

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Omar Khan
Mike Tomlin

Draft Day Press Conference



OMAR KHAN: Obviously an exciting day for us. I think the other day when we met, we talked about certain guys that we would not trade away from, and this is one of those players for us.

The phone was ringing and we had many serious conversations but at the end of the day once Derrick was still there, we were excited and it was an easy choice for us. Can't wait to get him here. He fits the Pittsburgh Steelers, and you know, like I said, I can't wait to get him in here.

MIKE TOMLIN: Like Omar said, he has Steelers DNA. For us, it starts inside and up front, and this is a guy that's capable of dominating that space versus the run and the pass.

So we're really excited about having him. As Omar mentioned, we were not interested in considering trading away from him, and really excited about getting him in here and getting started.

Q. How important was to get a defensive lineman, and what do you like about this guy additionally to what you said?

MIKE TOMLIN: Extreme urgency to be quite honest with you. There's no substitute for young talent. You don't have a chance to fill a quality defense unless you're stout up front.

This is a guy that has the opportunity to look for the likes of Cam Hayward and put his hands in that pile and be a significant contributor for years to come.

Q. Do you listen in case somebody wants to blow your doors off or something with an offer?

OMAR KHAN: Obviously we do. We were working the phones, several picks before ours. You listen. You have

to. We owe it to ourselves to listen, and you don't know how it's go to shake out five or six picks ahead.

You listen and weigh things, but at the end of the day, he was one of those players we were not going to trade away from.

Q. Were you starting to wonder if he might be there?

OMAR KHAN: Yeah, obviously, we're watching it, like you guys are, and we don't know what those other teams are going to pick and it just worked out for us.

Q. Defensive lineman, obviously in this first class, did you see something in Harmon that maybe stood out specifically related to the Steelers?

MIKE TOMLIN: I just think he's been impressive at every step of the process for us. His tape was impressive. We had great visits with him in Indy. He came to Pittsburgh, and we had a great day with him. Just with each interaction we all got more and more comfortable that he was our type of a guy.

Q. How much was Cam advocating to add Derrick Harmon?

MIKE TOMLIN: Cam is a team player. He wasn't really advocating for anyone, to be quite honest with you. But he's a quality leader, and I'm sure that he will take that personally.

Q. You talked about the urgency at defensive tackle. How did the way the run defense struggled down the stretch inform that urgency?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, the tape is the tape, and so we're behaving appropriately. You don't have a chance to have a top-notch defense unless you're smashing the run and getting after the quarterback, and this is a guy whose résumé says he's capable of contributing in both areas.

Q. You pointed out to us on Tuesday, only two QBs on the roster, and you wanted to have four when you got to Latrobe. Were you tempted to go with a QB?

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OMAR KHAN: We were on the clock and we got the player that we wanted.

Q. Throughout the Draft process, there were some noise about medical concerns about Derrick. Any red flags there when you guys met with him?

OMAR KHAN: We wouldn't have picked him unless our medical staff and we were comfortable with it.

MIKE TOMLIN: We had him in at a pre-Draft 30 visit and had an opportunity to get our documents, him in front of our docs, and we were extremely comfortable with that component.

Q. You talked a lot recently about how you play a lot of sub-package football, with Derrick Harmon leading college football in pressures,, how much can he contribute as a three-down type of player?

MIKE TOMLIN: I think that was one of the critical points I wanted to make. He's a big man. He's stout against the run. His résumé and tape confirms that.

But he's also a major, major threat in terms of getting after the quarterback. Probably tops in this draft class in terms of interior rush men, and so we got us a big man that's capable of being significant for us in all circumstances, and that's just what you want when you are talking about first round of the Draft.

Q. He's got a lot of attractive traits, length and size and everything like that, but can you go to the football IQ part of it? It seems like he's got -- it's definitely more?

MIKE TOMLIN: His intangible qualities are very attractive. He's a smart guy. He's a football guy. He's got natural leadership skills. The people at Oregon were really blown away by his ability to fit in and not only fit in but lead in a short period of time.

He had a similar reputation at Michigan State, and so the tangible things are obvious, but we were equally as impressed with his intangible quality, his intelligence, his relationship with the game, his natural leadership qualities.

Q. During your conversations with him, was there something that really stood out to you and impressed you?

MIKE TOMLIN: Just for a young guy, I thought he had an awesome sense of self. He was comfortable in his shoes. He had a real agenda about what he's trying to get done within the game of football. He's got a desire to be great.

All of those things were attractive.

Q. You hit the offensive line hard the first two years you were here, flipping over to defense; that obviously the plan when you took over here to hammer those two areas?

OMAR KHAN: You guys have heard me talk about the big guys, and it just doesn't apply to the offense side obviously. Same thing. Defensive side is an opportunity, and those big guys, they are not easy to find. When you have an opportunity to get a good one, we're going to get him.

Q. How much versatility is there with Cam and Derrick in playing the three and the five and how do you see them being on the field at the same time in?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know I am anticipating those guys working well together. I have seen Derrick dominate in terms of the pass rush from the A gap or the B gap. We have all been looking at Cam do that for a long period of time.

So I think we are going to have great flexibility there in terms of how we choose to deploy those guys.

Q. Can he play nose if needed?

MIKE TOMLIN: You know, I don't think nose is his game, but the rush component at three and five, and some of those things, certainly.

Q. Obviously throughout this process, there's still a whole Draft to go, six more rounds to go, but considering Keon and Benton in his role, do you consider him closer to a nose or a three, or do you want to get as many bodies in front as you can?

MIKE TOMLIN: I think we have two quality young players who hopefully are going to play a long time together and have a great deal of success. Both guys are versatile and both guys are stout against the run and both guys are pass rush capable.

We'll sort some of those details out once we get them on the grass and begin the process of team development for 2025.

Q. Once you got to 21, was there a deliberation? Did you go over it? Or did you just say, Wow, here we are, here is our guy?

OMAR KHAN: We knew before. It was easy. We were taking him.

Q. What are some areas where Derrick specifically still needs to improve coming in here?

OMAR KHAN: What was the question?

Q. Obviously nobody is a finished product in the Draft, but what are some areas specifically where Derrick still needs to improve to get to the next level?

OMAR KHAN: He's a young guy, he's 21 years old. You know, I think the ceiling is really high for him, and you know, we'll see where it goes. I mean, I think we can all improve at everything we do in life. But he's got a good opportunity.

MIKE TOMLIN: I was going to say, not to specifically avoid answering your question but a 21-year-old guy, he's got a lot of tools in his toolbox, but there's a lot of areas for improvement as he transitions from college to professional football.

We'll have a better sense of it as we begin to work and see him in that setting.

Q. What do you remember about when Harmon first got on your radar as a prospect and what stood out to you in the beginning?

OMAR KHAN: You know, we talked to him in Indy, and you know, we had had our meetings before that, and he's just a guy that stood out. We had done a lot of hoax work on him. We had a lot of contacts with Michigan State, and obviously Oregon we know some people. It was just, he checked a lot of boxes for us.

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