

# New York Giants Media Conference

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## John Harbaugh

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Coach John Harbaugh available. Questions, please.

**Q. I know coaches like to talk about all the players that are in the building. I'm going to start off by asking you about one that's not in the building.**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Shocking to me (smiling).

**Q. What are your thoughts on Dexter, the prospects of him being a Giant moving forward?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: We'll find out. I think the prospects are going to be high. The Giants, speaking for the Giants, we want Dexter here. I know Dexter wants to be here. That's a good formula.

But there's business involved. It's a business proposition. We know it's pro football. These things happen every year pretty much on every team. Not surprised by it. Saw it coming a few weeks back.

Good conversations with Dexter's agent Joel Segal, understood what they were thinking. This is where we're at. Try to work through it, see what we can get done.

**Q. Did you speak to Dexter about this?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Not about this. I talked to Dexter early a couple times when I first got hired, first few weeks. We had great conversations. Once it moved into this type of conversation, got to be about business, we knew it was going to be an issue. Joel's preference was we talk through him.

**Q. I hear your building already has a positive vibe that has not permeated there for years. 'Culture' is a hard word to define. How do you change what has been a losing culture? What does that word mean to you?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Like someday I'm going to do a book, Gary Mauser will probably want to write it. We'll talk about

all these things you just asked. That's some really deep stuff.

That definitely is at the heart of what we're going to try to do, try to be excited about every single day, try to approach the day, as my dad would say, with enthusiasm unknown to mankind.

We talked to the guys about that today. We had a good time. We had fun. We had great meetings. It was just a joy to be around the guys. We had all but three guys here. It was just amazing.

That's what it is. It's just a bunch of people coming together to build something together that is a team, plays like a team, plays like a team better than any other team. If you do that, you have a chance to be the best team 'cause the best team is the best team that plays the best. I might have said that in the meeting today.

It was fun to be around the guys. It was fun to stand in front of the New York Giants today. It was an honor. I told them that. Talk to the New York Giants, have them communicate back. We had a fun time. We had a great meeting.

**Q. You mentioned three guys not there. Who are the other two?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Paulson wasn't here and we had Sam wasn't here because he has a surgery that he can't travel with yet, that he's got to wait for the stitches to heal.

**Q. Paulson an excused absence?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: There's no excused, unexcused. It's voluntary. Guys come or not come according to their choosing. Voluntary time of year.

**Q. What is the challenge like when you have the Dex situation? What's it like to deal with that issue while trying to get to know a brand-new team?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I mean, you meet people where they're at when you can. I think it's part of it. It's pro



football. It's expected. We had a great day today. When guys come back in situations like this, whatever it might be, they merge right in.

It's like this New York traffic, Jersey traffic is the traffic I've been in. You try to merge on some of these roads, like the freeway outside here, you better be accelerating pretty quickly because it's moving, man. Hopefully it's moving. If it's not moving, it's going to take a while to get home. It's usually moving when I leave, which is a little later. I digress.

The point is you have to get up to speed quick. When someone comes back into the building from something like this, they have to hit the accelerator. They will and we'll be rolling.

**Q. If I could go back to what Paul said for a second on Dex. How involved are you in that? Is that Joe and Dawn or as an involved head coach do you do get involved in the negotiations there, too?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: That's a great question.

I'll get as involved as a head coach should, which is I'll be in conversations with Dawn and with Joe. But they'll be leading the negotiation. It's not something -- it not my expertise area, so I won't be involved as far as any negotiating.

We'll talk about it. I'll probably throw my two cents in where I can, but trust them do a good job, and they always do.

**Q. Malik Nabers, Skattebo, I don't know if anybody else had any injuries. Those two in particular people will want to know when the players can get on the field. That would be Phase II or whatnot. Where do you expect them? Will they be able to do anything this spring?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, not too much. Skat is going to be ahead of Malik with that. I think you guys all know that. Scat probably get out there a little bit some point in time. Some degree. It wouldn't be fair for me to give you days or dates. Really haven't had that in-depth discussion with Adam. I have a vague idea. It's not that important today. We try to focus on today.

Malik is going to be more into training camp and closer to the season. That's more Malik's timeline.

