

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

### Kevin Colbert

### Mike Tomlin

#### Draft Press Conference



KEVIN COLBERT: It's good to see you guys back in the familiar setting of this pressroom. We're super, super excited to be able to draft Kenny Pickett with our first-round pick. Honestly, never thought he would make it to us at 20. Exciting times for us, for Kenny, for the University of Pittsburgh, and for Pittsburgh in general. It's great. We couldn't be more excited.

Coach?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, it's interesting, well, we circled the globe or at least the United States here the last several months, man, just exploring and researching, and it's funny, we ended up with a guy from next door.

We're excited about it. Just to be able to not only know what he's capable of, but to see his process, his maturation process, his developmental process is just a great deal of comfort, and we're excited.

**Q. How much did it help that he's right next door and you had a chance to see him evolve like Mike just said?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Yeah, honestly, you watch him grow over the years, and sometimes we're more critical of the Pitt guys because we've watched them grow from freshmen on up. We get a little too critical times, and we talk about that. Some of the other kids, the other players, we catch them in their sophomore, junior year and you don't get to see them quite as much.

But honestly, Kenny developed, obviously had a great senior year, and it was a good move for him to stay in school. It just talks and preaches about what you can do when you stay and continue to develop and turn into a first-round pick. Kenny is special, and he grew from -- like I said, we watched him come in as a freshman. You knew who he was, and when he became their starter, you just continued to watch him grow into the great season that he

had.

We really don't get to see the Pitt kids as much as you think we do. They're on an opposite practice schedule. We get to see them play some more games. But like Coach said -- just let me talk, this quarterback class was a special group of young men with Kenny. Obviously we had Kenny valued the most because we took him first. It's nothing to take away from those other young men. They're great people. They're going to be great players, as well.

Again, just super excited for Kenny.

**Q. What were the things you liked about Kenny?**

MIKE TOMLIN: We talked about his high floor, and the high floor was because of the intangibles but also the anticipation and the pro accuracy were very obvious and consistent when studying his tape.

**Q. He's also run the Canada offense a lot?**

MIKE TOMLIN: (Smiling).

**Q. Did it take it more challenging for you guys knowing that you had all the quarterbacks available at your pick?**

MIKE TOMLIN: No, it did not. You want options. Like Kevin mentioned, it was a pleasure to get to know all the young men through the process. We took every opportunity to develop a relationship and to get to know them, and I'm appreciative of that. Just really impressed by those young men, all of them.

**Q. Kevin, you said that you didn't expect Kenny to be there at 20. What's going through your mind early on at like pick 11 when teams started moving up? Did you think he would still be there at that point?**

KEVIN COLBERT: We didn't know. We map it out and we get 20 guys lined up. The quarterbacks were in that group. We just wait and hope and keep it going. You have options. You're not going to lose, we're going to get a player at 20, but to get that player at 20 was certainly a pleasant surprise.

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**Q. A few days ago you said that you watched some of these quarterbacks as many as seven times. Was this a guy that fit that seven times?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Yeah, when Kenny was a young player, we weren't studying him but you knew who he was. I remember sitting behind him at the Dapper Dan coming out of his sophomore year, and you're around him. But yeah, we did get to see Kenny over the last two seasons, and this year in particular, it was great.

**Q. You mentioned the high floor of Kenny Pickett; how does that speak to potential NFL readiness when he gets here at 24, and how does that work with the dynamic of the other two experienced quarterbacks that you have?**

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, I think that's what Kevin was alluding to when he mentioned it was a good thing for him to come back and go back to school and gain another year of college experience. He is 24 years old. He is a mature young man. You do see maturity in his game, and I think all of those things are going to put him into position to compete.

**Q. Is he going to get a chance to start this year, and how will that play out?**

MIKE TOMLIN: He'll be given an opportunity to compete certainly.

**Q. You talk a lot about mobility and how final it is in today's day and age. Kenny has shown he can move. What does he provide that, Willis was another guy that could move, what was the separator?**

MIKE TOMLIN: I like his mobility. I'm going to ask that he slide when he gets in certain circumstances. (Laughter).

**Q. Kevin, was it imperative of you guys to address the quarterback position in this draft in your mind?**

KEVIN COLBERT: It wasn't. You know, there was plenty of good players that we could have taken here. There's plenty left for us to take. But this quarterback group, if we could address it with people we felt worthy of this pick, we certainly were going to, because quarterback is the most critical spot in the National Football League. That's not to take anything away from Mitch Trubisky and Mason Rudolph. We've got three young quarterbacks. I think it's going to be great competition, and as Coach mentioned, they'll all be in it to see who becomes the starter, but now I think we've got three real good options.

