportunity to play with a future Hall-of-Famer for at least one season in Big Ben. What does that mean to you?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Oh, man, that's dope as hell. It's dope, though, because shoot, I mean, people didn't realize it, but I only followed two teams and that was the Steelers and the Niners and that's because I actually liked those teams. But actually seeing Big Ben, all the Super Bowls he came into and actually seeing him perform at a high level and stuff like that and actually being able to line up with him, on the side of him and learn from him, I mean, that's an honor right there to have.

I'm excited to meet them, really the staff, everybody. But Ben, of course I'm excited to meet him, too.

**Q. We talk a lot about receivers at Alabama going to the NFL, but actually you'll be the seventh active running back in the NFL from Alabama. How does it**

**feel to officially be a part of that fraternity, and what does that say about just the powerhouse offense that you came from?**

NAJEE HARRIS: Well, yeah, I was considered -- I know I'm labeled a running back, but I'm considered a receiver my damn self to be honest with you. But me playing with all those guys and actually learning and having all three of those offensive coordinators and now I'm going to be able to be in the NFL like you said and there's now seven active running backs, it just shows you really how dominant Coach Saban can be, but really just how focused we are at Alabama at achieving what we want to do. I mean, nothing ever changes. When I go to the league I'm going to work hard just the same as I worked hard at Alabama. I mean, I'm considered a receiver by them to be honest with you.

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