

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Coach Mike McCarthy

Omar Khan

Art Rooney II

Weekday Press Conference



ART ROONEY II: Good afternoon. Thanks, everybody, for being with us on this special occasion. It may be irrelevant to some of you, but I like the fact that today's my grandfather's birthday, and he would have loved the fact that we're hiring a guy from Greenfield to be our coach.

Having said that, him being from Greenfield had little to do with our decision here. It's really great to be able to hire somebody who has such a tremendous winning track record and won everywhere he's been. So it gives us great confidence to welcome Mike.

I'm happy to introduce Mike McCarthy, the next head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

(Applause)

MIKE MCCARTHY: All right. Here we go. Thank you, Art.

I thought I would at least be able to get started. Oftentimes, coaches and players, you put on new team colors, and it takes a minute to feel comfortable in those new colors. But to be blessed beyond any measure one day to put on the colors you wore since you brought home -- I apologize. I told you not to sit my family down here in front. This is so unfair -- when you come home from Mercy Hospital.

I want to thank Art Rooney and Omar Khan and Dan Rooney and the entire Steelers organization for the trust they've placed in me to represent one of the most storied franchises in all of sports.

I understand and embrace the responsibility and the privilege and the weight that comes with this stewardship. This city, this franchise, this fan base means the world to me, because Pittsburgh's my world, and it's just awesome to be back here.

I do want to thank two men I'm very fortunate to call friends. Mike Tomlin and Bill Cowher. They represented this organization with such class, and I'm honored, honored to follow in their footsteps. They left the proverbial cupboard full, for sure. My family, my loves, my wife, Jessica; kids, Alex and Danny, Jack, George, Gabby, Izzy; my parents, Joe and Nell McCarthy; my sisters Kellie, Ellen and Colleen and the crew that's here, we can finally openly wear our Steelers swag, so let's get it.

My heart is full. My focus is singular. And it's time to bring another championship back to this great city. And with that, I just want to make sure that when we do get that trophy, the seventh trophy in the case, we'll start that victory parade at 1137 Greenpoint Avenue (phonetic).

Q. Did you think and want to get back into coaching? We've seen other guys take that year off and get back. What did last year or the year off do for you, show you, anything like that?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Well, the year off was awesome. Really, family. I had a chance to take a year off in '19, and, frankly, I didn't really take the year off. We had a group of coaches, friends, mainly, that we really treated it like a season.

We started in February and still today there's projects that I never really got to in Dallas. It was a football deep dive on a lot of things. It was awesome. I loved it just to do it at that pace and do it with the people that I experienced that with.

But this year was about family. I spent a lot of time with the family through the spring volleyball games, all that stuff. I don't know why I'm so emotional.

But a great year. I had a great year. And then I was able to do some cool things, too. The Pat McAfee Show was awesome, just to see that side of the world. Have more respect for you now, Jerry, than I ever have just because I got to see how hard you guys work.

No, it was just a very fulfilling year. Frankly, it went too fast, because once football season -- really, once training

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camp hits, we all have that clock. So to be able to start, have conversations and watch certain things, I just didn't do as much this past year as I did back in '19.

But it was really cool to step back and look at the trends. I think our game is so much about trends. I'm just always amazed, when you look at a season, whether you're following game management, you're following fundamentals, if you see the ball kicked out at the 1-yard line in one game, and it's amazing three more happen the next three weeks.

So I've just always followed the trends because I think our game is about trends, and it is our responsibility as coaches to make sure we're constantly teaching and reinforcing and finding new examples for that. So it was a great year.

Q. Mike, a football question for you. I'm not asking this from any other perspective except your own personal preference. In your best-case scenario, do you want Aaron Rodgers back as your quarterback next year?

MIKE MCCARTHY: That's nice the way he asked that, right? That was slick. (Laughter).

Definitely. I don't see why you wouldn't. But just like anything, knowing Aaron long enough, going through seasons, I think when players -- to see Mel Blount here -- when guys are up there at that stage of their career, they need to step away and decompress. The game is so emotional. With what these men commit to, what they put into it, I think that time away is important. And I have spoken to Aaron. So that's really where we are there.

