

# New York Giants Media Conference

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## Coach John Harbaugh

### Press Conference



JOHN HARBAUGH: Good to see everybody. Thanks for being here. What questions do you have?

**Q. I think some fans, it's hard to know what a CEO coach does. I think in a way maybe the last month is a good example of it. How would you explain not just the hiring of coaches but overall the approach to renovating all these parts of an organization and still keeping the brand?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I think just trying to build how we're going to operate, trying to build what we're going to become and organizing the way that we can be our very best, and that's really what it boils down to. You try to build a system and an operation that can be its best.

It's a tough league. It's very competitive. It's a really fine line; the margins are tight between winning and losing and having a good day and all those kind of things.

What we try to do together and as a group is just build the best football operation that we possibly can, and out of that, create the best football team that we can. Then prepare the team and go play the games and see how we do.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Definitely a different color pattern, no doubt about it. That's kind of been good. I've enjoyed it. I appreciate that. I was going to take this off and you can see the logo a little better, so that's a good thing.

It's exciting. It's fun. I really feel energized, always do. Whenever you come to Indy, you feel energized. You get a chance to get around, you see the players, you have the interviews, you see the coaches, you see the GMs, you kind of size up your competition.

Let's be honest; it's competitive. You get a chance to kind of take a look at who's doing what and how they're trying to do it. That never changes.

The fact that it's with the Giants now instead of the Ravens is what it is, and I'm excited about it. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to represent the New York Giants. We're just really going to work, and that's really what we're doing.

**Q. (On hiring Dawn Aponte).**

JOHN HARBAUGH: To be the very best we can be. It was an opportunity. I've known Dawn for many years through the league circles and have worked with her on different projects and things like that. Nothing but the utmost respect for her. And when it became apparent that she was interested in this particular job, it was obvious that she was the perfect fit for what we were trying to do. She makes us better. She gives us a chance to be our very best. It's been great working with her so far.

**Q. Have you had a chance to talk to Mike Macdonald?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I have.

**Q. How did that conversation go?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: It went great. It was a big hug, congratulations, and he's always smiles right now. I can't imagine why. And well-deserved. Proud of Mike. One of my favorite people. I like Steph even better than Mike, obviously. Who doesn't, who knows Steph and Mike. But Mike is amazing, and to see that happen for them, the type of team they built -- I guess probably more than anything is really kind of studying the type of team that they've built. He and Leslie Frazier as partners on that process; Jay Harbaugh, a part of that, too. Seeing the team that they've built is reflective, I would say, for sure, of the team we want to build in New York.

**Q. What's the thought behind the analytics?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, it's integration. The thing that you come to understand over all these years, and it's probably really true for any organization, that you've got to be aligned and you've got to be integrated, and everybody has got to be working together. There's got to be a shared understanding, a vision of what you're trying to accomplish.



There's got to be a shared understanding of who you are, what you stand for, what the values are, of how we're going to get there, what our plans are. That takes constant communication. It's got to be flat. Everybody has got to be working together.

The idea that there's too much hierarchy or silos or separate fences and things like that, just can't be a part of it. Not in football, not in anything. Someone like Dawn helps Joe and I, the three of us really, working together to make sure that all of our systems are integrated.

Whether it's analytics, which is an area that we've bolstered up quite a bit if you look at the staff, whether it's performance and medical, which is an area that we bolstered up and tried to tie together, grounds, fields, all of it, video, all of it, coaching, scouting, pro, college, all of it. It's all got to be integrated, and it's got to be aligned. So Dawn is someone who helps us do that. It's a multiperson job, so between Joe, I and Dawn, I think we get a chance to do that, and then ownership is a huge part of that. We have great owners. We have great families involved. They're the dome over all of us, tying it all together to represent what the Giants are about, what they've always been about, based on the Maras and the Tisches and now the Kochs and their vision for the organization.

**Q. (On his relationship with ownership.)**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Have great respect for the ownership. All the people I've gotten to meet, John and Steve and Chris Mara and John Tisch and Carolyn Tisch and the Koch family have been nothing but great conversations, great interactions, and we've been talking about the business of football, the business of building our team, the business of putting staffs together, all the things we're talking about, the integration you just asked about. That's what our conversations have been about.

