

Steelers Hold the Line as T.J. Watt Contract Talks Continue After Ramsey Trade

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PITTSBURGH – The Pittsburgh Steelers shocked the NFL world last week by trading for star cornerback Jalen Ramsey, sending safety Minkah Fitzpatrick back to the Miami Dolphins. The move has sparked fresh excitement among fans and fueled hopes for a Super Bowl run in 2025. But behind the headlines, many wondered if this blockbuster trade would impact the team's contract negotiations with T.J. Watt.

According to veteran Steelers reporter Gerry Dulac, the answer is clear: it will not. Speaking on The Rich Eisen Show, Dulac explained that sources inside the team say the trade and

Watt's contract discussions are completely separate.

“The stalemate is that Watt wants to be the highest-paid non-quarterback in the league, and the Steelers are looking at it as he's age 31,” Dulac said. “They did see a decline in his performance last year... They believe they will sign T.J. Watt, but something is going to have to give.”

Watt is reportedly seeking a record-breaking contract that would pay him more than top defenders like Myles Garrett and Nick Bosa. However, Pittsburgh is cautious about making such a long-term commitment to a player whose production dipped slightly last season. If a deal is structured over five years, Watt would remain under contract until age 36, an age when most pass rushers are no longer at their peak.

Meanwhile, the Ramsey trade was carefully planned to fit the team's salary cap. Ramsey signed a major extension with Miami in 2024, but the Steelers waited until after June 1 to finalize the trade. That move lowered his cap hit for 2025 by more than \$18 million, making the deal much easier to absorb financially.

Despite the excitement over adding Ramsey, Rich Eisen questioned how Pittsburgh can risk frustrating Watt, who remains the cornerstone of their defense. “How do they play footsie with T.J. Watt? How is that possible?” Eisen asked during the interview.

In reality, both sides need each other. The Steelers rely on Watt's pass-rushing ability to keep their defense among the league's best, and Watt benefits from the stability and fit of Pittsburgh's system.

Before the season begins, a compromise is likely. Whether that means Watt lowers his demands or the Steelers agree to pay closer to his asking price, the outcome of these negotiations will shape the team's future and their hopes of returning to championship glory.