I was able to sit back and watch the games, watched most of the Pittsburgh games on TV, and I thought he was a great asset for the team.

Q. Credentials aside, did you feel like you had to sell yourself in that interview? Was there any answer or story that you told that maybe helped get you job that you can share with us?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I think every time you have a chance to interview -- I've always enjoyed the interview process. Frankly, I was on three this year. I had a number in '19. Really didn't have many before that.

Frankly, I think anytime coaches and players have a chance to talk football, sit down across the table and have a chance to sit down and talk to Art Rooney about the game, the history, especially growing up here, being a huge Steeler fan as a kid, it's a great opportunity.

So I'm filibustering here because I'm trying to think of a good story to give you. But I don't think there was one that knocked it out of the park.

But, no, I enjoyed those conversations, and I know this: No different than I would think in any industry, you look for fit. I'm in the process of putting together a coaching staff. There's so many outstanding coaches out there that I respect. But it has to fit together.

I did feel very comfortable from the moment that I was able to sit down with Art and Omar, and that's a connection I know where I am in my life, in my career.

The GM/head coach relationship is critical, and I couldn't be paired with a better guy.

Q. Mike, in terms of, absent of being a Pittsburgh guy yourself, but when you looked at the roster specifically, what attracted you most to the roster, and what are you happiest with in terms of the roster?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I love the roster. I think it's Omar's turn to talk here. But I think it's a roster that is fluid. What I mean by that, the first thing I always look for -- I know in my head coaching years, how many players do we have returning on contract? Are we at 52? Are we at 61? 64?

Frankly, the draft's really important. Veteran free agency's important. But that group of men in these offseason programs, particularly, just being older, just being in the league, that time you have together, those men will move the needle, in my opinion, more than anybody else.

It's a great group of men, just based off the feedback. We all talk to each other, and so I'm really looking forward to moving the needle with those guys, and definitely we'll add through free agency. We'll add through the draft.

Like I said, Mike Tomlin and Omar, they've left me with a lot to work with. I feel good about the direction. I'm really excited about the defense. Great seeing Alex here, because defense wins championships. The history of the Steelers defense and staying with the 3-4 is important, as far as the origin of it. And that's something we have to build off of.

I've been a head coach 18 years. I've had one top 5 defense, and we won the Super Bowl that year. The importance of defense is critical.

Q. The last three guys that had this job were in it for 19 years, 15 years, 23 years. You're a little bit more advanced in your career than they were when they

took over, but how long do you see yourself continuing to coach? What do you kind of view this timeline as?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I think we're going to shift to dog years, number one. So shouldn't be funny in your first press conference. That backfired on me last time. (Laughter).

But Coach Noll, growing up in the '70s, when I got into coaching, that's when you look at someone you like to emulate and what Bill Cowher and Mike Tomlin have done here, trust me, I have great respect for that. I really am.

Hell, I can't even get through the press conference. I'm looking forward to getting started tomorrow. And this game is about winning, and the game has changed.

My first year in the NFL was 1993. The rules have changed. The way you train your team has changed. So those are things I'm focused on. I hope it lasts a very long time.

Q. What was it like after you got the phone call from the Steelers to be able to call your parents and share that news with them?

MIKE MCCARTHY: That's not fair, Teresa.

It was a great phone call. I couldn't get through the introduction. So I think you know how that went.

Q. Why did you still want to coach? What is it about this profession that -- certainly you have great credentials, coached a good, long time, some guys don't come back at 62. Not that it's as old as it used to be, but what keeps you coming back? What made you want to get back into coaching?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I love coaching. I think the biggest thing is the interaction every day with the players, the coaches, the support group, the lineup every single day and the work and to do hard stuff with people that are committed, I mean, there's nothing like it.

I've had a chance to step away and look at other things. There's nothing like the National Football League. And to do it at the highest level, it's something that I'm not ready to walk away from.

And to have this opportunity, it just seemed like it was meant to be on so many different levels. But Sundays are incredible. But Tuesdays, game plan days, are still one of my favorite days. There's so many little things about the coaching profession I love.

But the fact getting up every day, grabbing that cup of coffee and hitting it, getting it, and it's all about winning. I'm just fortunate that I had the opportunity to do it again.

