

Steelers prepare for life after Tomlin

BY WILL GRAVES
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH — Art Rooney II sensed Mike Tomlin might be ready for a change. Nineteen years doing any job is a long time, let alone in the white-hot spotlight that comes with coaching the Pittsburgh Steelers.

So when Tomlin walked into Rooney’s office Tuesday and told his longtime boss he was stepping down after a largely successful run that included one Super Bowl victory, an appearance in another and 19 straight non-losing seasons, Rooney wasn’t shocked.

“He was pretty clear about what his intentions were,” Rooney said Wednesday as the Steelers began the process of hiring just their fourth head coach since 1969. “We had a great conversation, and I understood where he was.”

Rooney described the impetus behind Tomlin’s decision as “more family-related than football-related” and stressed the team was “certainly willing to make another run at it next year with Mike.”

Tomlin went 193-114-2 in Pittsburgh, tied with Hall of Famer Chuck Noll for the ninth most regular-season wins in NFL history. Tomlin arrived in Pittsburgh in January 2007 as a relative unknown 34-year-old defensive coordinator. He left as the longest-tenured head coach in major North American professional sports with a



Gene J. Puskar/AP photo

Pittsburgh Steelers owner Art Rooney II meets with reporters on Wednesday in Pittsburgh.

resume that will receive strong Hall of Fame consideration of its own, even if he never coaches another game.

Whether that happens is anyone’s guess, though Rooney said it was his understanding that Tomlin does not intend to coach in 2026. A future in television, even if it serves as merely a breather before the 53-year-old married father of three returns to the sideline, could be in the offing.

Rooney did not try to talk Tomlin out of the decision, saying instead that the club is “grateful” for the way Tomlin carried himself both on and off the field during what Rooney described as a “winning era” for one of the league’s most visible franchises.

That era, however, ended with the Steelers in a rut. Their season-ending 30-6 loss to

Houston in the first round of the playoffs Monday night marked Pittsburgh’s sixth straight one-and-done post-season appearance, all of them by multiple scores.

“I can’t explain the more recent history there,” Rooney said. “It’s hard to explain, given the overall track record. Frustrating for all of us, mostly for Mike.”

Asked if those playoff failures factored into Tomlin’s decision to walk away, Rooney demurred. He also declined to get into specifics about what might happen should Tomlin want to return to coaching in 2027. Tomlin exited while still under team control for two more years, with the club holding the option for 2027.

During the rare occasions the Steelers have found themselves looking for a head

coach, they often have been looking for a certain type. Noll, Tomlin and Bill Cowher were all defensive coordinators in their 30s when Pittsburgh plucked them from relative anonymity. They all left with at least one Super Bowl ring.

It’s far too early in the process for the club to start whittling down the field for a job that figures to be among the most coveted of the nine current head coach vacancies in the NFL, considering the Rooney family’s track record of giving coaches ample time to find their footing.

“Can I sign up for another Chuck Noll or another Bill Cowher or another Mike Tomlin or somebody that we feel fits that mold? (That) would be great,” Rooney said.

Rooney essentially ruled out any of the staff Tomlin left behind — including offensive coordinator Arthur Smith, who has been contacted by Tennessee about its opening — from being a candidate to replace Tomlin, though it’s possible they may have an opportunity to stick around in some capacity if they mesh with the new hire.

Whoever takes over will be given the same “the standard is the standard” mandate that Tomlin embraced, though it led to diminishing returns in his final years.

“There will be changes, and we’ll have to all get comfortable with kind of the plans,” Rooney said. “Whether you call it a ‘rebuild’ or not, I don’t like that

word that much. We’ll try to compete Day 1 if we can.”

That plan seems unlikely to include Aaron Rodgers. The 42-year-old who helped guide the Steelers to the AFC North title will be a free agent in March, and Rodgers made it clear from the moment he arrived last June that Tomlin’s presence was the main reason he signed, a sentiment Rooney echoed on Wednesday.

Rooney declined to put a timeline on a potential hire, though he expects it to be before the NFL combine in late February. The Steelers have the 21st overall pick in the draft, which they will be hosting for the first time.

The club has long pointed to the draft as an opportunity to select its next franchise quarterback, something that has proven elusive since Ben Roethlisberger’s retirement in January 2022. The discussion about the quarterbacks “will be an important one” when Rooney and general manager

Omar Khan meet with prospective candidates.

Whatever quarterback/coach combination walks onto the field at Acrisure Stadium next fall will be tasked with helping the franchise emerge from a decade of purgatory in which it has been good but not nearly good enough, and do so quickly.

“I’m not going to say, ‘Well, we’re going to take a couple years to figure this out, and then we’ll try and compete,’” Rooney said. “So I think you try every year. Some years you have the horses to really get there, some years you don’t. But you try.”

49ers star Fred Warner ruled out for Seattle game

BY JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco star linebacker Fred Warner was ruled out for the 49ers’ divisional round playoff game against Seattle but could return from a serious ankle injury if the team wins this week.

Warner returned to practice this week for the first time since breaking and dislocating his right ankle in a loss at Tampa Bay on Oct. 12, with coach Kyle Shanahan initially describing it as a season-ending injury.

Warner had left open the possibility earlier this week that he could play on Saturday, but the 49ers ruled out that possibility Thursday. Shanahan said he remains hopeful that the four-time All-Pro could return if the Niners beat the Seahawks and advance to the NFC title game on Jan. 25.

“I do feel confident in that,” Shanahan said. “We’ll see if it works out.”

