

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Omar Khan

Mike Tomlin

Draft Press Conference



OMAR KHAN: Productive weekend. Really feel like we're a better football team today than we were at 7:59 on Thursday. Can't wait until we get to the rookie mini camp in a couple weeks and really see our new Steelers in action.

It's going to be fun. I think we're in a good place.

As we speak, the rookie free agency process is going -- in full effect. As soon as I leave, we're going to go finalize that, and I'm sure we'll get the names to you guys over the next couple days.

With respect to the remainder of the off-season, I've said it before, we're going to continue to evaluate what opportunities exist to improve our roster, if there are, and with that, I'll turn it over to Coach.

MIKE TOMLIN: Feel really good about the weekend, but probably equally as important, I felt good about the process, and I think that just tees up the weekend. We've talked quite a bit about that. We rolled our sleeves up and got on the road and did all the things we needed to do, utilized all the opportunities to engage with these young people, man, and get a sense of what they're capable of and how they might fit.

I just think when you do a good job of that, it creates weekends like we experienced.

We feel good, but obviously the quality of this weekend will be played out over the next three to five years in the careers of these people, and we've got some responsibility in terms of that work, as well.

They're the product, we're the source. It's our job to help them grow and develop, and we're excited about getting started with that.

I'll pause and open it up for questions.

Q. Mike, you took a big tackle, you took two big corners, you took a massive tight end. Was there any added emphasis on size and maybe physicality with your picks this year?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, I don't know if size per se was a point of emphasis, but obviously we value physicality and those that are capable of playing a brand of football that we value.

Q. Last week at the pre-draft press conference you had mentioned that you were open to doing business with the 32nd pick, maybe trading out of it. Did you guys become less eager to do so when Joey Porter, Jr., was still on the board?

OMAR KHAN: I think we listened. There were definitely opportunities there, and after we evaluated everything, we just felt really good about the opportunity to take Joey Porter, Jr., so it worked out that way.

Q. Coming into the weekend, did you ever see a scenario where he would be there at 32 for you guys?

OMAR KHAN: You know, you go through different scenarios and mocks, and we had him graded obviously higher than that, and we expected him to go higher than that, but we're very fortunate. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have had the opportunity to pick him at 32.

Q. Omar, you've been through the draft process before, but this is your first one as GM. How was it for you to go through this entire process?

OMAR KHAN: It was awesome. I think the journey of getting here has been great since I got the job to now. It's been pretty special.

I have a great group of people that I did this with, and they worked really hard for this organization. We have a really strong group of people. It's just exciting. I don't know if it's hit me completely yet, but yeah.

Q. Mike, we've checked in with you along the way about how you've seen Omar handle this process.

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Now that there's a bow on it, how would you evaluate what it was like working with him this weekend and throughout this process?

MIKE TOMLIN: I don't know that I evaluate it from that perspective. We've just got work to do. It's normalcy for us. We've worked together for a long time. I don't know that we hide behind roles and titles. People have opinions. We've got work to do. We've got information to gain.

The process was very similar to how it's been in the past. I don't know that I've looked at him in a different light because of the position. I don't know that he looks at himself in a different light. I just think sometimes titles and things of that nature are overblown. We've worked together for a long time, and we had some fun this weekend.

Q. You said he was aggressive going after the next two. Is he still aggressive?

MIKE TOMLIN: Yeah, what did they call him, the con artist? I saw that. That's pretty good. That's a cool nickname.

Q. Do you have a favorite nickname, Omar?

OMAR KHAN: I've been called worse. I don't have a favorite nickname, but yeah.

Q. Your sixth rounders, did you expect to not walk away with a quarterback in the draft, and can you tell us anything about the kid from Minnesota that you signed in free agency?

OMAR KHAN: Sure, I'm not going to get into exactly who we signed. I don't know what's out there and what's not and I know that process continues. I have Cole Marcoux, Dan Colbert and Mark Sadowski and Sheldon White, they're leading that process right now. But obviously we didn't draft one, and we still have a couple open quarterback spots to fill.

Q. Mike, what are your thoughts on getting the defensive lineman and also getting the big tight end?

MIKE TOMLIN: Both guys, we had a great deal of exposure to. I think we 30 visited both guys. We saw Benton down in Mobile, saw Washington in Athens at his pro day. So just really comfortable with what they're capable of and how they might fit, so really excited about both guys.

Q. Asking about size, where do you think overall you really improved your team or were able to improve

your team this weekend?

MIKE TOMLIN: We feel good about the pedigree of the men that we've gotten. That'll be told as we get to work and really get an opportunity to put them in a professional football setting and see how it plays out.

I'm not going to have any bold predictions in that regard.

