

# Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Pitt Panthers

## Donovan McMillon

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Donovan.

**Q. How do you follow up a season where you had a hundred tackles, what is the next step for you?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: I would say the next step is just going 1-0 at the end of the day. I don't think about stats when it comes to it. I'm trying to do my one of one for the team, make plays as they come.

Like I said, to win is the only thing I want to do.

**Q. 105 tackles last season. How is it that you're able to track on the ball so well?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: I think that comes back from my wrestling background. I don't know if many people know, but I placed second in the state of Pennsylvania my junior season. Wrestled about 14 or 15 years of my life. That comes down from the angles, the technique of tackling, comes from wrestling.

Having three younger brothers at home, Darius, Dane and Davin, sometimes I get them, sometimes they get me.

**Q. Is that where you learned to wrestle?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: I learned to wrestle from a plethora of people in my family to great coaches. That was definitely my best sport for a while, so...

**Q. The stamina that comes with wrestling, how does that help you with football? Have you gotten any advice from some of the great defensive players in the path that went to Pittsburgh?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: Stamina? I would say there's no shape like wrestling shape at the end of the day. Obviously I'm not in wrestling shape any more. But the mentality behind it keeps me going at the end of the day. We're having a 12, 11-play drive, you have to run to the

post for the fourth time in a row, you just happen to have that grit and mentality to keep pushing forward at the end of the day.

When it comes to defensive backs, I've talked to the threes that were before me, Damar Hamlin, Jordan Whitehead and they say nothing but the best for me. They say keep going at the end of the day, so...

**Q. You went home, you were at Florida, went home, playing in front of friends and families. I'm sure heavily recruited by this coaching staff. What was it like to open up your options and think about going back to where it all started?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: So quick story. I hit the portal. There's a two-day period of time where coaches can't hit you up. I think it was 9 or 10 a.m., whenever the portal opens up after your two days, Coach Cory Sanders was the first one to call me. Two days later, Coach Duzz and Sanders were in my apartment in Gainesville.

They really opened up my idea of coming home and being a hometown hero. There was the talk behind the defense and scheme got me excited, especially with the stat of how many defensive backs have made it to the league since 2018. Things I had my eyes open for. Ended up being a great plan. So far it's going well.

**Q. You are only 24 miles from home in McMurray. How big is your guest list, how many tickets on a weekly basis?**

DONOVAN MCMILLON: You can ask Gavin and Nate. I'm asking every single person can I get a ticket. I've had up to 24 tickets for a game, and that's not including half the family that came. There's nothing better than having that experience. In Florida I had my parents able to come to maybe two, three games a year. Now they get to come to every single game. It's a breathtaking experience for my friends and family to be able to come watch me play every Saturday.

**Q. What is it about the game of football that you love so much?**



DONOVAN MCMILLON: That's a good question right there.

We'll start with how I used to get made fun of for saying I eat, breathe, sleep football. I absolutely love the game. I don't even know how to explain how much I love it. I have my dad, my role model, I look up to. He was going through and we were watching football games ever since I can remember.

I always laugh and joke with people. I never watch a game in real-time. Everyone is texting me, did you see the interception? I'm four plays behind. What is opening the tight end up in the flat? Him and his defensive line, don't get my started. The gap scheme is the best thing he likes to talk about.

At the end of the day I grew up loving the sport. That's the only thing I love to do.

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