

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Omar Khan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. We are here to announce Omar Khan as our general manager. Art Rooney will say a few words and then pass it off to Omar and then after Omar says a few words, we will open it up to questions for Omar. Art?

ART ROONEY: Good morning. First, I just want to say thanks to a few people that have helped us with the -- I think we had a very thorough process, Kevin Colbert, my brother Dan and Coach Tomlin all very helpful with interviews and making sure, as I say, we had a very thorough process.

Obviously we picked a guy we know very well, and excited that we know Omar, Omar knows us, so I think it'll be a very smooth transition.

Without further ado, I'm happy to introduce Omar Khan as the next general manager of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

OMAR KHAN: Well, everyone, appreciate you guys all being here today on my account. I want to begin by thanking Art Rooney and the entire search committee, Dan Rooney, Jr., Kevin Colbert, Coach T. I'm confident that time will show this was the right decision for this franchise.

I'm excited. I can tell you that I don't take anything for granted, and I understand the expectations that come with this job, but I can assure everyone that the expectations that I set for myself are even greater.

Before I take any questions, I'd like to just mention some people that have been very important to me in my life. First and foremost, my wife Kristen and our two daughters. I'm so blessed to have them in my life. The four of us, we make such a great team together. I have a great team here at work, and when I go home I have a great team, although I have no authority with that team when I go home, but we get along so well. They're very supportive of me, and like I said, I'm very blessed to have them in my life. So thank you.

To all my close family and friends, especially my parents, I come from two amazing parents, my mom, my dad, both immigrants. My mom is Hispanic, she's from Honduras, my dad is Indian, both whom have had the opportunity to live the American dream and have always done whatever they had to do to make sure my brother, my sister and I always had the resources necessary to succeed. To this day, they're the two hardest working people I've ever met in my life.

Today is as much for them as it is for me. They're also the ones that had to listen an 8-, 9-, 10-, 12-, 14-year-old kid tell them that he didn't want to be a lawyer, he didn't want to be an engineer, he didn't want to be a doctor, a teacher, a policeman, a fireman; all he wanted to do was work in the National Football League, become a general manager and win a bunch of Super Bowls.

To all the great football people that have helped me along the way and have helped shape who I am and helped me in my development, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Ambassador Dan Rooney. Him and I had such a special and unique relationship, learned so much from him.

To the entire Rooney family, I've said this before, the Rooney family, especially Art and Mr. Rooney, they've taught me so much not only about the game of football and the business of the NFL, but about life and being a person. I am who I am -- the person you see here today is who he is for having known the Rooney family, especially Art and Mr. Rooney.

To Kevin Colbert, what can I say? Kevin and I have worked together for over 20 years, and I find it hard to believe that there's two people in this business that have worked as well together as Kevin and I have for so long. It's been an honor, and I'm excited that he's always going to be just a phone call away for me.

To Coach Tomlin, what can I say? To step into this job and know that you're going to be working hand-in-hand, shoulder-to-shoulder with Mike Tomlin, I mean, that's a dream come true. One thing I will say about Coach is I've never met anybody that has a greater passion for the game of football than Mike Tomlin, at all levels, and I'm not just talking pro football, but his passion is amazing. That

resonates on all of us in this building, myself included.

Coach, I'm excited. Let's get it.

I could be here forever. I know you guys don't want to be here forever. Some of you guys want to go golfing and stuff like that.

There's so many people that -- Bill Cowher -- Bill Cowher and I to this day have a strong relationship. We communicate periodically. He's been -- when I've gone through these processes, he's not only been a great advisor but he's been a great friend, Coach Cowher. I've never met anybody that's been able to give me a better perspective on things on life, whether it's personal or football, than Coach. He's been tremendous. Coach, thank you.

Again, there's so many people. Bill Nunn, Ron Hughes, Joe Greene, Billy Cuhara (phonetic), Chet Franklin. I could be here forever, the people in this building. This is a tremendous organization with tremendous people that have also helped shape who I am here today.

With that said, I know I forgot some names, but all the great players that have been here. I've been around some tremendous players here, and I've gotten to know players that were here before me, and we have some great players here, and like I said, I'm excited to be here and ready to take any questions.

Q. When you got into this business, was your goal, your dream, general manager, president? Did you think that was what you wanted to do and that's what you would rise to?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, my dream since I was young, I spoke to Missy yesterday and I was telling her, she asked me when did I realize I wanted to work in the NFL or be a general manager. I said, look, when I was running around that football field and I realized I wasn't as good of an athlete as everyone else on that field, I said I'd better change course and maybe not try to be Archie Manning but try to be Jim Finks maybe.

Q. How much will things change? Will you do things different?

OMAR KHAN: Obviously being in this role, the responsibilities shift a little bit, but I'll have my hands on a lot of things that I have done before and obviously have my hands in other things. It'll be a smooth transition.

