

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Andy Weidl

Weekday Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for Andy for about 15, 20 minutes here for questions. Andy, if you want to say something first.

ANDY WIEDL: Yeah, great to see everybody here. Thank you for coming out, and look forward to talking with you about the draft, any questions that you might have about this past weekend.

**Q. What was the experience like for you your first time in the Steelers draft room working with Omar and with Mike Tomlin?**

ANDY WIEDL: It was awesome. Working with those guys. Not only them, but our entire scouting staff, the coaching staff, and everybody who we had in the building.

You know, it takes a village to do a draft. It really does. There's a lot of people that put a lot of time and effort into this. It was a big collaborative effort. We come together, and we find Steelers.

We bring guys in. We find guys that are our kind of people, our kind of players, players that are going to add to the culture, and it was just awesome to see everybody come together and pull together. When you work together, you put ego aside, and you are working towards a common goal, you know you can achieve greatness.

We're really excited about the process, how it went this weekend, and look forward to seeing these guys next weekend on the field.

**Q. What are your kind of guys?**

ANDY WIEDL: Our kind of guys? Steelers. Physical, tough, love football. High character guys. High football character players. Guys that are resilient. They can handle it. They can come back from a setback, and they just have a fortitude. They're strong-willed. They're tough-minded players and people.

**Q. A lot of intangibles in there, Andy. How do you glean that from tape?**

ANDY WIEDL: You can glean it from tape, but you also rely on your scouts. You rely on all the information you get. You take all the accurate information you get, and you make the best decision possible off that information off the tape evaluation.

**Q. Was it your plan going in to add a lot of big people, tall cornerbacks? Bigger overall, was that part of the plan coming into this thing?**

ANDY WIEDL: Yeah, our plan. We want to be a big, physical team. We're the Pittsburgh Steelers, and I think the way the board is set up and how the draft felt, it really benefited us.

Now, we still have to see these guys. They have to come on the field and perform and produce, but there's a toughness, a physicality, an athleticism.

You touched on the corners. When you have big corners that are long, they have range, they can run, they can locate the ball, that's advantageous. We're aware of the players that we have in our division, the receivers that we have to defend against, and I think with Cory and with Joey, as we say, speed and length can shrink the field on an offense, and these guys have speed and they have length.

**Q. As a former offensive lineman yourself, just how do you evaluate Broderick Jones? What intrigued you about him, and what will be some of the areas he'll continue to evolve at the NFL level?**

ANDY WIEDL: Broderick is an interesting guy. He's a big, explosive athlete. I had a chance to see him play twice this year. Went to the South Carolina game, and then I saw him later in the season at the SEC Championship, him and Darnell.

To watch him grow -- he is a one-year starter, but to watch his arc of performer and his trajectory and how he kept getting better as the year went on. He is a guy with tremendous feet, balance, ability to pass protect in space,

and he also has the explosive power to displace people off the line of scrimmage. He can get up on the second level. He can execute blocks in space. I think you've seen the highlights of it, but he is a guy who can get out there. With his range you can do different things in your offense. He can open up your offense more.

**Q. How surprised were you to go up to get Broderick? You guys obviously had to trade up, and it ends up being the Patriots and Bill Belichick that does a deal. As someone who has been in the league the long time, you know the history between the Steelers and Patriots. How surprised were you that that's the one that ends up coming together?**

ANDY WIEDL: Well, you never know what's going to happen draft night. You are always just being prepared. Credit to Omar and our staff, being prepared, having the strategy meetings. They saw an opportunity to go up and get a player that typically left tackles, if you are going to get them, let's say, free agency or in a trade, you're going to pay a lot of resources. To give up a fourth round pick to get a player of Broderick's caliber, I thought it was a brilliant move by Omar and seizing the moment.

**Q. Do you think there was falloff in left tackles and tackles in general after Broderick?**

ANDY WIEDL: It depends how you see it. Different people are going to see the board different. He is just a player that we really valued. We spent a lot of time with him. He we saw him. We had a lot of evaluations on him. A lot of exposure to him down at Georgia. A lot of exposure to him in games.

We brought him in for a 30 visit. We had a formal interview with him at the Combine. Got a chance to see him work out in the field with coaches down on the field. Just developed a comfort level.

**Q. How was your view of the board? Was there a dropoff in tackles after him?**

ANDY WIEDL: Well, you know, we liked him a lot. He was a guy that we were happy and excited to get.

**Q. Were you getting nervous that he might have been the last guy?**

ANDY WIEDL: You know what, it was an opportunity, and we seized the moment. Credit to Omar for doing that. It was great to see him do that.

