

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Coach Mike Tomlin

Weekday Press Conference



MIKE TOMLIN: Good afternoon. Really excited about getting this team development process started with this group. We checked them in today and had a mandatory NFL seminar, and then we've done the conditioning tests.

This evening we get into our foundational things, administrative meetings, getting to know one another, and starting this process of individual and collective development.

Excited to see these guys. I like the feel in the air. Everyone showed up adequately conditioned and then some.

It appears that we have a very good group from a health standpoint. There were some people that were somewhat limited in the spring for a variety of reasons. We don't see anyone at this juncture that will be limited as we embark on this thing tomorrow, which is a good thing.

I'll pause and open it up for questions.

Q. Can you elaborate a little bit on you like the feel in the air; what are you feeling?

MIKE TOMLIN: Just excitement. Guys are excited to be here, to be back, to be around each other, to begin this process. You feel it.

Q. The camaraderie with the team, talking to the players today, the guys have competitions, whatnot, could be anything. Does Coach Tomlin ever interact and do any of those things?

MIKE TOMLIN: Very much so. I think that's one of the tangible benefits of a destination training camp, and we just -- obviously we let it happen organically, but we also tee it up.

There's awesome development, collective development in an environment like this where we get an opportunity to be away from our lives and be singularly focused on this

collective and spend formal time and informal time together. I just think that's a component of team building that we've all been on enough teams, we know and respect and feel, and really want to pour into.

So yes, there will be competition, video games, board games, dominos, et cetera. I think that's one of the things if you love football and you love football environments, that's one of the things that you like about destination camps.

Q. What would you like to see this offense evolve into year two with Kenny?

MIKE TOMLIN: That's a complex question, to be quite honest with you, man. We've got to maintain possession of the ball. We've got to maintain scoring pace. We've got to be well-balanced. We've got to utilize our eligibles and their talents. We've got to protect our quarterback. There's a lot of layers to that discussion. But that's why we're here.

As far as Kenny goes specifically, this is the second lap around the track for him like it is all our second-year players, so I think it's reasonable for them to proceed with that knowing and that knowing to be displayed in their production and the consistency of their play. He's no different than any other second-year player in that regard, it's just that he's our quarterback.

Q. What does it do for the development of the offense with Kenny coming in as the cemented starter, you don't have the quarterback competition that you had a year ago?

MIKE TOMLIN: That kind of remains to be seen. I think just on the surface level, the allocation of reps and the pointed work relative to those things are clearer and thus potentially more productive. But it remains to be seen.

Q. Kenny was asked a couple of those questions, too, and he spoke to the importance of taking and cashing in on calculated shots. The calculated shots, what goes into that calculus for you guys, and how much of it is actually about touch and feel, as well, time and place in the game?

MIKE TOMLIN: You guys are digging in deep on day one, man. Hey, we want to be explosive. We want to get yards in chunks, and I guess that's what he's speaking to, but we also want to possess the ball and control the flow of the game, and so we've got to do all things if we want to be a dominant group, and that's a component of it. We weren't explosive enough a year ago in terms of chunk plays, and so there's a focus there.

Q. You said during the off-season you expect Kenny to, quote, "kill it." What's your definition of "kill it"?

MIKE TOMLIN: We'll see. He needs to be what we need him to be. I know that he's preparing with that mindset, and I like his approach and his demeanor in that regard, but I think whether you're talking about guys like quarterbacks or guys like me as a head coach, we need to be what our team needs us to be.

Q. Nobody on PUP to start? Is that what you said earlier?

MIKE TOMLIN: Correct.

Q. When Brian Baldinger visited you guys' OTAs, he said it was the most physical OTA session that he saw. What's your anticipation for how physical once the pads get on --

MIKE TOMLIN: I don't get what you're talking about in terms of physical OTAs, man. I have no idea what you're talking about. I have no idea what Baldy is talking about.

The physical component of team development here is critical because that's a component of our game. We spend a lot of time teaching and learning, particularly in the spring, and even in these settings, but there's a component of this game that you can't get away from, and that's the physicality component and really environments such as these are our first opportunities to display skills or an appetite in that area.

I have no idea what you're talking about regarding the spring.

Q. How do you explain maybe Kenny ingratiating himself with his teammates so quickly? Everybody speaks highly of him when asked about Kenny, in such a short amount of time.

MIKE TOMLIN: Kenny is hard-working and no nonsense and a legitimate humble dude, and I think that's attractive from a teammate perspective. I think he's thoughtful and considerate of others. I think that's attractive.

