

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Tuesday, August 2, 2022
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Omar Khan

Weekday Press Conference



OMAR KHAN: Thank you for being here. Appreciate it.

I wanted to start off by first saying how excited we are to be back here at Latrobe, Saint Vincent. It's been an awesome week so far. The people have been great, not only here on campus but in the community. It's been great to be back.

With respect to the fans, I mean, what can I say? The support we've gotten here so far from the fans coming in, it's been just tremendous. I've met people from all over the country, actually all over the world. I met someone from Mexico yesterday that had traveled. It's just been amazing. That does a lot for all of us, including the team.

With respect to the team, I'll say a couple things first.

As you guys know, we extended Chris Boswell. We're excited to get that done. He's been an important part of this team for a few years now. We're excited it's going to continue for another five years.

With respect to some of the injuries, I'll just mention. Minkah is progressing nicely. I'd be surprised if we don't see him back on the practice field here in the next few days. Same thing with Larry O and Tyson, they're progressing nicely, too. I don't expect those things to linger very much longer.

With that said, happy to take any questions.

Q. Anything going on with Diontae?

OMAR KHAN: Conversations we have with Diontae and his representatives are going to stay between us. We won't discuss them publicly. But we've been in conversations.

Q. The fact that you gave T.J., Minkah top-dollar deals, Chris a top-dollar deal, does that signify any change in philosophy, a by-product of the salary cap?

OMAR KHAN: Every one of those situations is different. A

lot of factors go into it. I don't really want to discuss specifics of any one of those deals. A lot of factors go into each one of them.

Q. Are you okay with Diontae sitting out? How does that dynamic work between you, coach and Diontae sitting out the first week?

OMAR KHAN: Obviously you want everyone out practicing. We've taken the approach that we're using it as an opportunity to look at the other guys that are practicing, especially the young guys get some good work.

Like I say, we want Diontae. We're excited to have him as part of this team. We hope he's going to be a Steeler for a long time.

Q. You have two new quarterbacks that he hasn't worked with before in the building. He's not getting any reps with them. The longer that he kind of goes through this path, maybe that hinders his development and chemistry. Is that a concern of yours and Coach T?

OMAR KHAN: I can't speak for Coach T. Obviously, like I mentioned, you wish you had everybody out there practicing. Sometimes it's for different reasons. Sometimes it can be for injuries.

Our focus is on the guys that are practicing. We're taking the opportunity to evaluate those guys, see how they connect.

Q. The wide receiver market, the way it's kind of taken off salary-wise...

OMAR KHAN: I think it's a function of the times and the system that we're in. It's just part of the process. Positionally, regardless of the position, I assume those things are going to continue to grow. As the CBA grows, the contracts will grow.

Q. What would be a successful training camp for Kenny Pickett?

OMAR KHAN: Kenny Pickett? That's a good question. I



would say the growth. He's a young quarterback. There's a lot being thrown at him. I would just say from his standpoint, to be able to say on the day he leaves camp that he's in a lot better position than he was day one. I think that's important for him.

I have all the confidence that he'll get there.

Q. Mike Tomlin said he's not micromanaging the quarterback competition. How do you view it from the sidelines? Do you have to caution yourself to not live and die on every throw?

OMAR KHAN: That's a good question.

I would say we've had one padded practice, so it's early. There's a lot of practice that still has to happen. But we've seen some good things. We're excited about the room, what the future holds.

Q. Was it different for you negotiating a deal like Chris' as the GM as opposed to being the cap guy?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, I'd say from their standpoint I don't think there was much difference. Cole Marcoux was heavily involved who works for me. Not much difference.

Q. Is there a concern that you had T.J. holding in, Minkah holding in, Diontae holding in, is that a concern that might be something that becomes too much of a norm, or not a concern for you guys?

OMAR KHAN: Every one of these situations is different. Obviously that's something that's happened league wide, right? Happened more this year than last year. Realistically it's probably going to continue to happen league wide.

Q. You added Jeremy McNichols. There are reports you worked out other running backs. Is there a big concern that make sure Najee's carries are divvied up now so he's able to be healthy in the season?

OMAR KHAN: Coach will manage Najee with respect to the carries and all that. We're always going to be ready to have the next guy up if needed based on injuries or whatever the situation might be.

Q. These holdings, are they collectively bargained? Do they have anything to do with the union? Is it a team-by-team situation? A mutual agreement?

