

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Thursday, April 28, 2022
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Kenny Pickett

Draft Press Conference



Q. Kenny, what was that moment like when you saw the number pop up on your phone? Did you know automatically that it was the Steelers giving you a call to pick you there?

KENNY PICKETT: I did, yeah. I'm pretty familiar with the area code, so I had a pretty good idea of who it was. To be honest I was speechless. It's a lifelong -- 23 years of hard work to get to this point, and that all came in a phone call. It was probably one of the best moments of my life, and I'm so excited to get started and get to work with the guys who are next door to me my whole career with the Pittsburgh Panthers.

Q. You're going to be asked to replace a guy that's probably going to the Hall of Fame. What do you view the challenge that it's going to take to live up to that standard?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I'm honestly not thinking of that. I'm excited to get there tomorrow. There's a lot that goes into this, but I'm just excited to get to work. I've been working so hard for this moment, I can't wait for it to continue and be part of the team and get right back to work honestly. I'm just going to enjoy this night with my family and friends, and it's honestly right back to it.

Q. What was the day like just as sort of the picks went by and there was a bunch of trades? It was a crazy draft for everyone else. What was it like for you?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, just about the same for everyone else, to be honest with you. It was kind of wide open in terms of the draft. I was really excited to obviously get the call. I wasn't too sure when it was going to be. We kind of had an idea, but I saw the 412 number pop up, obviously I got insanely excited for it. It's an unbelievable organization to be a part of and I can't wait to get there tomorrow.

Q. The Steelers still have Rudolph, they signed Trubisky. Did you think if you were going to get drafted in the first round you'd be joining a team with a

more clear path to starting? How do you feel about competing for the job?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I'm pretty familiar with competing. I've been doing it my whole life. So I know how to be a good teammate and also compete at the same time. I'm excited to join the quarterback room, get to know those guys and honestly just get better every day. We're all chasing a championship, so at the end of the day that's all that matters. That's what I'm excited to go do.

Q. You've been here in Pittsburgh obviously for a handful of years. What have you learned about this city that makes you feel like you're a good fit for this Steelers team?

KENNY PICKETT: I'd kind of say my personality and how I attack my business and go about playing the game. I play with an edge. The Pitt fans understand that. I'm extremely excited to show that to the whole entire organization.

Yeah, I can't wait to get to work. I'm really excited. Like I said before, I'm kind of speechless. I've never had this kind of feeling before in my life. It's all the hard work coming to fruition in front of me. I can't wait to get in that building and go chase championships with those guys.

Q. Was your process strong enough about the Steelers when you saw them come up at 20 that you felt pretty good they were going to give you a call?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I had a pretty good feeling when I got to 20 that that would be the call. As soon as the Saints pick went in, I got the call. My dad saw, my fiancée saw, so we were all incredibly excited for it. I honestly just broke down. Like I said before, I'm just repeating myself, but it's my life's work in one phone call. It's really special.

Q. This is obviously a great story in Pittsburgh, but do you feel there's more pressure on you now going from playing at Pitt to playing here in Pittsburgh with the Steelers?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I think it's the National Football League, man, so there's pressure always. I love playing football. I love playing the game. This has been my whole



entire life. I'm so excited to get with new teams, new coaches. Matt Canada, who I was recruited by, I can finally play with him and get coached by him. We're going to be spending a hell of a lot of time together to say the least. So I'm incredibly excited to get there. But the pressure is always there. It's the business.

Q. So follow up on that, Kevin Colbert just told us that that is something that they had to take into account, how a quarterback would kind of deal with all of this. What did you tell them in your pre-draft meetings to kind of give them that confidence that you could be a first-round picked quarterback and you could handle everything that comes with it here?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I've always had that confidence in myself when I arrived at the University of Pittsburgh, so I know what I can do and I'm confident because of how hard I work. I know sooner or later I'm going to get to where I want to get to. It happened in college. I'm excited to go out there and work and do it in the NFL. There's a lot of great guys to learn from in that organization, especially that quarterback room, honestly.

I think one of my first calls at North Carolina is Mitch Trubisky. So I'm excited to see him and learn from him. He's been in the league for some years now and he's a hell of a player, so I'm excited to get there.

Q. Did you say Mitch called you today?

KENNY PICKETT: No, he called me when I was getting recruited by North Carolina.

Q. What do you like about Matt Canada's system?

KENNY PICKETT: Going back to when I was getting recruited, it's just the diversity of it. He has the quarterback in the pocket, he gets the guys on the move. So I feel that's kind of underrated in my game. I feel I do a really good job of getting outside the pocket and making plays, and he does that with his play design naturally.