Q. Omar, you beat out 15 other candidates. What do you think put you over the edge in Art's eyes?

OMAR KHAN: You know, you'd have to ask Art that. I think I'm the right person for the job, and I think I'm going to be successful. I can't speak -- those were all great candidates. I know most of those guys, I know very well, and they're all very qualified, and I'm pretty certain every one of those guys will be a general manager at some point.

Q. This process played out for a few months, and you had two interviews. In between that did you just focus on the job at hand and forget about it?

OMAR KHAN: I guess I had the advantage of having gone through this process before, and I understand what it entails. When you're in this business, you work hard to just get to the point where you're in the mix. You're always appreciative. I was patient. I had the experience of going through it before.

Q. You're known mostly as kind of the cap guy is pretty much how the public has known you. What do you bring to this job including from a football capacity?

OMAR KHAN: Look, I can tell you from the first day I started here in Pittsburgh, it's been all about football and building a championship roster here, and I learned that from day one, and that's not going to change.

Q. I know you have a good relationship with Andy; what has he helped bring to the table for what you do?

OMAR KHAN: I've known Andy for over 20 years. He's a strong evaluator. He's a very loyal person. I think he's a Steelers type of person.

Q. When speaking about the player evaluation side of things, talent evaluation side of things, it was referenced before, we sort of know you through the business lens and the cap lens. Do you see yourself leaning on the opinions of others perhaps more early to work your way into more of an expertise on the player evaluation end? How much of that have you built that maybe we don't know having not really dealt with you publicly so much?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, I think I'm confident in saying that I've touched every aspect of the football operations, obviously some more than others. But I think every good leader understands his strengths and his weaknesses, neither of which I'm going to discuss here publicly, but I think every good leader surrounds himself with smart people that are going to help him succeed, and that's my plan.

Q. I know you're early in building the rest of your staff, but when you look at some guys who have been here for a long time like Brandon Hunt and Kevin Colbert, do you anticipate them having roles in your staff going forward?

OMAR KHAN: You know, the process right now, literally these guys have been at meetings and I just got hired a couple days ago. It's a real fluid process. As soon as we can confirm every name, we will.

I can tell you guys that I have hired Andy Weidl and Sheldon White. I'm not going to get into titles and responsibilities, and also Dan Colbert. He's been promoted to a senior level position. We'll get into titles, and Bert will confirm them when he can.

Q. You touched a little on Kevin. What did you learn from him?

OMAR KHAN: A couple things. Number one, when Joe Greene speaks, you listen. That's number one.

Number two, and this goes way before Kevin, but we're always going to build this through the draft, and I can't ever forget that, and I won't. He was always big on that, and that goes back to Art and Mr. Rooney, and that's going to continue.

Q. You guys have gone to the playoffs two years in a row, one division title in there, but the postseason success hasn't been there. As you step into this role, what's your evaluation of the state of the franchise and the trajectory?

OMAR KHAN: The trajectory, I'm excited about it. The 90 guys we have in that locker room right now, I'm really excited about the future and where I think we can go.

Q. You mentioned your relationship with Kevin; what does it mean to you to have you stepping in and following in his legacy while at the same time starting and creating your own?

OMAR KHAN: You know, I don't know if I look at it as that specifically, but he's always a phone call away for me. I'm always -- there's not going to be a lot of change here. I obviously have some ideas that I want to implement and put in place, but I don't foresee a lot of change.

Q. You've had other opportunities; what's kept you loyal and patient here with the Steelers?

OMAR KHAN: This is where I've always -- just the fact that this is the dream job for me, this is the one I've always

wanted, and it just wasn't available when I've interviewed for those other ones. But it was available this time, and it worked out, and I'm grateful.

Q. How did you first end up here? Was this the dream job then or were you just trying to get your foot in the door with any organization?

OMAR KHAN: You mean before --

Q. 20 some years ago.

OMAR KHAN: You know, I was working for the Saints, and to be honest with you I was born and raised in New Orleans and I never thought I'd be leaving New Orleans. Then one day I got a call from the Steelers about a position and obviously the opportunity to work for the Rooneys, I wasn't going to pass it up. I came up here, interviewed, and I just felt at home from the very beginning, and fortunately they hired me.

Q. As strong obviously as your candidacy was, Brandon's, too, and all the people that have stayed around the organization as long as they have. You just mentioned bringing two guys from the outside, a lot of outside candidates were interviewed, as well. Is that important to get outside eyes on your team, too, to get a different perspective from other folks that have worked well in other organizations?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, it's always good to get new ideas, but we have a lot of great people here who have great ideas, also. We're going to -- like I mentioned, this is a fluid process. I'm going to continue to meet with those guys and put things in place. I've literally within on the job for a couple days, so a lot of moving parts.

Q. What's it like being in such a transition part where not just you're changing, but new defensive coordinator, Ben Roethlisberger is gone, new first-round draft pick. What are the challenges of being part of that, other areas changing, as well?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, I'd say it's exciting really. It's exciting. We have a great -- we have a great group of people Coach Tomlin has on his staff, and I mentioned the players and I'm excited about some of the people we have here and some of the people I'm bringing in. I just think the future is bright.