Q. There's some new faces on defense. Did you get enough done in OTAs to kind of shorten that learning curve of all these guys getting together as they start camp?

MIKE TOMLIN: I'll be very blunt. We're not concerned about the new faces on defense, man. They're veteran guys. They're smart guys. It's going to be a non-issue for us by the time we're stepping on the stage.

Q. With Holcomb in the spring in the position he plays, what are you looking for out of him as he steps on the field?

MIKE TOMLIN: To carve out a role for himself in this thing. He's a starting capable guy. He's got a reputable resume and body of work in Washington, so we're excited about adding him to the fold and him doing some of the things here.

Q. In terms of the red zone, in what ways do you feel like you might be more positioned for success this season there?

MIKE TOMLIN: I have no idea. We're here to kind of discover these things, guys. Seriously.

I think sometimes when you have too hard core of a plan in an environment like this, you miss something, and so we're here to grow and develop individually and collectively, and when you're in my position you'd better be open to being pleasantly surprised or disappointed, to be quite honest with you.

Some of the things that you guys ask about specifically in terms of an agenda or things I'm looking for, it's a tad bit premature because we're here to develop our personality, our strengths, our weaknesses, to ascertain what those things are, to divide the labor up. We're at ground zero in that regard.

Q. A year ago when we were in here you talked about boiling mouthpieces and all the excitement you feel coming into this camp this time of year. Do you still feel that level of excitement? Where is it in relation to last year when you were talking about those things?

MIKE TOMLIN: It probably intensifies, to be quite honest with you, but that's me and my personal relationship with this game and the group of men that I get an opportunity to lead, man. I enjoy what I do. I enjoy the people I get an opportunity to do it with.

I'm always generally excited. I'm excited about the

challenges that environments like this present and the way it's going to challenge us and the way we get an opportunity to grow as professionals, as men, myself included.

Q. Everybody is here that's supposed to be here?

MIKE TOMLIN: Yes.

Q. Najee took on more of a leadership role last season. What does he need to show or prove to you guys between the lines in year three?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, just to continue to progress in the manner in which he has, not only inside the white lines but off of it. He's a guy that's shown a natural appetite for leadership and perspective, and it's reasonable to expect that to continue, as well.

Teams are continually evolving, man. Guys are ascending, guys are descending and so forth, and you've got a talented young guy like him that shows an appetite for leadership, you want to cultivate all components of that discussion, not only in his game but the intangible things that he provides us.

Q. How does Jaylen make Najee better as a running back?

MIKE TOMLIN: I don't know that he does. Jaylen better focus on Jaylen.

Q. Does momentum exist from year to year? Especially on offense you have so much continuity. Can there be carryover? Is it ground zero, day zero?

MIKE TOMLIN: I think it's prudent to proceed and to assume that it does not. If it does in a positive way, great, but I don't think any of us are sitting here relying on that discussion.

Q. Dan Moore going to get the first reps with the ones at left tackle?

MIKE TOMLIN: I hadn't thought about it, but I assume so, yes.

Q. This is the time when this organization has extended their contract with the head coach; that would be for you. Do you expect that? Would that mean something --

MIKE TOMLIN: Wow, I hadn't even thought about it. I'm stage of my career I don't care about contracts to be honest with you, man. I acknowledge I've seen more days

than I'm going to see. You know, that's just the nature of this thing.

I'm appreciative of the opportunity. I'm singularly focused. I'm thankful that I'm at a stage in life and my career where that's a non-issue for me.

Q. As a head coach, are there any perspectives that you usually give to the rookies when they come into almost what you could consider a college environment, preparing for camp?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, this is their first lap around the track, so don't pretend like it's not. Be open to growing and learning. Be a sponge, ask good questions, learn from others, what others say and do, positively, negatively. Just don't try to pretend to be at a place that they're not.

Q. Back to the run game, Najee was very eloquent today talking about concerns that the group has, generally speaking, that that role has been somewhat devalued. Yet your team, you put an emphasis on it and a lot of teams do. They close out games, do a lot of things. Can you identify with the plight that some of those guys feel they're on?

MIKE TOMLIN: To be honest with you, as I embark on this journey with this group today, my focus is this group and the members of this group, so global issues such as the ones you mentioned are less important to me. I don't know that I have an opinion that's worth expressing.

Q. Acknowledging what you just said there about having more days behind you than ahead of you, how does that even heighten the importance of what you're doing here today?

MIKE TOMLIN: It can. I don't know that it does. I'm on 10 always.

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