**Q. During this process, what are some traits that you look for?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Well, they've got to love football. We talked about that at the opening press conference. You want a bunch of people that understand that that's what we're here for and that can fit the type of team we want to play, the values that we're looking for. We want good, tough, hard-nosed players that want to play hard, that are team-first type people, that like every part of football, meetings, weight lifting, practice, the preparation, like being around the guys and the gals who are involved in it, that want to go out there on Sunday and let it rip. That's what we're looking for.

**Q. Along those lines, from when you got to Baltimore in 2008 to 2025, did your definition of playing (indiscernible) change?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I gotcha. I would say it has evolved, sure. It should evolve, right? The principles of what it is, the hard-core truths of what it means haven't changed one bit. Those things are exactly the same. The methods that are involved, how we operate, how we've done things, what we value sometimes, how we approach different problems and things like that definitely evolves.

Then you operate differently, not just like over time but like in circumstances. You've got to treat circumstances how you find them. You guys know the challenges you've had. You guys lived them with us. You saw us walk through those things, and you were part of that, too, and the people that you're dealing with, because everybody is a little bit different. Everybody comes from a different place, trying to operate in all those types of circumstances and people and situations in a way that's effective. So that's always evolving, yeah.

**Q. When you come here to the combine, is there something for you personally that is a favorite part that you want to get out of this experience?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: There's probably three things. One thing is the part that I think Joe spoke to earlier. You do learn about the free agent landscape. We'll come out of this week understanding the free agent landscape a little bit better because there's conversations that happen behind the scenes. I'm not having those conversations; Joe does a great job with that. So I'll be interested to hear how all that stuff goes.

The interview process is a big part of it. Just getting to know the players a little bit better. That's a big part of it.

Then just being a part of it. Walking from one place to the next and running into people who are colleagues and friends, Rand and Leslie and Steve Spagnuolo at lunch today, had a chance to see them. You kind of cherish that part of it, too. So I'd say those three things.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JOHN HARBAUGH: There's tons of work to be done. It's not just the Giants. I promise you, every single team, there's like loads and loads, heaps and mountains of work to be done, and we dig in.

Another thing I do here is I watch tape. I don't spend a lot of time -- I spend a lot of time watching the workouts because those are on tape, so I spend my time in my

room, I have an office set up and I'm watching college tape because I need to get caught up and get ahead on seeing all the prospects. Yeah, there's a lot of work to do.

**Q. What's your reaction to Mike Tomlin leaving?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, just nothing but respect and admiration for what he's done. What a worthy -- I feel just honored to be a part of that. The thing about Mike, the thing that makes him such a great coach is you knew what to expect from his teams.

Teams don't play the way they play because -- the Pittsburgh Steelers aren't the Pittsburgh Steelers because they're in Pittsburgh or because they wear black and gold or because they have the nickname that's tough and steely or because of anything other than the personality of the people that are running the program, and Mike has been the face of that organization. They've got a lot of great people that have worked hard and do a great job. But that team reflects Mike Tomlin. They reflected Bill Cowher before that, and Bill Cowher was one of the greatest coaches in the history of football, right. Chuck Knoll before that, one of the greatest coaches in the history of football. Boom, boom, boom. Now Mike Tomlin.

So I got to be across from Mike Tomlin for 18 years in some heated battle, and you always knew what you were going to get because it was a Mike Tomlin-coached football team, and I admire that very much.

**Q. How will the Giants reflect John Harbaugh?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: We've spoken on that a lot. You'll see.

**Q. What advice would you give to a first-time head coach?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: That's a really big question right there. I would say, first of all, be yourself, and then make sure you understand and you stick to what you believe in and what you stand for. Make it clear what those things are so everybody else knows it.

**Q. (On Tee Martin.)**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Really big question. Many layered and complicated and I probably don't have a great understanding of the big dynamics on all of that. But what I can tell you is that we had great coaches in Baltimore. We had great coaching staffs, and they were very diverse coaching staffs. It's not that you don't think about that because you try to think about every aspect of hiring, but really it was about hiring the best coaches, whether it's

whatever type of background or format it might be.

We've had a lot of women on our coaching staffs. We've had very diverse candidates in every kind of way. To your specific question, Tee Martin is a great football coach, a great man and a great friend. I love his family. He's a great family man, too. It was just a joy to work with him all the time. He and I have had a lot of these kind of conversations back and forth. We've spoken a few times since and just trying to find the right fit to help him in whatever way I can, and that's what we did with the Giants, too. That's how we put our staff together this time, kind of for what we required and who was available and those kind of things.