**Q. You mentioned his maturity. What else about his off-the-field presence excites you?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Kenny is just a mature, even-keeled guy. A lot of times like when we're studying the quarterbacks, we not only watch them on the field but we watch them off the field, when they come off, how are they with their teammates, how do they interact with their coaches, how do they conduct media interviews. We talk to Kenny about how he's going to handle this in this market because he's going from a University of Pittsburgh great to a potential Steeler great.

But it'll be different for him. He won't be a college player any longer, he'll be a professional, and there will be different expectations. But we feel that the maturity that he displayed on and off the field will help him in that endeavor.

**Q. Kevin touched on it a little bit just now, but how do you handle this with Mitch and Mason in terms of letting them know what you guys are doing?**

MIKE TOMLIN: It's really nothing to handle. Those guys are competitors. We're in a competitors' business. They understand that. They understand that we're building the construction of the team to win. So I'm sure they're excited about having an opportunity to put their skills on display.

**Q. Kevin, I'm guessing you thought he was the most NFL-ready quarterback?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Again, there was a great group, and as Coach mentioned, we really enjoyed getting to know them, getting to know their families. But obviously when you take this guy first, he was our top choice, and again, can't take anything away from the rest of that group, but Kenny was clearly our top pick at that position, and it was, again, unexpected.

**Q. Where did you see him make the biggest leap from last year to this year?**

KEVIN COLBERT: I think he continued to grow. Coach talked about his mobility. Sure, he can create plays but he finds receivers when he's creating. He's not necessarily going to scramble for 40 yards, 50 yards, but he may buy a little time to his left and still be able to throw it back to his right, and there's no panic in the young man, and that's really exciting.

Again, I think he grew into -- he was like a first-year NFL player for Coach Narduzzi and Coach Whipple, just a mature player at that position that obviously helped Pitt and we're hopeful it helps us.

**Q. Quarterbacks usually go early. Why do you think the first one was at 20?**

KEVIN COLBERT: No idea. Honestly, I didn't know if any of them would make it to us at 20. But they were there, and again, Kenny was the pick.

**Q. You talked about Coach Whipple, and obviously he played for Coach Canada, as well. How does a quarterback playing in a pro-style offense make your evaluation easier or different than someone who is not?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Yeah, we talk about it all the time. He's coming from a pro system and sometimes it's an easier transition. It doesn't mean the player is coming out of it, can't make that transition. It may take a little bit longer. And you've got to be careful as to not over-evaluate a player because he's coming from a familiar system.

But I think Kenny, again, coming out, that'll help him. Going to the Senior Bowl helped him. Again, that was another great week where we got to see the top guys all in the same venue.

It'll be familiar for him, but again, he's going to go from being a great college player to hopefully a great NFL player.

**Q. To follow that up, when you talked about before you sometimes can be a little bit more critical of kids because you've seen them for so long, was there any part of you because you had those two veteran quarterbacks in place, maybe we could take a younger guy and have him develop behind those guys?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Yeah, we go through it all, and in the end we're going to pick what we felt was the best player. Yeah, he's a little bit older than the rest of the group, but he was still the best. The age factor never came into play.

**Q. Was much made of the hand size thing?**

KEVIN COLBERT: It wasn't for us. Honestly I never paid attention to it. I believe it was the Clemson game, and there was other scouts here, and they said, you know he's got a small hand? And I said, no, thanks for sharing. But it really didn't matter because it was never a factor. His fumble rate was not anywhere near a problem. He could certainly throw the football.

Sometimes we get hung up on all that analytical measurements and short arms and long arms and so on and so forth. I just want to see the results. I know Coach

does, too. It certainly didn't affect him.

**Q. Kevin, was there any anxious moments there about potentially moving up, because I think the Saints slotted right before you?**

KEVIN COLBERT: Yeah, we made some calls. We did. But that's not unusual. We'll make some calls. We had people calling us from the bottom. We had people that we knew were interested in maybe trading down to our spot and us trading up. So we go through that process almost every round.

**Q. Mike, I know you talk to the Pitt players sometimes and they like to talk to you. Kenny said I think it was combine that he remembers sitting on the bench with you, long conversations. Do you remember the first interactions you had with him or the first time you noticed him?**

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, I make it my business to kind of get to know those guys just to be neighborly, just to encourage them. I've known him for several years now, whether it's in the parking lot or what have you, wishing him good luck on a big game of the week, neighborly type things, in a very natural way, like I've done with those who have come before him.

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