

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Tony Fautanu

Draft Press Conference



ART ROONEY II: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us today. We are excited to welcome Troy Fautanu and his family to Pittsburgh. Glad they were able to make it in on the redeye last night.

We had some inside information on Troy this year because his teammate was Mark Bruener's son, so great to have Mark share some thoughts. The little coincidence there is the last person we picked in the first round from Washington was Mark, and so now we're bringing Troy here from Washington.

As you know, Troy had a great career at Washington. They went all the way to the championship game this past season, and really he established himself as one of the top linemen in the country, and we were excited to make him a Steeler. It's my honor to introduce Troy Fautanu.

TONY FAUTANU: First and foremost, I just want to thank God, man. Without him, this opportunity wouldn't be here. I'm truly grateful, so I just want to thank Mr. Rooney, Omar, and Coach Tomlin for taking a chance on me, man, and believing in me.

I'm just super grateful to play for an organization like the Pittsburgh Steelers. I'm sure everyone knows I grew up wanting to play for these guys and grew up a fan, and this is truly a dream come true to be here.

Q. Can you take us through the last 24 hours? What it's been like since being drafted and being here today and spending the day with Mike and all these guys?

TONY FAUTANU: The last 24 hours has been a blur, man, to be honest. It's been hectic. It's crazy to think back just 16 hours ago or however long it was I got my name called in the NFL Draft. It's something that I've been working for my entire life. Everything that I've done up until this point is to try to get to this point. I'm just truly grateful, man.

It's been hectic, once again, but I think I'll be able to kind of

soak it in once I get back to the hotel and my family and just kind of talk about it, so yeah.

Q. Why the love for the Steelers?

TONY FAUTANU: It all started with Troy Polamalu. I was a big Troy Polamalu fan. Kind of watching him, and you get to see what the Steelers are all about, how they play football, what the brand of football is.

I kind of took that and put it into my own game. What I think of when I think of the Steelers, I think of gritty. I think of working in the trenches, stuff you don't see. I take it personally because it's part of my job.

It's an awesome organization. I'm just so happy to be a part of it.

Q. You mentioned Troy Polamalu was the origin of you becoming a Steelers fan, but Mike Tomlin said last night that maybe your dad had something to do with you becoming a Steelers fan. What are some of your earliest memories? Is that how you were influenced?

TONY FAUTANU: Yeah. I'm going to clear some things up. My dad wasn't a Steelers fan. I'm not going to say the team he is a fan of. It was me that just kind of grew the love. I mean, I had an uncle and aunt that were Steelers fans, and we lived with them for a year when we moved to Vegas, and then I'm, like, oh, these guys are cool. They're playing the sport that I was.

I've always gone against the grain because I'm a West Coast kid. We're from the West Coast, and my dad is, like, Oh, why do you like the Pittsburgh Steelers? They're on the other side of the country. It just happened. Everything played out the way it was supposed to, so...

Q. Why do you think this organization and this team captivated you at such a young age? You talked about how it became personal for you to a certain point.

TONY FAUTANU: Once again, just the grit that the team plays with. I grew up a really big fan of Ben Roethlisberger. That's what I always seen him to do. He is out there commanding the team and commanding that



offense. I always thought he was one of the toughest guys I've ever seen play. He would get hit and get right back up. That inspired me to play the way that I do.

Yeah, hats off, man. Coach Tomlin has done a really great job. I'm just so happy to be under him and learn from him.

Q. Some prospects might delete those old tweets when they come into the draft if they were talking about a team or the league. Are you glad that you left those up and everybody can kind of see how long you've been invested in this franchise even before you got here?

TONY FAUTANU: So I left -- I thought I only left the one. I initially left that one just in case they signed me.

I had my whole agency and marketing team send me some tweets that were a little questionable. That one I decided to leave up because why not? See where we are right now.

Q. How many tweets did you have to delete?

TONY FAUTANU: I don't remember. There was a couple, but nothing crazy.

Q. What's your earliest memory of the Steelers? Do you remember Super Bowls at all watching them?

TONY FAUTANU: Yeah, my earliest memory was in 2007, I believe. It was the Steelers, and we were playing the Patriots. I don't remember why I remember that game, but I think it was the first football game, NFL game, I ever watched, and I don't remember what the score was. I was 7 years old, so I really can't recall anything that happened, but for some reason that's so vivid to me.

Q. When you were drafted, you hugged a couple women first. Probably grandparents or mother. Can you tell us who they were and kind of what they mean in terms of your journey to get to this point?

TONY FAUTANU: Yeah, the people that I had sitting next to me were the people that I thought were most important in my life, starting with my grandmothers because fortunate enough I still have those two strong women in my life. That's my mom's mom and my dad's mom.

The first woman that I hugged was my mom's mom. The second woman I hugged was my dad's mom. And then I went over to my parents because my parents, without their sacrifice, I wouldn't be here.

And then on it went, I hugged my sister and my girlfriend.

Those people -- being able to share that moment with them because they've done so much to get me to this point, and hats off to them for believing in me from a young age. I'm just happy to be able to be in a position to help them and repay that.

Q. Have you talked to any of your new teammates, and have you looked at the roster and thought about I'm going to be playing with some of these guys?

