

# New York Giants Media Conference

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## General Manager Joe Schoen

Press Conference

JOE SCHOEN: All right, welcome to 2026 combine here. It's always great to be back in Indiana, my home state.

Before I get started, I would like to say thanks to all the first responders back in the Tri-State area. I know some of you guys had to change your travel, as did we, trying to get our staff here today. I still have several staff members stranded back home and having a difficult time getting here.

So the first responders, street department, the guys working the plows, keeping your families safe and my family safe as well. So I would just like to give a big shoutout to them..

As for the combine, this is an exciting time for us getting ready to kickoff the 2026 season. This is the first chance to get around some of these draft prospects. I wasn't able to go to the Senior Bowl, East West game, so this will be my first opportunity to get in front of these guys and get to know them, as well as get in front of some of our agents of our current UFAs that we'll hopefully be able to bring back.

So we'll start those conversations this week.

With that, I will open it up to any questions.

**Q. Joe, how much different is this combine, the fact that you have Jaxson, the quarterback spot seems to be solidified?**

JOE SHOEN: Yeah, I reflect each year on these meetings, and last year it was the quarterback situation, what are you going to do? I said, we're going to take our swing.

So it is nice to have that piece in place to have a rookie quarterback that played well his rookie year and know who you're going to build around.

So, yeah, it's an exciting time for us and some of the other



young, core pieces that we have. So you're really going to build it around Jaxson, new head coach, and some other changes within the organization.

So I'm excited about where we are and this is the start of that process.

**Q. (Regarding flexibility.) Do you feel like you're behind in that process?**

JOE SHOEN: I was behind, but this past week I was crushing it in the office doing film. This research for the head coach, it did set me back. That was my priority. First and foremost it was finding the best head coach for the New York Giants. I spent a lot of time in December when I would normally be watching film doing a lot of research on the coaching candidates.

I feel like I'm in a good spot from a free agency standpoint. In the last week I've been able to play catchup on the college draft prospects and I'll continue to do so.

But really going to start focusing on free agency this week with the meetings that we're going to have and the strategy and planning starting next week.

**Q. Joe, what have you learned about John?**

JOE SCHOEN: What have I learned about John? A lot of it we learned on the interview process. The leadership, the passion for football. He's a hard worker. He's a very hard worker. He's in there all the time. Great football mind. Not just Xs and Os, but the leadership that he brings, the plan, the clarity in terms of how he wants to build a team.

His communication has been phenomenal. As you're getting to know somebody, no matter what the relationship is, you're trying to feel how people communicate, how they operate, do I go down to his office, does he come to me, do I text him, does he text back?

So you're feeling through all that stuff initially in a relationship, but it's been phenomenal so far.

**Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding John, leaning on**

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him.)

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, coaching communication has been great. Again, when he got here, it's the first time you're going through everything together. How did you guys do this in Baltimore? Okay, this is how we're doing it. Okay, we're doing that exactly the same.

Now we get to pro days. How do you operate? Do you want coaches to go out, not go out? So the process is the same. It's just overcommunicating on how we do things versus how they did things in Baltimore or how he wants it done.

So they drafted well in Baltimore and they've won a lot of games. Again, we don't have all the answers. There are tweaks we can make that will make us better and I'm open to that.

So we've had a lot of communication up to this point. Really like the process we currently have. We tweaked a couple things. The communication has been great, and ultimately we're just trying to do what's best for the Giants, whatever part of the process it is.

**Q. Do you feel that you have a lot more flexibility now in the draft? How much does it change? You talk about having Jaxson.**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Jordan, having that piece is very important. A lot sleepless nights last year trying to fill that one. If you don't have that piece then a lot of times really doesn't matter if you don't have a quarterback. We definitely have more flexibility. We have some holes and that's where we'll see what's going to come up in free agency.

We have some UFAs that we would like to keep. If we can't keep them, that certainly opens up other holes. Yes, you feel good about having the quarterback, but there are some other positions that we're going to need to fill throughout this free agency process.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, and I mean, when you look at who the starters are that are up you have to fill those holes because you don't currently have starters in some of those situations. We'll go through this week, meet with their agents, gather a lot of information; then when we get back to the office next week, that's when the strategy will start to take place.