I don't doubt for one thing that Tee Martin is going to land on his feet and he's going to do really well because he's a great coach and a great person. I expect that to happen, and he's going to do well. You'll see; he'll do really well.

**Q. What excites you about this three-headed monster that you've kind of put together on the offensive coaching staff with your coordinators in the different roles, having so many former head coaches in the building working on the offensive side of the ball?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Three-headed monster, I like that. It's a three-headed coaching monster. I'm excited about the staff. I think those three guys you're talking about are high-level guys. These are proven, proven coaches, and now the key thing is the integration of that. Making sure that we're organized and that we're building something that we can share together. Like I told them, we're not carrying over a system from Kansas City or from Tennessee or Cincinnati or San Francisco or Baltimore. We're building the New York Giants' system.

Same thing on offense; we're going to build a system that fits what we're trying to accomplish, terminology-wise, concept-wise. So I really like the guys who are in the building. The three monsters that are leading that up and all the other coaches, too, I'm thrilled to have those guys. It kind of goes back to the earlier question, you try to build the best staff you can because you've got to be your best, and I feel like we've done that.

**Q. (On Jesse Minter.)**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, I don't know if I could say what the difference is. I've known Jesse since he was a kid. I just know he always had a passion for football. He had a great way about him, even back then. When he first came to Baltimore, he wasn't inexperienced. He had been a defensive coordinator in college at that point. He's a coach's kid.



Rick Minter is one of the smartest coaches I've ever been around. I had a chance to work with and for Rick for three years. I still talk to him all the time, and Jesse is part of that. He grew up with that. It's in his DNA. It's in his blood. That's an advantage. He always kind of had that.

He grew up with that. He was always ahead that way, I would say.

But then he's his own man. He worked hard. He was his own man in Baltimore when he was young. When he worked his way up to the safeties coach, he was his own man. Got the opportunity to go be a coordinator, was his own man, and then was with Jim those years and did what he did, and now he gets his opportunity to be a head coach in a great place. I have nothing but love and respect for him. I think he's ready.

**Q. You've talked a lot about the history of the New York Giants, the Football Giants. Those Giants stop the run. Is that a personnel thing? Is that a mindset thing? How do you get the Giants to stop the run?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Well, we'd better. It's a must thing; I can tell you that. There's a lot to it. There's three levels and layers to your defense, and all three layers and levels have got to be committed to and incorporated and stopping the run, no doubt. Every single one of the 11 guys has got to be committed to stopping the run. You can't let people run all over you, there's no doubt about it. It's been important in football since football started.

That's going to be where it starts. It's going to start with stopping the run, honestly, and it's going to start with running the football. Once you can establish that you can do those things, then it gives you a chance to open up the playbook and do whatever you want.

**Q. I know you're not really a live-in-the-past kinda guy, but (indiscernible). Some people thought it was a touchdown. I think the NFL was saying it should have been a touchdown. (Indiscernible).**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Right. Yeah. They mentioned the other play, too, in that game.

**Q. The interception?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah. Just reminding you on that.

But it's not -- yeah, I think it's natural and normal to feel that way. So of course. That's something you do think about.

**Q. What stuck out to you about Dennard Wilson?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I've known Dennard for a while, worked with him closely. In the process, looked at a lot of candidates, thought about a lot of different types of guys, and first of all, Dennard's talent and his ability, his tenacity, his determination, I think he's really smart, and I think he has a great knowledge of the game. He's an excellent teacher. He's very demanding and yet he's very relationship oriented. All those things were part of it.

Then at the end of the day, I wanted to stay in the system. It's a system that we built over a long time, and that's the system that we'll be continuing to run. He represents that, as well.

**Q. What drew you to Callahan?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Over the years watching him coach. Look at his record; he's proven. I didn't really know Brian that well. It wasn't like we had a close relationship. But in talking to him and just starting to talk football in those interviews, Zoom interviews and stuff, I just became really impressed with his knowledge, and then also his demeanor. He's got a great understanding of every part of offensive football, passing game, run game, protections. If your dad is Bill Callahan, you're going to have a great understanding of protections, right? The fact that he's going to be able to just immerse our quarterback in that understanding of the game, especially from the protection standpoint but every part of it is going to be good for our offense.

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