**Q. Good to have him here today for the classroom stuff?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Fantastic. Classroom, he's lifting

weights, into rehab stuff. Got up and spoke like everybody did. It was great, man. Great spirits. It was fun being around him.

**Q. On the Dex thing, everything is new, you're setting a foundation. How much do you take into account precedent, a guy with two years left on his contract, pressing for a raise?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I'm sure all that is factored in for sure. That's all thought about. That's not really what I'm thinking about. I'm thinking about the team meeting, the offensive and defensive meeting, football. Those kind of conversations happen all the time between the parties back and forth. That's all part of it.

**Q. I don't think we've asked you about Kayvon. His name has come up in trade talks. How do you view him? Is he a guy who could be traded?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I think he's a great player. I'm excited about him. I was fired up to see him today. He's in great shape. I'm thinking about him on the field, getting him plugged into our defense and getting him rolling.

I think you want to talk about is he a trade possibility? Everybody's tradeable, everybody. Even you're tradeable, Dan. We can get something for you, we'd trade you in a heartbeat (laughter).

It's not really what you focus on. You focus on the fact that we're having a day, we're talking ball, we're getting our team coming together as a team. The business part of it is the business part. That kind of swirls around us. We try to lock in on the football.

**Q. Obviously you've talked a lot about Jaxson, how you communicate with him. Now that you guys have been in person and talked, first day, what are those conversations? How are you feeling about him? How are you feeling about him that the offensive staff have talked with him, building that relationship to help him in year two?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Great questions.

I saw him in the team offensive meeting and the quarterback meeting. I didn't stay there for the quarterback meeting. I talked to him as he was getting ready.

He had a new pen for his notepad. Old school, you have the three-ring spiral notebooks with the actual pen. I actually have an erasable pen. He has one that writes on the iPad that you can log and everything.

But he was opening up. It was all foreign to me. I didn't know what it was.

What was the question?

**Q. How are those conversations going with him as far as building him up, developing him? How is that growing now that you're talking more?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: That's a great question.

Today was the first day for football, the first day we had a chance to talk football. What I witnessed was the first install, which is just the very first example of how we're going to build the offense. That's what was put in today. I saw that put in. I saw him reacting to it, interacting. I might have asked him what he thought about it. Seemed excited. Just kind of dipping our toe in the water today with that.

But it was fun to see offense up on the screen and Jaxson right there taking his notes. That was awesome. It was a good start.

**Q. You had said before just the idea of what's important now, what isn't important. I think you were referring to Malik in terms of his timeline on the field. What is important for you right now? How have you evolved through the years in terms of what you want to get out of the spring?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, I don't know if it's evolved. Probably is more the same now as it's ever been. We want to get the most done we possibly can in the four hours they allot. We want the guys to take their iPads home and study them and make the most of the day.

We worry about today. Tomorrow has enough troubles of its own. We want to make the most of the day. We want to get everything we possibly can done in the time that is allotted. We want to be as organized as we can. We want to present something efficiently as we can. We want the system that we're presenting to be as well built as we can. We want to make up as many miles behind us as we possibly can.

I think what I'm saying is we want to get everything done we can. But there's certain things you can do, certain things that you can't do, we are not practicing. There is nothing on the field right now. There are not any walk-throughs or anything like that.

We want to have the best meeting we can have, weight lifting, best conditioning session that we can, also get to know the guys.

For me it's like a lot of faces. I don't know who everybody is. Even when I see them, I'm like John Harbaugh. Hi, John Harbaugh. Most guys will say Hey, give me their name. Some won't give me their name. Dude, I don't know who you really are (laughter). I haven't really seen their face yet.

It's been that kind of a day. That's part of making the most of the first day. First day of school sort of. It's been really great. It's been really fun.

**Q. You had mentioned the systems. You've talked about how you knew what you wanted on the defensive side of the ball, but offense was a work in progress. How close are you to having something to present to the guys in total for the offensive side of the ball?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, we have the system built. Not to say it won't evolve, because it's always a work in progress. We have the system built.

What we'll start doing is installing it so they get a grasp of how it's put together. Like even today we showed them how it's put together so they can start getting their arms around how to think about the words and the terms, what comes off of what, how it's structured so once we dive into the specific plays, they can kind of just understand them better.