Q. You mentioned your wife, your parents, and just them supporting you. What's it like telling them when you get the call from Art that they're offering you the job? What were those moments like sharing with your family?

OMAR KHAN: You know, first call was to my wife, Kristen, so obviously it was a lot of joy, just knowing that we're here -- I love it here. My wife is from western PA, my kids were born here. I've been here for 22 years. This is where I want to be.

I'm a western PA person now. It still hasn't necessarily hit me, but it's been great. My parents were just thrilled. My dad and especially my dad, he's been looking forward to this moment for a long time.

Q. Omar, Mike and Kevin had a unique relationship for a long time; how do you feel your relationship will be with Mike moving forward and more of a personnel type relationship?

OMAR KHAN: I think it's going to be an easy transition. Coach T and I have had a great relationship over the last 16 years -- 15 years -- quick count, 16 years. We've confided in each other on a lot of things. We've spent a lot of time together. It's going to be a smooth transition.

Q. You have the pro days in March drinking some sweet tea?

OMAR KHAN: Part of the job. Sweet tea? I might have the unsweetened, but yeah.

Q. You talked about some ideas you have. Are there going to be any changes to the team stance on how and when you guys negotiate with players in-house in terms of contracts, that type of thing?

OMAR KHAN: No, those discussions are always going to be -- we're going to get in a room and decide what the best timing is for that. Those big decisions are always going to be Steeler decisions.

Q. I meant more like non-negotiating during the season, waiting until the last year of the contract --

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, those principles will stay in place, yeah.

Q. In some of Kevin's final interviews he talked about how the game is changing, the league is changing, and he looked forward to seeing how whoever replaces him kind of grows into that. What are your thoughts kind of generally on the role of analytics and football and just the wave, I guess, that Kevin said he looks forward to seeing how the Steelers adapt?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, anything that can help us improve or win football games, we're going to look into and utilize. I'm

not going to -- I have some cool ideas I think I'm going to implement. I'm probably not going to share those publicly. I don't want anybody else knowing those. But we're going to use every tool or every opportunity we have to get better.

Q. You mentioned it hasn't entirely hit you yet. Can you just describe a little bit of the emotions when you officially found out that you're going to be the new GM of this team?

OMAR KHAN: When I was sitting down with Art and he told me, and I tried controlling myself from smiling too much. I was very, very -- I was thrilled. It was a dream come true. I actually gave him a hug on the way out. Yeah, it's been -- it's awesome.

Q. What does Andy bring to this organization? Did you fight for him, or did Art want him?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, no, I've known Andy for a long time, and we had meetings and discussed how I wanted to structure this, and I just felt like Andy was a valuable piece, would be a valuable piece to me. I'm just very fortunate we were able to work things out and get him over here.

Q. Just to clarify some of the things about your background, you said your parents are first-generation immigrants both?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, both.

Q. Were they young when they moved here? What is your family's love for football? Were you the first person who really liked football in your family?

OMAR KHAN: No, you know what, football -- my dad probably moved here I think it was late teens. Don't quote me on that. My mom I think was in her 20s and they met in New Orleans and eventually I came around.

Football in this league, in this game has always been the bond that I had with my dad from early on. He taught me about the game. I grew up a die-hard Saints fan. When I used to talk about Rickey Jackson and Pat Swilling, Sam Mills, Vaughan Johnson, he'd say let me teach you about this guy named Jack Ham and Jack Lambert, and I used to know everyone on the Saints team, and he used to tell me about this guy Joe Greene and Franco Harris. It's kind of ironic that, fast forward, I ended up in Pittsburgh because I've been hearing about those guys -- Lynn Swann -- he loved great players and the great teams, and he knew all about them.

Q. There's been a lot made this off-season about the

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NFL and diversity and trying to improve that. What does it mean to you to be someone that's a minority and being given this opportunity?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, I hope we get to the point where we're not even having those -- need to have those conversations. But I'm excited about what the league is doing and the initiatives, commissioner and Art and -- there's some really great things that they're doing, and I think it's headed in the right direction.

Q. When it comes to Sheldon White, what does he bring to the organization?

OMAR KHAN: Lots of experience, very loyal person. He's going to be an asset. Again, he's a Steeler type of person. I'm not going to get into specifics, into roles and titles right now, but he's going to be a great addition here.

Q. Will Kevin have a role or will you talk to him, use him as a sounding board?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, we're still working through that process. It's really fluid, but I hope so. Kevin and I have a great relationship.

Q. You've several times called someone a "Steelers-type person." What does that mean to you? Define a Steelers-type person.

OMAR KHAN: Well, that's a good question. Obviously have to bleed black and gold, they've got to be loyal. They've got to fit into our culture here, and just good people. Everyone here -- you look through this organization, you go through all the people in this building, it's full of really, really good people, and the guys you're bringing on, they're good people. They'll fit in nicely.

Q. Will you switch (indiscernible)?

OMAR KHAN: I'm working through that right now.

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