We gave up a fourth round pick, but then we come back in the third round, and we trade back and recoup that pick

and were able to get a player of Nick Herbig's caliber.

I thought you saw aggressiveness, and I thought you saw patience from Omar. It was a remarkable way he worked the board draft night.

**Q. Darnell's role, what type of potential does he have as a pass catcher?**

ANDY WIEDL: Right. Well, Darnell, he is an unusual player. First with his size, his length, his athleticism, and his speed.

He is a guy defenses are going to -- it's going to be interesting how they account for him because it's one of the things we talked about in the evaluation process is how are you going to treat him because he is so flexible and versatile in what he can do.

He can line up in the slot. He can line up on the line of scrimmage. He is a weapon in the run game. He is a guy you have to account for in the pass game because he has the ability and the speed to clear the second level, and he is such a forgiving target and it's a rare catch radius that he has and his ability to adjust to the football. He is just a unique player.

**Q. Generally speaking, when you have a high grade on a player but there might be some injury concerns, when is the right time to make that move? What's that process like? You know, the decision in the war room, can you just walk us through that? Is there a good time? Third round? What are you guys thinking?**

ANDY WIEDL: Well, we rely on our doctors. They have a lot of experience. They've been doing this a long time, Dr. Bradley and his staff, John Norwig. They're tremendous. They're some of the best in the business.

They give the okay, we have the okay. We lean on them. Sometimes with a player like that, sometimes you catch a falling star in a draft. He is a guy we really liked. For whatever reason, he was there, and we just saw a moment, an opportunity to go ahead and acquire him.

We couldn't be happier or more excited to bring him in here because not only of the talent, but the person that he is. The football character, the personal character, his path, his journey here. We think he will be a tremendous fit with our operation.

**Q. You had used the "it takes a village" analogy. How has the village been raised around the quarterback, and was that your thinking going into this draft is to put as much around the quarterback as you could to**

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## help him grow in year two?

ANDY WIEDL: You know, we're excited about Kenny. Obviously the way he finished the season, and one of the things you want to do is take care of a quarterback up front. Not just in the run game, but in the pass protection.

Every great passing game, good passing game, starts with protection. You want to protect the quarterback. You want to surround him with weapons.

We're going to do that. We're going to bring in talent. We're always going to try to help him out because we believe in him, the quarterback, the person, the leader he is becoming. Any opportunity we have to help him out, we will.

## Q. So those improvements that you made in free agency and the draft, will that allow you to expand the playbook for him and the rest of the offense?

ANDY WIEDL: Well, you know what, that's Coach Canada. That's up to him. That's his area.

We had an effort with the coaching staff. We bring them into this process, and we collaborate with them, and we make sure there's a vision there and that we're all on the same page, which we are.

There is, I guess, a synergy with us, with the coaching staff. As I've said in the past, we are an extension of Mike and his staff, and we are going to bring in players that fit their system, and they're going to add to the culture. Any time we can do that, add a player with a talent, we will.

## Q. Andy, there's been a lot made about you coming from Philadelphia and the way that organization was sort of built from the trenches out in this recent iteration. How much do you feel like that success there maybe has an influence on you or the way you think about team-building? I'm sure you're not just, like, oh, only 300-pound guys in the war room or something like that, but do you feel maybe differently about the importance of big guys in the trenches having seen what has happened in Philadelphia?

ANDY WIEDL: Right. I think it starts up front. It's football. I was an offensive lineman, and I know when you are strong up front, you can control the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball, you've got a chance to win games.

If you are strong on the offensive line, you are strong on your defensive line, you are strong in your front seven, they travel well in this business. I've seen it.

You have to go win a game late in the season or you have to go on the road and win a playoff game, they usually show up. I believe in that, and we believe in that.

You build through the lines. You invest in that. That's football. That's always going to be football in our mind is the line of scrimmage.

## Q. Herbig, your vision of him? Outside, inside, or a guy that can do both?

ANDY WIEDL: We think he is a guy that can do both. He has that ability. He has a high football IQ. I think you saw a little bit there in playing on the line of scrimmage, his ability to get off and rush the passer and also his ability as stack backer to drop into coverage with the awareness he has. He is a high-energy, relentless football player. Very physical.

The one thing with Nick that jumps off is he is always passing people to the ball. He is looking for work. He makes plays. He is capable of making negative plays. He is capable of winning off the edge. He is capable of winning in the rush game. He is capable of making negative plays in the run game.

