

# New York Giants Media Conference

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**Mike Kafka**

Press Conference



MIKE KAFKA: Good to see everybody.

**Q. New quarterback room. Can you talk us through your evaluation, touch points, with Jaxson Dart?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yes. So throughout the whole process evaluating the quarterback prospects obviously Jaxson was one of them and a guy we're really excited about. Yeah, being there for the 30 visits, combine, being around him there and watching him operate there.

Get him Thursday, had a private visit with him. It was a very thorough process, and we did it with a bunch of different guys.

We're happy with Jaxson, the way he's been going, but it's a cool process to be able to go through that. Obviously you get a guy that you really like and you really think has potential to do something, you take a shot at him, and excited about Jaxson.

**Q. How early in the process did you know he was your guy?**

MIKE KAFKA: I wouldn't say it was late. I would say it was relatively early just because you get -- the more touchpoints you have with them the more confidence you get and more you see him fitting into your system and your scheme.

And so I felt really confident about how he operated, studied, prepared, handled himself. And then at the end of the day, his tape and the way he performed in those meetings.

**Q. In that tape what stood out to you in his game?**

MIKE KAFKA: You watch a lot of it, and I'm not going to get into all the details, but the explosive plays, two-minute drills and under pressure, under duress; you see some of the off schedule, off platform plays he has and you kind of watch that together and put together a report.

Those are things that stood out to me. His ability to kind of play within the pocket, outside the pocket, QB run game, things like that.

**Q. That said you, had to wait through draft night to see if you were even going to get him. What was that like for you?**

MIKE KAFKA: You never really know how it could go. You don't know how those things will line up. Joe and his staff had a great plan and did a great job. Had a great draft. We're excited about the players we added and happy to have Jaxson and all the guys we drafted.

It's part of the process, part of league, part of the NFL, and just another year of trying to put together a good squad and good crew of guys.

**Q. You were part of Patrick Mahomes' early development in Kansas City. What did you learn from that and how can you apply those lessons to helping Jaxson develop?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, I think whenever you draft a quarterback early, you want to have a plan or some semblance of a plan or schedule to put in place to understand that it's not really a one week, six month, one year, two year type plan. For any player you get you want to see what that player is going to be some point in the distance, six months, 12 months, 18 months in the future where his progress is and where he should be. That way along the way you can evaluate is he on schedule? Is he further behind? Do we need to add or subtract things?

So that's no different than any position. For the quarterback that's what you try to put together. I'm not going to get into the details of that plan, but that's what you want to look for. You try to put those touchpoints on, okay, is he at this point come training camp? Start of the season where is with protections or assignments? We try to put together a checklist and plan for every player, and the quarterback is no different.

**Q. How different would your role be with Dart? With**

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## **Mahomes you were...**

MIKE KAFKA: It'll just be different based on just the nature of my current position. Just being the quarterback coach, you're in that room with them. You're coaching them not just like a specific job, but quarterback versus the offensive coordinator putting the whole picture together. Being in those meetings with the quarterbacks and explaining my intent for a player, my vision for what that play could be or the offense could look like or how we'll attack certain things, being out in front of that with the quarterbacks is always good information.

### **Q. How do you separate -- (Plane interference.) How do you separate what they do with Jaxson versus what the coaches do?**

MIKE KAFKA: You know, the great thing about having those veterans is you don't need to have to egg them to do anything outside of what they normally do. They're naturally really good teammates, really good people, really good preppers. They study habits.

For Jaxson it's about getting around these guys and seeing how they work and ask questions, see how they interact in the locker room with the players, the meeting room, and the command they have in and out of the huddle.

I think those are just great experiences to have. When you have a veteran room, and throw Tommy in there as well, going on year three, year four in the offense, that's really good information. A lot of guys are leaning on Tommy because he's been in this for so long.

So we have three veteran guys, a young guy, a lot of great experiences among the coaching staff in this room as well. It's been a fun room. So far this spring has been fun and getting to learn everybody and getting introduced to the offense.