TONY FAUTANU: Oh, yeah, man. For me, the little kid in me, I'm still a fan of football. You know what I mean? Sometimes I still get starstruck seeing a lot of these guys around here. My 30 visit (indiscernible) growing up, watching a guy like that, he is talking to me and saying he watched me play before, and I'm, like, What are you talking about? That's not normal.

For me, Dan Moore hit me up. Russell Wilson called me on my flight here. Yeah, a lot of the guys hit me up. It's crazy to me still. I'm just really excited to kind of learn from those guys because a lot of those guys have been around the league for a really long time, but I'm just trying to soak up as much knowledge as I can.

Q. You talk about wanting to learn things from your new teammates. What are you most excited, though, for Steelers fans to get to learn about you?

TONY FAUTANU: I think just the mentality that I play with. I think that's one thing that, of course, I was taught, but I feel like I've always had. Just the want to go hit somebody in their mouth, man, and that's just something that it's either you have or you don't, and I feel like that's something that I have always played with even growing up.

I played -- I was running the rock. I had the ball in my hand, so I was trying to run everybody over. I was always the biggest kid playing kids my age, so I feel like that's where I got it from.

Then when I finally got to play up, it was a little bit easier. Yeah, I just think that that mentality that I do play with and just the passion that I have for this game.

The amount of opportunities this game has offered me is something I appreciate so much, and that's why I'm willing and I want to be able to put my all into it. So, yeah.

Q. Obviously you talked about that mentality of hitting people on the field, but I've heard you've got some other talents as well, from volleyball to cutting hair, maybe even some piano and singing. How have you become such a well-rounded guy beyond just playing football?

TONY FAUTANU: To be honest I just get bored when I'm sitting at home, so I just go on YouTube, and I'm, like, What can I learn today? So I picked up hair-cutting in high school. I've played volleyball. I feel like I picked it up pretty quickly.

I got it from my parents. My older sister, she plays volleyball. The whole singing thing, my sister can really sing. I have never told anyone this, but yeah, she can sing better than me, but I kind of got it from her. I just do random things.

Q. You do play piano?

TONY FAUTANU: I do. I play guitar. I play a couple of instruments. It's just random things. Whenever I'm at home and feel like I'm not doing anything productive, I decide to put my energy towards something.

Q. The best assessment I've ever heard of you was last night. I said, What do you think of the Steelers draft pick? He said, It's sort of like a ZIP code with arm and legs. Having that mobility and having grace with it, is that one of your attributes that you think you can bring to the team?

TONY FAUTANU: I really do. I really do. I feel like -- I'm a product of the people around me. The people around me were very good at what they did with my O-line coach, who is now at Seattle. My offensive coordinators that I had. Just my teammates, learning from them. The guy opposite side of me is in the draft now, Roger Rosengarten. I learned a lot from him.

Playing next to my best friends, left guard, right guard, Julius Buelow and Nate Kalepo. I learned from watching them play. We all have different play styles. For me, I like to watch a whole bunch of people and pick things from these different players and try them out. Try them out at practice. That's when you do get the ability to do it. Then I go into the game a lot more confident.

I feel like for me a lot of it I learned. A lot of it didn't come natural I feel like. Being able to move maybe did, but the technique and all that stuff, I'm a student of the game. I'm a sponge, man. I'm just ready to learn, and I know I'm going to learn a lot from these guys that are in this room, so I'm super excited.

Q. Have you been to a Steelers game before?

TONY FAUTANU: I have not. I have not. It's crazy, but my first one I'm going to be wearing a jersey on my back, so I'm super excited for that.

Q. Have you thought about what number you're going to wear?

TONY FAUTANU: I'm wearing whatever number these guys give me. I wore the same number for my whole life, but it's really not up to me. I'm just excited for the opportunity.

Q. You mentioned last night that you were a running back and on the O-line. For somebody who likes to hit somebody, was that a move that you welcomed, or was it like this is what I have to do to be on the field?

TONY FAUTANU: I always thought I was going to have the ball in my hands. I always thought I was going to be able to do that. When they told me O-line was the best position to get opportunities like this, then I decided to buy in. Once I realized how fun playing in the trenches are and how, like, crazy it gets down there, there's a whole lot of things that happen down in the trenches that not a lot of people see.

The position that I play -- we play as offensive linemen, you don't really get praise until you mess something up. That type of pressure is the stuff that I live for, man. I enjoy that pressure, so I'm just super excited to be here and, once again, learn from these guys that are in this room and soak up that knowledge for sure.

Q. Talking about your evolution and changing positions, starting from a running back and then eventually becoming a tackle, how did you maintain your athleticism and mobility while you added weight to your frame?

TONY FAUTANU: I just always felt like athleticism was always something that I could be good at, I guess. I don't know. Just being able to move out space. My coaches did a really great job of putting me in situations where I could kind of show that, showcase that.

Especially this past two years with Ryan Grubb as our OC. He put me out on screens. I was pulling on counter. Just things like that. Just being able to -- them being able to put me in those positions, I wouldn't be here without them. Hats off to them for sure.

Q. Have you ever played right side, practice any scenarios?

TONY FAUTANU: I pretty much played every position in college. I played the left side mainly in games, but our coach did a really good job of cross-training us and making sure that we were ready for any opportunity that presented

itself. I'm comfortable anywhere, man. I'm ready to contribute.

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