So we're excited. You know, we saw him as a Steeler type of player and Steeler type of person.

## Q. Do you project that he is going to have to get bigger if he is going to hold that edge on Sundays?

ANDY WIEDL: He is a 21-year-old. We think he will get bigger and will let that happen naturally. When you have a guy that's tough and that loves football, usually those guys hit their ceilings. They maximize their potential, and a lot of times they'll go above it. He is one of those guys, we feel.

## Q. Andy, when you get a new job, you have to learn the people around you. You know Omar. You knew Mark from, what, New Orleans. How important was that coming to fruition here on draft day where even leading up to it that you knew what these guys may have been thinking from your past relationships with guys who were already on the staff?

ANDY WIEDL: We always talk about we're a team within a team. Chemistry is just as important in our department and what we do as it is in the locker room. You know, working together and working together and doing what's best for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

It's not my player evaluation. It's not Mark's player evaluation. At the end of the day it's about us getting the player right at the Steeler evaluation.

**Q. When it comes to upside with these draft picks, how much did you and the rest of the front office consider upside not just with Broderick and him being a first-round talent and a caliber of a day one starter, but even in the later rounds? Is that a relative towards the prospect?**

ANDY WIEDL: Yeah, I think the way we stacked it and how we vetted these players, we went through the process when we looked at them, you know, in the meetings that we had starting in December and then in February and then with the coaches coming in in April. We went through it. We noticed that.

I mean, that was something, but it was the talent first. Then the player, their makeup, their football character. That was a nice thing that happened.

I think most of our players are under the age of 22. Broderick is going to be 22 in 11 days. But it's a young class, and it's a class that you take, you grow with, you watch them develop and get them in the program. Where they are now as opposed to where they're going to be at 24 or 25 is exciting, the projection of it when you are forecasting with where they're going to be down the road.

**Q. You were hired in late May. How long was it before you were able to catch up? Did it feel like it was swimming upstream? Like you said, trying to get -- find out what type of players Mike wants? Was it a difficult transition in that regards?**

ANDY WIEDL: No. You know why? It's so transparent here and the communication daily is fluid. You know, you just listen. We sat down with Coach. We got in here last year for mini-camp and just had him go through what he looks for in a player, what he wants in a player. All the scouts were in there. I was in there.

We just asked him to do that so we were all on the same page so when you go out and you are scouting in the fall, you've got it. You've got the orders what they're looking for. Part of scouting is knowing what you are looking at and knowing what you are looking for.

**Q. When you talk about the guys that Mike likes or the guys that fit the Steeler mold, how different is that from maybe what you were asked to do in Philly? Was there a lot applicable in the way that you were evaluating intangibles and things like that that carries over to Pittsburgh?**

ANDY WIEDL: I think a lot of it's guys that are tough, they love the game, and they're physical. They can come back.

They're resilient, as I've stated. They're just tough-minded guys. They're tough-minded. They've shown the ability to overcome.

**Q. Can you give an example of that? Maybe you were watching film and you saw something on Darnell Washington, say, or whatever. Do you have an example, a story?**

ANDY WIEDL: I think it's just each of these players has their own path that they've carved to get to this point. Some of them through their journeys, as you get to know them, what they've been through, what they've had to overcome in life, what got them to this point, you know, it's amazing.

That's honestly one of the best things about this process is getting to know the people, the person, and their path and their story and how they got this point in their career.

**Q. Leading up to Wisconsin when you looked at their stuff, were you looking at Benton and Herbig? Did one kind of pop out when you were looking at the other? How did that unwind?**

ANDY WIEDL: I got to see them play at Ohio State. I got there early, and I was there for the pre-warmups about three hours before the game. And Chris Herring, who coached my brothers at Mount Lebanon High School, he coached all three of them, known him a long time and have a really good relationship with him. He was a special teams coach. Got to catch up with Chris before the game and get insight on Keanu and then through the process once Nick declared, talked to him about Nick Herbig.

He was a great asset to get the insight from him on the players. And then just to see them physically move around, the body type, the agility, the athleticism they had.

It wasn't a great night for their team, but you're there to watch the players and watch them perform and watch them move around and how they handle themselves and the warmups and just get some information from are the coach before the game if you are able to.

**Q. Didn't Benton struggle against Ohio State, though?**

ANDY WIEDL: I think they all did. It was a bad night for the Badgers. I think it got out of hand early, but we watched Keanu. We saw him through the season, saw him perform at nose tackle and the ability to win an edge. You know, the ability to make negative plays, the ability to strike, unlock his hips.