The 49ers are hoping to get receiver Ricky Pearsall back this week after he missed the past two games and nine overall



Peter Joneleit/AP photo

with a knee injury. Pearsall practiced on a limited basis all week and was listed as questionable.

Pearsall has 36 catches for 528 yards this season and leads San Francisco with eight catches on throws at least 20 yards downfield. Quarterback Brock Purdy hasn’t completed any deep passes the past two games with Pearsall sidelined.

Shanahan said Pearsall has made improvement this week, but might not be able to handle a full workload if he does play.

“He’s still battling it, so that’s why he’s still questionable,”

Shanahan said. “We would never put a guy on an exact snap count especially in a playoff game. But we also understand where he’s at and that it would probably have to be different than his just true status of when he’s 100% healthy.”

Safety Ji’Ayr Brown is out against Seattle after injuring his hamstring last week, while linebackers Dee Winters (ankle) and Luke Gifford (quadriceps) are questionable. Receiver Jacob Cowing, who has been on IR all season with a hamstring injury, is also questionable.

San Francisco 49ers middle linebacker Fred Warner (54) runs to the locker room after pregame warm-ups before an NFL football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Oct 12, 2025, in Tampa, Fla.

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For Bidding specifications and a bid packet, contact Seth Breitner at (270) 765-5551.

The City of Elizabethtown reserves the right to reject any and all bids or to let the contract as a whole or for any part, and to waive any informalities or irregularities in the bids received.

/s/ Jeffrey H. Gregory, Mayor

Attest: Jessica J. Graham, City Clerk

LEGAL NOTICE

Read at a meeting of the Radcliff City Council on the 18th day of November, 2025; a second reading was held on the 16th day of December, 2025, and said ordinance was passed and approved on the 16th day of December, 2025.

/s/ James S. Duvall, Jr.
JAMES S. DUVAL, JR.,
MAYOR,
CITY OF RADCLIFF,
KENTUCKY

ATTESTED BY:
/s/ Ashley Russo
ASHLEY RUSSO
CITY CLERK

CERTIFICATION
I, Michael A. Pike, hereby certify pursuant to KRS 83A.060 that I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with the law firm of Pike Law, P.S.C., 1000 Johnstown Road, Suite 100, Elizabethtown, Kentucky; that I prepared the foregoing Summary of Ordinance of the City of Radcliff, Kentucky; and that the foregoing is a true and accurate summary of the contents of said Ordinance. Said Ordinance can be examined in its entirety at Radcliff City Hall, Radcliff, Kentucky.

/MICHAEL A. PIKE/

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MAYOR,
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ATTESTED:
/s/ Ashley Russo
ASHLEY RUSSO
CITY CLERK/TREASURER

CERTIFICATION
I, Michael A. Pike, hereby certify pursuant to KRS 83A.060 that I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with the law firm of Pike Law, P.S.C., 1000 Johnstown Road, Suite 100, Elizabethtown, Kentucky; that I prepared the foregoing Summary of Ordinance of the City of Radcliff, Kentucky; and that the foregoing is a true and accurate summary of the contents of said Ordinance. Said Ordinance can be examined in its entirety at Radcliff City Hall, Radcliff, Kentucky.

/MICHAEL A. PIKE/

BUZZER

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3-pointers with four assists.

Moreno also would finish in double figures after his late heroics with 10 points and eight rebounds.

Kentucky started the game abysmally, not scoring a field goal until four-and-a-half minutes into the game. It was Jelavic who made the bucket.

The Wildcats trailed LSU by 16 at the break and finished the disastrous first half with just 22 total points. It was less than half the total scored in the first half by Prairie View A&M at LSU, with the Panthers ranking as the 300th offense in the country out of 365.

That poor first half saw Kentucky go 8-30 from the field, 2-12 from beyond the arch and 4-8 from the charity stripe with five turnovers and just two total assists. The Wildcats were also out-rebounded with less points in the paint than Matt McMahon’s Tigers.

The second half was far better for Kentucky, which reached its first-half total in less than nine minutes. UK finished the second half with 53 points, shooting 72.7% from beyond the arch with 12 assists.

“First off, I want to shoutout my teammates,” said Aberdeen, who made UK’s postgame opening statement. “We battled back. No one put their heads down. We all played for each other. Everybody stayed together, kept their head up, and I’m proud of us fighting for the win at the end.”

Kentucky would take its first lead of the entire contest with just under four minutes remaining before a tight final three minutes of play.

In the end, the game would be tied at the one-minute mark before Owhe seemingly had the go-ahead bucket before officials ruled he failed to beat the shot clock, resulting in no basket.

The Tigers would regain the lead with free throws before Owhe would go 1-2 from the line with a chance

to tie it. It wouldn’t matter though, as, with the seconds winding down, Moreno nailed his buzzer beater, exorcising the demons from LSU’s last-second victory and subsequent court-storming two years prior against John Calipari’s final Wildcats team. “I grabbed Malachi (before the intended play), I’m like, ‘Hey, if we overthrow this, just catch it and go shoot it,’” Pope said. “To Malachi’s credit, one of the things we pride ourselves on in our program is owning our shot. It was brilliant, it was awesome, it was fun. It was a great moment.”

When Moreno was asked if he told Collin Chandler, the inbounder, to find him instead of Owhe, who the final shot was intended for, the former Great Crossing Warhawk simply said, “No comment.”

Kentucky will return to action Saturday traveling to Knoxville to face off against No. 24 Tennessee inside Thompson-Boling Arena. That game will tip off at noon and be shown live ESPN.

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