Q. Your history is offense. Your reputation is offense. Your numbers support that. What has been transferrable from one stop to the next? Why do you keep getting production and getting the most out of quarterbacks?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Well, I mean, the quarterback opportunity, I think it's important. When you become a head coach, big part of why you got that first opportunity was the position you coached through your background and so forth.

I've been super blessed to work with an unbelievable group of quarterbacks, the hall of famers. Paul Hackett was my mentor. Paul taught me the quarterback position. Started at University of Pittsburgh over there in 1989.

So just had great mentorship through my younger years. But that follows through, a little harder to coach the quarterback today than it was in pre-2011. But that position is no different than any other position. The quarterback position, to me, is a huge challenge because you don't have the individual time that the other positions have. But finding time, being efficient with your workload capacity and making sure those guys get the fundamental training. So just never really deviating from the old-school way. And it's worked for decades.

Q. The playoff win drought has been a big topic of conversation here the last few years. When you look back at the last ten years, what would you do differently? What do you think the biggest change needs to be right now, moving forward into this era with you?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Honestly, I don't think you can really look at it that way. You know, every season's different. Every team you coach is different. Your beliefs and your standards and the culture you're trying to create, you're trying to move that forward.

Most important thing about playoff football is staying in the playoffs. We're not trying to get to the playoffs and doing the things to stay in the playoffs. Playoff football are the hardest games to win each and every year.

Earlier we talked about trends. I think that the trends are -- the fourth quarter changes is something that I know I've been watching, the momentum shifts and so forth. Because in a lot of ways, when I look at the training of the

team, especially the way the offseason programs is orchestrated, you almost have to reengineer how you want your team to train.

What I'm talking about is you need to put more time and energy into the end of the game, because you look at the playoffs because it's about winning the championship, it's not about getting to the playoffs and winning one game; it's about bringing the trophy home, and that will always be the goal.

I think the trends of playoff football, I think there's been one game this year that didn't come down to the last series and the whole playoff outcome, and that trend has been in place for years. So there's not too many games in the playoffs that does not come down to the two-minute drill.

As I already stated, the fourth quarter momentum swings this year have been at a record pace. So that's what I pay attention to, because we all have the same amount of time to train the team. The players have the same amount of time to put into it when we're able to work as a team. But where are you spending that time? That's really my approach to how I would attack the playoffs.

Q. There's the legend of the unopened Iron City can that was passed along from Coach Noll to Coach Cowher, then from Coach Cowher to Coach Tomlin. Did you get that can?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I haven't really had a chance to get to the office yet. But I'll let you know.

Q. You've had great success over the years developing quarterbacks. But you're taking over an organization here who wants to win now. How do you balance winning now and finding that next franchise quarterback?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Well, I think you're always developing the quarterback. I've been blessed to have great starters, particularly the last one Dak Prescott and Aaron and Green Bay, Brett, but we've always approached it as the quarterback room because that second quarterback, third quarterback, they need to emulate the starter because that starter is dictating the rhythm and time and precision with the perimeter guys.

I'm excited -- where I'm going with this, I'm real excited about Will Howard. I think he's someone that I thought he really came on there at Ohio State. I'm anxious to work with him. It will be great to have Aaron back, but Will and Mason, I'm really excited to get started with those guys.

Q. Do you plan on calling the plays? And what's your

timetable for offensive coordinator, any coaching staff, are they going to be people you're familiar with from your past or around the league?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Definitely. I will call the plays on offense and obviously will run the offense. But these coaching staffs, it's a bigger challenge each and every year. I think there's more moving parts to it. But it's been very fluid the last 48 hours.

Q. Omar and Art, a lot of the candidates you interviewed were younger coaches, defensive backgrounds. Did you come into this thinking maybe that was something you were going to do? What was it about Mike that changed your mind, maybe, or stood out to you compared to some of the younger defensive guys?

ART ROONEY II: We came into this wanting to hire the best coach for the Pittsburgh Steelers. So we did not say we're trying to hire a young defensive coordinator or offensive guy. We had an open mind about it, I think, and really just, like I said, we just wanted to make sure we found the best coach and we were able to interview some great coaches.

I won't say it was an easy decision, but I would say at the end of the day it was an obvious decision for us that Mike was the guy for the job.