Like what exactly we do, we want to build a system that we can do all these different things in a way that's easy to understand, easy to operate.

Once we start to understand the players, how the players fit together better, then you decide what road you go down, what things you do, even if a game plan based on your opponent it tightens up a little more.

That will be an ongoing process through training camp.

**Q. I think you said you had Malik talk to the team. You said everybody did. What goes into that? Why do you think about doing that? Just how different was this day for you compared to the 18 previous ones that you've had of first days of off-season programs?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Right, two great questions.

The first one was we just did an introduction thing. We started with the coaches and worked our way through the whole team. It was a little different than, I'm Tom Rock, played Southern Cal, I'm an offensive tackle. It was more, I'm Tom Rock, we want our identity and we want a purpose.

Give us a quick overview on your identity, how you see yourself as a player, person, whatever you want, how you see your purpose. Identity and purpose, purpose and identity. Each guy went through that, told us a little bit about that.

Those are the things when you're a little bit vulnerable that way you open up a little bit more, you start to get to know each other more, bond a little bit with each other.

How different is it for me than 18 years? It was different. It was a football meeting in front of a team. So that's not new. But it was the New York Giants. I told them how much it meant to me to be standing in front of the New York Giants, what an honor it was to have an opportunity to have our first team meeting with the New York Giants.

**Q. Did anybody surprise you in terms of giving their identity and purpose?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Oh, no, no. I was impressed. I was impressed. Everybody was really thoughtful and good about it. It was some really deep, good stuff.

**Q. On Dex, you mentioned there's a high probability he returns. How much are you at least willing to entertain the possibility of granting his request for a trade?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: I don't know if 'granting a request' is the right way to say it. It doesn't really work that way. It's not a Christmas gift. It just doesn't work like that. It's business.

The business is to be the best football team we can be. The business for him I'm sure is for him to be the best player he can be. There's financial obligations, restraints, opportunities, all the things that go around that because this is pro football. I guess there is in college football now, too. It's just different a little bit in the way it works with the contracts in this league. That's really what it boils down to.

We'll see what happens.

**Q. You mentioned Paulson is also absent. Why is he not there? Contract related? Injury related?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: It's like we just got done, I don't know, 45 minutes ago. I'm not exactly sure. But it's his right. It's his reason, whatever his reason is. I'll be interested to hear it. But it is what it is. It's okay.

**Q. You went through a very public trade request with Lamar Jackson a few years ago in Baltimore. You got**

**that to the finish line where he was still your franchise quarterback. What did you learn from that situation, if anything, about how to bring something like Dex's situation to a resolution positively?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Right. Another great question.

I think we knew this going in, the way it was approached was just with patience. We knew the relationships were the relationships. We had great relationships.

It's a little different because I knew Lamar at that point. We had been working together for like five years, six years. Four years, five years, something like that. It's not quite that way with Dex. I don't know Dex as well.

I think it's the same in the sense of it's just understanding that's part of the business of the job. It will get resolved. It's going to work out.

Dexter wants to play, we want him to play. How it's all going to shake out, we don't control that. We're not given to know the future. The only thing we really can't control is the outcome. What we can control is how we approach it along the way, with respect, professionally, absolutely.

All these players in this league, all the coaches in this league, all the front office people in the league, deserve to be highly respected. It's high level business, high level football. I'm sure it will be handled in a real high level way like that. I'm not worried about it.

**Q. You've spoken a lot about Dexter from the business side. Can you speak to what he can bring to the team on the field and in terms of as a culture setter?**

JOHN HARBAUGH: Yeah, Dexter, he's a veteran guy. He's got a lot of skins on the wall, as they say. He's a dominant football player. I know he's excited.

I know this, because he told me this a few weeks back when we talked, he wants to play his best football of his career. He's expecting to play the best football of his career. From what Joel his agent said he's working super hard training and everything.

That's what I expect. I expect him to come out and be that leader by example, be that leader by what he says, what he does. Just who he is. Be himself, be you, be the best you that you can be. All the things that I think Dexter is about, I would expect him to be all those things.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

JOHN HARBAUGH: Thank you, guys. Appreciate you.