OMAR KHAN: You'd have to ask those guys in the union about how involved they are. I'm sure there's some conversations that happen at that level.

It's case by case.

Q. Can you find guys that are healthy that are not practicing? Is that a team-by-team thing? Have you explored that?

OMAR KHAN: There are obviously options out there. We're focused on we want Diontae here, so... We'll keep those discussions, as you can imagine, internal.

Q. Two guys got big contracts. Does that have a real kind of effect on the market value of guy like Diontae or does it fluctuate that quickly?

OMAR KHAN: Obviously when things happen, conversations, it adds to the conversation, let me put it that way, yeah.

Q. How would you assess your depth at running back?

OMAR KHAN: We like the group that we have. We have a couple guys banged up. We have to be ready to add to that room.

But we feel good about that room.

Q. One of the guys that got banged up was Najee yesterday. What is the level of concern when you see your starting running back come hopping off the field?

OMAR KHAN: You never like seeing anyone get hurt. Obviously Najee is Najee. Don't like seeing that. Don't foresee it being an issue.

Q. Can you talk about your observations of the O-line, the influx of talent through free agency?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, we're really excited about that, the offensive line room. We added some key pieces there. We've only gotten the opportunity to see them in pads once so far. A lot of practice left to happen.

But we really like the room. We added some good guys, just some leaders. We're excited.

Q. You mentioned with Diontae not practicing, you've had an opportunity to see some of these younger receivers like George Pickens, Calvin Austin. This organization has historically drafted wide receivers very well. What is it about the way that you evaluate talent that made that a trend?

OMAR KHAN: We have certain characteristics that we

look at in receivers. It's worked for us. I'm not going to discuss them in public for obvious reasons. We've stayed true to our beliefs and it's worked for us.

Q. What has impressed you from those guys so as far?

OMAR KHAN: Their growth, their maturity, their excitement, their energy. You guys have seen George out there. He brings a lot of energy out there.

Q. When you signed Larry Ogunjobi, was there an understanding it might take him a little bit to get ready?

OMAR KHAN: I'll be honest. We're just trying to be smart with the situation. Larry O is ready to go. We're just trying to be smart. We understood where he was and we wouldn't have signed him if we weren't confident that he was going to be ready to go.

We're just trying to be smart. There's still a lot of football to happen before September 11.

Q. You have found yourself more of a popular guy on campus where you thought people wouldn't recognize you, now all of a sudden...

OMAR KHAN: Having people ask to take their picture with me, I wouldn't ask myself to take a picture with me. It's been fun. I have a lot of admiration for our fans. Always have. Steeler Nation. Been so supportive of me. So appreciative for all the support they give us.

But it's been fun.

Q. Have you guys figured out any kind of role for Kevin moving forward?

OMAR KHAN: Kevin, I think that's still fluid. I had him up here it was a couple days ago to speak to the scouting staff about things he's done in the past, how we did in the past. I think we're still working through that. Art and him have been talking.

He's been a great resource for us so far. He's a phone call away. We text and talk all the time.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your relationship with Brian Flores.

OMAR KHAN: Flo has been awesome. He's a great person, a great football coach. One thing we have in common he's of Honduran descent. I'm of Honduran descent. That's a cool little bond that we have. But he's

been great.

Q. Some things put in place during the pandemic, the expanded practice squad, shorter IRs, are those going to stay?

OMAR KHAN: Those are fluid conversations in my understanding at the league level. We are proceeding as if the rules are as they are in that last CBA. That last CBA was signed, then we had COVID. We are proceeding as it is in the CBA. If we get the extra practice squad spots, great. Extra rules, great. But we'll adjust as we have to.

Q. Are you the same keeping a certain amount of money for like emergency, practice squad? Is that the same type of number it was last year, a certain number to go into the season with?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, that goes back to Joe's question. We're still waiting to see what some of the rules are going to be, some of the flexibility we have. Obviously the more flexibility we have with some of those rules, we're going to need to hold onto some more dollars. But, yeah, it's relatively close.

Q. How does the chair feel?

OMAR KHAN: It feels great (smiling).

Q. Is there any area of the team that you would like to add some? What is your comfort level with the guys you have in camp now?

OMAR KHAN: Overall I feel really good about the 90-man roster that we have. If there's an opportunity to upgrade a position, somebody comes available through the waiver wire, someone calls about a player, they're shopping, obviously you're going to look at it.

Injuries come into play with those conversations. But overall I feel really good about our roster.

Thank you.

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