OMAR KHAN: Just to echo what Art said. We were very open-minded going into this interview. Really an awesome group of candidates. I think Mike's resumé speaks for itself. Learned a lot through the process, but we're excited Mike McCarthy is the head coach.

Q. Coach and Omar, you guys crossed paths with the Saints many years ago. Short period of time. Is it surreal to be sitting next to each other in the capacity that you are today and what do you remember about each other back then?

OMAR KHAN: You want me to go first?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Yeah, in case you say something stupid I -- (laughter).

OMAR KHAN: It's hard to believe it. That was 25 years ago. But I grew up a big Saints fan. For me, that year was really special because that was the first year that the Saints ever won a playoff game. Mike was the offensive coordinator, and it was an unbelievable year. And it was exciting. Not only as someone that worked in the National Football League, but just as a fan growing up. We had some good times.



But what I do remember the most? It's just the hard work we put in. I remember the attention to detail that this man to my right used to put into everything he did, and that still resonates with me today. But it was a good year, a good experience. I can't believe it's been 25 years.

MIKE MCCARTHY: It's going fast. I just always remember the first impression of Omar. You get hired, and just things are going 100 miles an hour, and it was my first time being a coordinator. And Omar had worked down in the personnel department and worked with the CAP. And Jim Hazzard asked if I wanted him to work with us on offense. And it was awesome. I think it opened up his eyes to what coaches and players really put into it.

And I always admired -- you could see right away he was going to be very successful, very bright, hardworking, and I think we've just always been connected since then.

Q. You mentioned defense wins championships. Got a lot of defensive guys up here. What is your defensive philosophy, and what are you looking for on that side of the ball from a coaching standpoint?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I mean, as we build a staff, we definitely want to build off what's in place here. I mean, just as a whole, you know, with this being the third organization that I've walked into, the first day, I don't believe in the throw out the baby with the bathwater method. I believe building off of what's in place. There's a lot here in place. I mean, the defense system has been here since 1992.

So it came here with Coach Cowher and Dom Capers. Always been a fan of it and always felt it was the toughest one to compete against as an offensive coach. Part of the reason why I went to it in Green Bay. So those are the things we're focused on right now. We're putting the staff together.

But ideally, we want to keep the language the same. So I think those are big decisions when you come in here, because when you've got something that works the way it's worked here for so long, I think you should try to do everything you can to build off of that, if possible.

Q. In an interview you did in Dallas a few years back, you said "Family first, family and football." And you coach your team that way. What does that look like? Why is that so important to you?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I think just like anything, it's how you're raised. I think just the basics, treat people the way you want to be treated. I think respect goes a long ways,

and I think it always starts with the locker room. That locker room is a family, and everything we do -- everything that we do that touches the locker room is, to me, the primary focus every day. I think that's how you win. You win every day. Those men are making sacrifices that -- those guys are performers. When they cross the white lines, we gotta feel that we've given them everything to be successful. It's really keeping a light on the locker room, which is the family.

Q. What qualities are most important to you as you form your coaching staff underneath you?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I mean, a number of them. I have a philosophy of how to structure -- I think there's four areas that I've looked at. Number one, you've got to have experts. You've got to have men that know the league. This league evolves.

You definitely want to be on the front end of the cycle. You want to be on the back end. So that's important to have the expertise and experience at a certain level.

I think it's important to look at the current coaching staff in place. A lot of good coaches that were here in place under Mike, and you have to take that into consideration, and that's part of the fit and the ability to move forward and make them a part of it, if you feel like it fits.

The third one is you've got to look at some of these young and new ideas out there that would fit the direction that you want to go with your team.

Then you've got to have them young dudes. You've got to have the guys that grind. You have to have the grinders that are going to be there and, frankly, came up the way Omar and I did. We didn't have the resources back then that you have today in computers. So you slept in the office back then. You did those things. I'm not looking for that now because of the resources you do have.

So staying true to that methodology is how I've done it. But at the end of the day, it has to fit together.