He is a powerful guy. He could be a 318, 320-pound guy.

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He has good length. He has the wrestling background. He is a guy that's comfortable being uncomfortable due to the conditioning that's instilled in him.

Then we saw him at the Senior Bowl, and we saw the pass rush ability. Him being able to go from the B gap to the A gap and win an edge and get across the face. We think that he has upside as a rusher.

I think what they asked him to do in that defense, you know, he did it. He controlled the nose. He played the point. And if you need him to win as a rusher, he would. You saw snapshots of it, and we saw it at the Senior Bowl.

**Q. You talked about it being a younger class. How much more of emphasis is based on youth maybe compared to a redshirt senior or something like that?**

ANDY WIEDL: I mean, look, good players come. They're all different ages; right? It just worked out with this class that it's a younger class.

What's exciting about it is the upside and their growth potential and forecasting where they're going to be. These guys are all our type of players and all our type of people. You know, through the process we identified them.

To have an opportunity to draft each and every one of them, we're excited about it. To get them in the program here and to watch us help them develop and become the best they can be, it's going to be exciting.

**Q. Andy, you mentioned the other teams in the division when you guys were making the decision about players. If you zoom out and look at the conference, I mean, Kansas City, Buffalo, maybe Miami, I mean, are you guys building a roster that's sort of like the Yin to their Yang in terms of maybe the way that you guys can go out and try to win football games?**

ANDY WIEDL: You know what, we want to be big, we want to be physical, we want to be tough. We want to be able to impose our will on teams. That's the Pittsburgh Steelers; right?

You go break the other team's sword in the second half of a game. Go be able to win on the road. That's what we're building. That's what we have here. That's what they've been in the past, and we want to continue that identity.

So that works in this business. Physical, tough, smart players, strategic thinkers that you can take on the road. You feel good about when they're on your bus going to the stadium. That's what we are going to continue to add to

this team.

**Q. When it comes to rookie mini-camp obviously we know the coaches' perspective. We know what they get out of it. For you guys, what's that process like, and what excites you about getting to see those guys?**

ANDY WIEDL: Right. A lot of times they say it's like Christmas morning. You get the new players, the new Steelers. We'll see them on the field together and see them run around.

It's exciting. There's so much time. Thousands of hours our scouts put into it on the road away from their families, writing reports, seeing these guys at different venues, All-Star games, live performances. The meeting time that we put into it, asking our coaches to do the evaluations, and meet with the players.

There's so much that goes into this. Like I said, it takes a village, and it's all going to come together. We'll see them next week on the field for the first time, and they'll begin their journey.

**Q. Coming from Philly to here, is the dynamic pretty similar in terms of how you, Howie, and Nick did it, with how you, Mike, and Omar did it? How much can you pull back the curtain on sort of stacking the board, who is leading those conversations on draft night, that sort of thing?**

ANDY WIEDL: Every place is different. I'll just say this here, it was a real joy to work with Mike and Omar in this and the conversations and the process. Mike was there at every meeting we had in February and through April and the Senior Bowl. He loves the process. He loves football. He loves scouting. He loves hearing about it. He loves being in on it.

It's awesome. It's awesome because we're there. There's no guessing. We hear the conversations. We have the conversations. We watch the players. You take them through the process.

As you start the process, it's a nine-month process, it's a wide vast of players. As you go through it, you tend to narrow the scope on your targets. To go through it together for the first time, it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of work.

And just to have those kind of conversations of what's best for the Pittsburgh Steelers and try to identify Pittsburgh Steelers that are going to come and add to our culture was exciting.

**Q. Andy, you talked about no ego and how everybody in the front office was able to work together throughout this whole draft. When there's a player or players or maybe a few players that you all are deciding on who to pick at a specific spot, how do you kind of take a step back and look at criteria based on the scouting and based on what homework you guys have done on certain players?**

ANDY WIEDL: Right. I think not everyone is going to see a player the same; right? You go through the process. You talk it out. Hey, I saw this guy this way. You might have seen this player a different way. Why? Right? Why? Talk it out.

You get to a comfort level with the person, with the player ultimately. It's just keeping an open mind, being a great listener. One of the things, you've got to be able to listen to your scouts. You need to listen to your scouts and the people because they know these players better than anybody; right?

They go into the schools. They go multiple times and might see them live at a game. They have the contacts there. They've worked their contacts to extract information. At the end of the day you want to be a great listener and hear everybody's opinion. I think Omar did a fabulous job of that. Mike. It was awesome being a part of this process.

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