So I feel like I do all the great things that he wants, and that's why he recruited me for his offense, that's why I feel like I'm in Pittsburgh now again. I can't wait to get back into it. Really just kind of obsess over the playbook and just kind of everything I do will be learning that playbook and being a Pittsburgh Steeler, so I can't wait to get there tomorrow.

Q. Did you keep your apartment or are you thinking about maybe upgrading it?

KENNY PICKETT: Oh, man, if you guys saw my

apartment, you guys wouldn't be asking that question. I definitely won't be staying in Oakland. I can't wait to find a new place. My fiancée will harp on that and agree, but my roommates might be a little upset, but I think they'll understand.

Q. When we were talking about Kevin Colbert he said how surprised and unexpected that you were available at 20. Going into the draft did you think you would still be on the board or were you thinking the Steelers were going to have to trade up to get you? What were you thinking as the draft unfolded?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I thought the board was pretty open to be honest. I had a range of about 6 to 20 that I felt like was the range I could go in. I was just waiting for the call. I wish there was a game that you could go play or something you can figure out where you're going. It's something that's out of your control. I felt like I put my best foot forward in every aspect in this whole process.

When I saw that 412 number though, I was kind of overwhelmed with emotions and just unbelievable. I can't wait to go next door.

Q. When you decided to stay home and not go to Vegas with the draft, what was it like having that moment there with your family and how excited are your folks to have the familiar drive down the turnpike away?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I've envisioned this moment since I swear I've been like five or seven years old. Ever since I've started playing football. I've envisioned having the track. I'd watch with my family, and me and my dad would talk all the time if that was going to be me some day. So that hug to him when I got that call was -- I just don't have words for it. We just both said that we would do it, and I'm incredibly happy that it's right next door to where I played college ball.

Q. When you were going through the process, like when free agency rolled around, did you think to yourself, yeah, the Steelers, I'm on their radar, then they got Trubisky? Did you kind of cross them off and then get back into your mind? What were you thinking through that process?

KENNY PICKETT: I'm going to be honest, every interview, every encounter that I had, there was not one encounter that I turned down. I took care of every opportunity that was there because I want to be the best, and I felt like any team interacts with me would have that feeling that I was the guy to go with. So I wanted to make sure that I took every interview, every visit, anything I could possibly do to



help myself in this process I would do.

I didn't care about what any team was doing in the free agency, what rumors I was hearing. I just wanted to put my best foot forward with that team.

Q. Going back to that call that you had with Mitch, do you remember or can you recall the advice or anything that he said to you then?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I mean, he was great honestly because he was a guy I really felt like I emulated my game around with what he did and how he played. So having him call me in high school, it was awesome. He was kind of in the position that I am now.

So it's something that I'm doing to recruits now in Pitt, so it's come full circle, and I take a lot of pride in the fact that I can do that now. So I'm so appreciative of it and I know he's a great pro, so I'm excited to get there. It's not his job to teach me anything. I'm excited to go there and watch how he goes about his business and kind of take great things away from him.

Q. I know Mike Tomlin and Kevin really appreciated that you stayed an extra year, and honestly paved the way for these other athletes that are coming up. What advantage do you think you have by having the extra year and staying in school?

KENNY PICKETT: I just think the experience of playing games and having starts under my belt, I think that really helps, seeing a lot of different defenses, playing a lot of different levels of competition. So I think it's just only going to help me at the next level. I'm just excited to finally fulfill my dream and go relentlessly at this goal of winning a championship.

I'm really happy that I'm in Pittsburgh.

Q. You've mentioned a couple times about going next door, but how weird is it going to be the next time you're here at the facility I think tomorrow coming in the Steelers side instead of the Pitt side?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, I don't know how weird it's going to be because every time I walked off Heinz Field, the two practice fields, the farthest end, I've envisioned myself being at the two practice fields as soon as you walk out of that facility. I right where I said I would be, and I knew I would be. It was five years of college, but honestly since I was five years old, I've been working towards this. So I'm exactly where I thought I would be, and I can't wait to get to work.

Q. Every year at this time of year when the draft rolls around it seems like certain narratives get attached to every player. Yours might be that you're a high floor guy but maybe not the same ceiling as other quarterbacks in this class. What would be your response to that criticism in general?

KENNY PICKETT: Yeah, there's always criticism. It's something I'm kind of at peace with in this game and this position especially. When I said I was going back last year, I'm sure everyone said, why is he going back? He can't get any better, what does he think five years is going to do? And now sitting here I just got drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers 20th overall pick.

So I'm always improving. There's not an off-season I've had where I felt like I haven't gone up because I go to work every single day. So I know I'm always improving, and there's always something that I can improve on, and I know what it is physically and I know what it is mentally, and I obsess over it. That's what I continued to do. Nothing really changes in terms of my mindset and how I go about my business.

It increases with the level of the NFL, but I just can't wait to keep chasing that dream of winning a Super Bowl.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.