Q. You bring a reputation of offensive football. I'm curious, how would you describe your philosophy on offense, and how has that evolved over time?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Well, I'm a believer in the tradition of the West Coast offense. And the first thing that always came to mind was the offense needs to be built to make the quarterback successful. As simplistic as it is. And that starts with running the football. I mean, you have to run the football, because if you don't run the football and you don't tailor your protection schemes and the action pass

game to the run game, obviously it's not going to affect the defense and have the benefits of what you're looking for.

The way the quarterback's coached in that system, you want a more athletic player in that position, the man that can extend plays and play to the rhythm and timing and spacing and all the things that go into an offensive system.

But at the end of the day, you'll never hear me say this because -- I would never say we run the West Coast offense. If your system of football cannot take in every player that Omar and Art want to bring to the Pittsburgh Steelers, then you need to take a look at your system.

So we need to make sure we can accommodate the variety of players that are available to us.

Q. Omar, Mike's had an extensive time working with quarterbacks. How much did that play a factor in bringing him on to be a head coach? Because I know, like, you've been making it a priority to find a long-term option at quarterback. And Mike, how has the quarterback position evolved, and what have you learned over the time of working all the way back to Joe Montana, but then also recently with Dak Prescott?

OMAR KHAN: It's a good question. I'd say, look, with everybody we talked to, the conversation of developing the next young quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers was part of it. I think Mike's resumé speaks for itself, who he's been around.

But we're excited about working with Will. And that was a part of it.

MIKE MCCARTHY: Quarterback play? I think the obvious is the rule changes. Their ability to run. They're running -- the quarterback runs, the called quarterback runs is probably the biggest thing that's changed in the last five, six, seven years. And obviously the rules protecting them and making it possible, I mean, just the way you play defense. You got a seven-gap run scheme now, has an eighth element to it because the quarterback can pull the ball. No different in the eight-gap, nine-gap scheme.

So, I mean, I think that is the biggest evolution that I think is obvious to all of us. But at the end of the day, to win these big games that are being played in January, they still gotta make throws from the pocket. And that's why the belief and the footwork and the training and all those things that goes into it. But the running quarterback is the biggest change that I've seen.

Q. What can you share about what these last 72 hours

have been like for you? How much of it's been, whether returning calls and texts to family and friends or planning the next steps, draft process, pre-draft-wise, what can you pull back the curtain for us on these few days?

MIKE MCCARTHY: I think the two words that jump to the front are "overwhelming" and "surreal," the opportunity with the Pittsburgh Steelers, but the overwhelming response that's occurred.

Whew, I've received probably twice as many, at least, text messages and calls than I did when we won the Super Bowl. It's just been overwhelming. But the last 48, 72 hours have been about the staff. It's just been nonstop because I'm trying to make it fit together. It's more difficult to put a staff together today than it was six years ago. And definitely 20 years ago.

Q. When do you need to have an answer from Aaron by? And second part of the question, you took this year off. What's your first thoughts on this year's quarterback class coming out of college?

MIKE MCCARTHY: That's probably a better question for Omar, because I'm just getting started on the draft process, and we'll dive into that, frankly, once we get past this coaching staff development.

But, yeah, timelines, we haven't discussed that yet.

Q. Your system has had lots of star receivers like Jordy Nelson, CeeDee Lamb. As you look at the current state of your wide receivers and your weaponry adding in the tight end and running back room, what stands out about it to you, and do you maybe need to add new types of receivers to fit what you want to do schematically?

MIKE MCCARTHY: Well, I just think, like any coach, I mean, you're supposed to look at what you have and you look at the opportunity to develop. As far as the receiver position as a whole, we were at our best in Green Bay, the Jordy Nelson era, because all those guys worked so well together.

You know, this game's about match-ups. Your ability to put your third receiver on the third corner or the third -- hopefully that's a favorable match-up, or move those guys around. You want your receivers to be able to play all three positions. Because when you can have the flexibility of that, that goes back to the first statement about making a quarterback successful, because the quarterbacks are trained in conceptual development of how you throw the football. So that helps you with your footwork training,



because, you know -- but if you have 900 plays just to beat every defense or beat every -- that's very difficult on a quarterback.

So if you truly want to play to the rhythm and the time of a quarterback, your perimeter guys being able to play multiple positions is very important. So that will be our approach with these guys. I'm looking forward to getting started with them.

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