**Q. (Regarding rehab for Cam.) Create an urgency for you in the free agency or draft, a skill player, position**

**player with Jaxson?**

JOE SCHOEN: Not necessarily with those two. I feel good about where those two are in their rehab. But, yeah, you're always going to want to add more explosiveness to your offense, guys that score touchdowns, wherever that comes from: running back, receiver, tight ends, whatever it may be.

You're always going look for more explosive players and guys that can add touchdowns. That will be something we'll look for.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: I've been texting with him the last couple days and he's in a good spot. He feels good. Yeah, the plan is hopefully for him to still be ready for training camp. Again, don't hold me to it. Things change. You guys have done this before. I learned my lesson. Every patient reacts different, and hopefully there is no setbacks.

The plan is for him to be ready to go for training camp.

**Q. He's in California?**

JOE SCHOEN: He's not in California. No, he's down in Miami.

**Q. With this organizational changes, like for fans, oh, a new coach comes in, (indiscernible) playcalling, players... (No microphone.) (Regarding training staff.)**

JOE SCHOEN: So say that again.

**Q. Explain how organizations, some of the changes, updating will be on display... (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, we've made some changes throughout the football organization, whether it was bringing in Adam Bennett as our head trainer, Dawn Aponte. We're going to probably hire a video director here sooner than later.

There are some changes that we've made. Again, those are decisions that were organizational decisions in terms of upgrading those departments and adding some new thoughts, ideas, philosophies in different departments.

So a lot of upgrades I like. We put together a phenomenal coaching staff. Coach and I worked long and hard on the coaching staff. We did a ton of Zoom with the trainers in Dawn's position, along with video directors.

So we've learned a lot over the last three to four weeks just

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from doing these Zoom. We brought on some candidates that will really help those particular departments.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, not so much on the field, but getting around the kids and the interviews are very important to us. Getting to know them as individuals. We would call it football character and personal character, any off field issues that we need to address.

So making sure that the fit is right for our organization and what we're looking for from a football character and personal character. The on-field stuff, we try not to move guys too much based on what they do in shorts and T-shirts.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, again, it's well documented. We made some reporting changes throughout the organization. You know, video and analytics will report to Dawn, and just great for the New York Giants to get Dawn Aponte. The diversity of her skillset at the league office, the three teams she worked with before, been on health and safety committees, in charge of the salary cap negotiations in the past.

So her skillset will help us across the entire football organization, so a really good hire, really good add for the New York Giants that I'm fired up about.

**Q. Who will direct the conversations about how free agents? Are you running those meetings? Is Dawn running those? Who is doing that?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Pat, I'm still the general manager the team and my role has not changed. I'm still tasked with leading the entire football operation. We're going to work in collaboration, like most good teams do, and it's going to be a collaborative effort. Everybody will have their role.

There is constant communication between Dawn, Coach Harbaugh, and myself in terms of how we're going to build the football operations and how we are going to execute the draft, trades, free agency, contract signings, coaching staff, whatever it may be.

We're going to work in collaboration together. We're aligned in that. It's been going really good so far.

**Q. (Regarding Joe's contract.)**

JOE SCHOEN: I'm not going to get into my personal situation. I appreciate it.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: We've got some that we use internally. We have a algorithm that we use in terms of how we come up with that. So it's a tool. We don't -- again, there are 32 teams. Everybody does it differently. You use it as a tool but it doesn't drive the process.

**Q. How important is Dawn? Some of the responsibilities she's going to be having, does that at all allow you focus on different aspects?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, again, she's a tremendous resource with a lot of experience. So I will lean on Dawn in terms of her expertise and her background when I see fit.

Again, I see her as a tremendous resource. Again with her salary cap background, she's basically an easy transition because it's a lot of what Kevin Abrams was doing, if you guys remember his role. It is essentially the same. Again, a different skillset maybe, a different background than what Kevin has, so some different strengths and weaknesses.

Just a really good hire for us and she has been a tremendous asset thus far.

**Q. (Regarding Kafka.\_ what was your experience like working with him?)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Mike was phenomenal to work with in two different roles. Obviously was our offensive coordinator. Went through the quarterback search with us last year. Really got to know him through that process; then being the interim head coach.

So you're getting a bright football mind that's a really good communicator that has a track record of success with young quarterbacks.