Q. Omar, how important was it to go back to get that fourth round pick, and how do you evaluate how many picks you need and where we want them to be?

OMAR KHAN: It was an opportunity, we were sitting there in the third round, we just -- when the call came about trading back, we just evaluated it, and we had a good feel for how many players were left that we'd be interested in, and got the top guy actually on that list. He was still sitting there, and the opportunity to pick up a fourth, which we had lost, it was going to be a long wait from today if we didn't have an extra pick. Fortunately we got it because we think we got a really good football player in Nick Herbig.

Q. You didn't pick in the fifth or sixth rounds today. Was there a temptation to get back in for a player that you were eyeing up and looking at?

OMAR KHAN: You always listen, and we did. There were some phone conversations, but at the end of the day it just -- nothing that made sense for us.

Q. How did you spend that long break that you guys had between those picks?

OMAR KHAN: On the phone, had some Chick-Fil-A downstairs. We just talked amongst ourselves, continued to strategize -- that was a good opportunity for us to discuss the process after the draft with signing some of the free agents. We went back and met and just evaluated our roster as to where we were. Next thing you know, we were back in the room and kind of seeing where things were shaking out.

Q. In part because of that you didn't have fifth and sixth rounder, but it's kind of rare, isn't it, to go through a draft without a QB, a wide receiver, or a running back. How are you feeling there?

MIKE TOMLIN: We feel good about some of the work that we've been able to do. There are multiple ways to add to your talent pool. We've done some things in free agency, really excited about the acquisition of Allen Robinson, for example. I think last year we ran into Jaylen Warren at the rookie mini, for example, so we'll keep team building.



Q. You said you had a lot of offensive pieces, free agency and the draft. How do you envision this offense moving forward? How would you like to see it work?

MIKE TOMLIN: Boy, that is a broad question. We'll hold our cards close to our vest, and you'll see in the fall. How about that?

Q. When we talked to Benton after his pick, he said it's apparent after talking to you that he said you want some goons out there. Is there an apt description?

MIKE TOMLIN: That's an accurate description, but I'll give him some media training so he can keep some of our private conversations private.

Q. When you see a tight end that big and has that unique skill set, obviously guys who can block but also catch?

MIKE TOMLIN: I think the awesome thing about him besides his measurables is his mindset. Here's a guy that I think maybe has "sixth offensive lineman" on his license plate. He embraces the things that come with being who he is, and knowledge of self and embracing that I think is one of the things that made him attractive, besides the unique physical traits and the things that he's been able to accomplish. The mindset, the willingness, too, is equally as exciting.

Q. You talked about Broderick and how last year when you were scouting at Georgia you were asking for a name, and Broderick's came up. Did a similar sentiment come up around Darnell, or what was it you were able to discover throughout the process?

MIKE TOMLIN: I didn't have to ask anybody about Darnell. All you've got to do is watch Georgia tape. He stands out. He's an enormous human. So I had prior knowledge to him.

Guys like Broderick, third-year juniors, those are the guys that you ask about sometimes when you're in places because those are the guys that kind of sneak up on you in draft prep. Washington has a longer resume and had more exposure to him.

Q. Georgia, Wisconsin, what is it about places that you've been back to before that makes you comfortable wanting to go to again?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, Georgia obviously, they've won back-to-back National Championships, and you don't do that without quality players, so we're not the only ones

fishing in that pond. Philadelphia I think is doing a pretty good job of that.

Sometimes a place like Wisconsin is a stylistic match. Always had a lot of respect for Jim Leonhard, their former coordinator, and they do a lot of similar things that we do. So it makes it an easy eval. There's less speculation in terms of what they might be able to do in our system of football.

Q. Omar, after the trade to get the fourth-round pick back, you said your top guy was still on the board. Did you mean Washington at that point?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah.

Q. How surprised were you that he fell to that point in the draft?

OMAR KHAN: I would say very surprised. We thought very highly of him. Honestly did not expect him to be sitting there. Just our gain.

Q. Denzel was saying there was a lot of emotion when you called Nick, and that was understandable because of all that. What was that call like, and when did you like from Nick?

OMAR KHAN: Both Coach and I spoke to him, and he was excited. He was very emotional, and obviously I'm sure for his parents, that's an amazing moment.

We could hear the emotion in the phone, a lot of noise in the background, and from when I talked to him, Coach, I don't know how he was with you when you talked to him --

MIKE TOMLIN: Yeah, it was the normal excitement that you would expect in a draft-like setting. But talking about Wisconsin and Herbig, there's not a lot of speculation, man, that guy held down the same position that I watched T.J. play in that place, and I think it was Van Ginkel after him. They asked him to do a lot of things. You see them do NFL things. They rush, they drop. It's fun to watch Wisconsin tape for those reasons.

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