### **Q. How good of a balance is it for you guys? You have an entire room, so obviously we been asking you about Jaxson. You have to also prepare the other quarterbacks to be ready to play. It's only June, but seems like closer you get to the season the less time you get with the entire group and the focus has to be about playing games. For you guys as a coaching staff, is there that delicate balance of making sure every day you're intentional, what you're seeing from 1, 2, 3, 4, if it's on depth chart or that kind of approach?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, I mean, the planning that is done well in advance of the phases, you talk about it, and that all absolutely takes into consideration how you script a play,

what plays you want to install, the emphasis of that day situationally. You look at that and try to detail that for the entire group, that way we all stay on the same schedule, right?

What the rookies have that the vets don't at this time is rookie time. So they get extra hours kind of baked in during the middle of the day, the end of the day when the vets aren't here. The rookies get a little bit extra time and get the finer details and get caught up, and sometimes the vets we're rolling and going through stuff.

They have an opportunity to kind of sit back, take a deep breath, ask questions, and get up to speed.

### **Q. Russ' career, we know what he did in Seattle. Career has taken a dip in Denver and last year with the Steelers. What do you see in him as a 36 year old veteran that and you the guys here can turn that back up and make him into a good starting quarterback?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, I see a lot of things this Russ and things that I watched from afar for a long time. His time in Seattle, Denver, Pittsburgh, just the leadership, the command. You see that on the field. I think the players have responded to it.

You see the competitiveness that he brings, the demeanor that he brings. I'm excited. We're in phase three so working through a lot. It's a new offense for him and he's played a lot of football, so a lot of these plays are similar to what he knows. Just getting him on the same page terminology-wise.

But it's doing a great job and I'm excited to have him. Appreciative to have him and what he's been to the offense.

### **Q. Is there anything you see from Russ that you maybe can see better in person versus on tape?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, you know, again, I've just watched him from afar. Being around him in the quarterback room, he's great. He has a really cool perspective. Just all of his experiences, playoff games, Super Bowl games, in-season games, situations at the end the game, here, this happens.

It's great for me to bounce ideas off him because he sees the game differently, right, because he played a lot of ball. All of a sudden he can -- we can challenge each other on some of the games or situations and the play calls and keep that open dialog in terms of communication.

Not just with Russ, but with the whole quarterback room. That's been great for everybody. Even Jameis. He playing



well and has certainly a boatload of experience as well.

**Q. What do you expect the offense to look like with Russ? Significantly different given his skillset maybe compared to what you had in the past.**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, I think when you look at the players right now in phase three, evaluating guys, it's kind of a different camp just by the nature of the physicality of it. We're not in pads so you miss an element of the run game, the physicality. It's more of a passing camp and speed-driven and developing the speed and strength aspect of it.

Right now we're evaluating our players based on the schemes we put in. We are trying to put them in good spots to get evaluation on what they can and can't do. We are putting a lot of installations in to see how much they can regurgitate and get back and show up and play fast and still have a lot of volume.

It tests them on that, so now we know how much volume we can carry throughout the year and know, all right, maybe this group can't handle this or they can. We can build on certain packages.

Right now in phase three we're coming together. Got a bunch of guys new to the offense we are trying to get caught up to speed, and also not take away the veterans that have been here and continue to add more to their plate.

**Q. What was your conversation and reaction like when Daboll said for at least the spring here, you're calling plays again?**

MIKE KAFKA: That's a good question. I would say right now, whatever Dabs needs me to do, that is what I'm going to do. If he needs me to call plays, communicate with the quarterback, whatever he asks me to do, I'm going to do.

So that's kind of the first thing I would say.

The next part is you're learning every year, learning and growing every year. Whether I'm learning from my experiences when I was calling it, when I wasn't calling it, other play callers across the league, you study them and their habits.

It's been I think each year if you're not looking for that to grow as a professional, then you're not taking a step in the right direction. I've always used that, whether it's phase two, phase three, the offseason as kind of that jumping point for me.

**Q. Is that something you talked about at length with Daboll?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, I'm not going to get into the personal conversations with him, but, yeah, me and Dabs have an open dialog about offense.

**Q. Real quick, Evan Neal, can he be a good starting guard in the league?**

MIKE KAFKA: Yeah, he's doing a nice job when you see him in transition. He did it in college. And again, just like the nature of the camp. It's not a full-padded camp, but there is a lot of fundamentals you can work, individual drills, pass-driven drills, and Evan is doing a nice job. Happy for him.

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