**Q. How important is it to buildout the roster during Jaxon Dart's rookie contract?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, regardless who is in that position you want to build out the roster. But it is, you're at an advantage. When you talk about a surplus at those positions and the quarterback position, what those guys are getting on the open market, okay, you like to build it out. What would Abdul get on the open market? Well, he's on a working contract. What would Malik Nabers get on the open market. Okay, we're paying Malik what we are, but receivers are getting \$40 million a year. To me, we have some young, core positions, a position where we have a surplus and value.

We are going to build it out obviously in that window where Jaxson is still on the rookie deal.

**Q. Two picks inside the top 100. How do you balance trading back because you may need more draft capital or...**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, going to look at all options. We're open to moving back if an opportunity is there. We're also fine staying and taking a pick, a player there. If you can't get out of five, there is always a chance in the second round if you want to move back. Or if there is a good player, you can sit and take them, move back into the first round. We are going to keep all of our options open.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, you're always evaluating all the teams around the league in how they build, how they do contracts, you know, how they draft, how they do free agency.

So you're evaluating 31 teams when you do that, along with yourself, and also looking to see if there is stuff we can do better.

**Q. (No microphone - regarding Patriots.) How do you replicate what they did this year to make that not just playoff run but...**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, that would be awesome if we could do that. I would sign up for that right now. Again, we are just starting our process, so be detailed throughout our entire process, the free agency period, the draft. They did a really good job. They had a lot of money last year, too, the Patriots did.

But clear plan in place. Coach and I aligned in how we're going to build it. Again, we have a young core in place. Not that they didn't, but I like some of the young guys we have in place. Again, just continue to build on that.

**Q. (No microphone.) How do you evaluate...**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, that's a great question. We're always trying to evaluate that. It used to be, what is this kid going to be like with money? What's he going to do? Couldn't really answer the question because you didn't know. Now these guys all come to the league and they have money.

So now it's how much do they love football? Would they do it for free? We are always trying to analyze. Do they transfer four times because they're chasing the bag?

So that's really what our scouts do a phenomenal job, they do a great job of getting background at the schools. The relationships with coaches, that's where it's integral. We've a veteran staff that does a really good job with the background check and have a really good feel for who these individuals are.

**Q. ... balancing who is available on the board versus filling your needs?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, that's always a fine balance as you're going through training camp. I've told you guys before I like to go into the draft being able to play a game so you don't back yourself into a corner. If we can address our needs throughout free agency, wherever it is, high value guys, mid-tier, VSBs, but on Draft Day you could go play a game, then you don't back yourself into a corner and you can take the best player available.

Ideally that's what you do. If you back yourself into a corner and take a need based, sometimes that's where mistakes can be made.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOE SCHOEN: That's a good question, too. To me it's a lack of continuity. Every quarterback that was drafted last year other than Milroe transferred.

You're not sitting in one system for three or four years and learning the nuances and the intricacies of the system. You're going from one school to the next school to the next school. New offense, new coaches, new techniques. You're not able to develop.

So to me at the quarterback position I think there is some merit to being in one place for an extended amount of time and truly mastering the offense.

**Q. How do you measure that with Jaxson?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, you want to take the player's strength and build around what the player does well versus square peg round hole, we're going to ask this guy to do stuff he's not good at. I would say during the season there was a couple games when Jaxson came back, maybe went away from some of the stuff that he did well, and then eventually went back to it.

So I think that's a good example of finding out what the players do well and then have them go execute what they feel comfortable executing.

**Q. ... struggle to stop the run for the Giants recently. How big of a priority is it going to be this offseason to**

**address that? What are your thoughts on how to build a defense to stop the run?**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Coach and I talked about that a lot. Stopping the run is very important to Coach Harbaugh, everybody. It's something we haven't done well, so that's something we'll be conscious of that offseason in terms of how we're going to be able to do that better.

**Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding Steve Tisch.)**

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Steve released a statement a few weeks ago, you know, about the regrets, so I'm just going to leave it at that. I'm not going to comment anymore on that.

**Q. (Regarding best player available.)**

JOE SCHOEN: You want to get the value right ideally, the need and the value. Like this guy belongs here in the second round and it's a need. That's when you take that player.

Now, if it's a need position and non-need position they're on the same level, or maybe one box below, you naturally lean towards the need.

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