

Philadelphia Eagles Media Conference

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Weekday Press Conference



Q. I wanted to ask you, we all know when the 53-man roster is formulated, there's a sort of push and pull between backups at positions and guys who are really good on special teams. Ideally you want both, but did you feel like you got the guys you need out of this process, and what do you think your special teams will be good at? What will you be noted for here looking at this group as you head into the season.

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I thought a collective effort out of Nick and Howie and all the coaches like putting their input in, and I thought we did come out with the guys we wanted, and we're going to go out there come Atlanta week and put our best 11 in each phase out there to help us win as a team. We all know special teams is a big component, especially now we're getting into the regular season.

In terms of what units we want to -- we want to be good on all six of them. That would be great for us.

It just starts off with these guys wanting -- getting a taste of what a game plan is going to look like and buying in, which I think they all are. I think we really want to excel in everything. We really want to help the team flip the field on the coverage standpoint, and flip the field in the return standpoint.

You can see on our roster we've got a lot of high-quality returners that we're going to try and put in the best possible situation, but it's not all on their shoulders. It's the other 10 that are going to block for them. It's going to be the whole 10 outside the kicker on kickoff covering well, outside of Arryn punting it's going to be everyone out there -- we've all going to be a collective effort, be on the same page, help this team win in any capacity we can.

Q. Who do you see returning? Who's at the top of that group right now?

MICHAEL CLAY: You know, we have a good mind. We don't want to give Atlanta a special insight. But as you saw, we rotate a lot of guys through preseason. There was

a lot of guys that have dynamic speed, dynamic cutting abilities. We have a good thought in terms of a coaching standpoint who we're going to throw out there, but we have a nice room to pick from.

Q. As you saw in that Patriots game when Jake was down, we didn't see any field goal or extra point situations there, but there have been situations in the past year where the kicker, punter, long snapper have all gone down in game. What are your contingencies at each of those spots going into the season?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, on the off part of the field, we have our backups ready to go. We've got a backup long snapper. We actually have a couple. We've got a backup holder. When it does come push to shove, we have a backup kicker for extra point situations or field goal situations.

But when it comes to that, you always want to be ready. We'll always give them a couple snaps during the week, a couple kicks during the week just to get it going. We obviously have Arryn to take care of kickoff opportunities if need be.

He showed that in the preseason where he was able to give our coverage team some balls to cover down there. We all have a contingency plan between myself, Coach Sirianni, Tyler Brown, Joe Pannunzio, so we have a contingency plan just in case worst come to worst out there.

Q. How is Siposs as a kicker?

MICHAEL CLAY: You know what, he put in a lot of effort coming out of college to now, and he's taken leaps and bounds to probably what he thought he could be. He just keeps getting better and better in both the punting situation and these extracurricular situations in terms of kickoffs and kicking.

So the more time he spends getting better, he's going to be a more complete player.

Q. One of the things Howie and Nick were telling us the other day is that one of the reasons why J.J. Arcega-Whiteside made the team was because of his work on special teams. I was wondering if you could

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address how far he's come on special teams and what kind of role you see for him on your units this year.

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I thought J.J. did an unbelievable job. Obviously coming from San Francisco everyone had basically a clean slate with me, but he came in every day from the off-season to the training camp and he put on his hardhat and he came out to play and he just kept getting better and better.

It's not just him. I think everybody that was on the team got better and better. One, it's a new system, coming from -- playing with Fipp and everything, so there's something new. But I thought J.J. did a really good job in terms of embracing and getting better and better.

I always tell these guys, when you get that first tackle they start to come in bunches, and he had that one in Pittsburgh and it's one of those things like, All right, this is actually kind of fun.

Outside of J.J. I thought everyone started to get better and better as the preseason went on, as the training camp went on. It's always good from a special teams coaching standpoint to see the leaps and bounds guys go from, not really playing special teams to actually embracing it and seeing it.

It comes down to the core of why you're a coach, you just want to see guys get better and better, which I thought everyone did, including J.J.

Q. How did Jake end up injuring his ankle and how is he now and what have you seen from him through the course of the off-season?

MICHAEL CLAY: I thought Jake has done an unbelievable job. It's something minor. You guys obviously saw in the last preseason game he was out there kicking, ball jumped off his foot. It's one of those things where as a kicker you kind of need your feet. He'll be just fine in a couple weeks.

But I thought this off-season with Arryn and Rick getting back down to the operation, and when he was out there for Pittsburgh and the New York Jets you saw that ball jump off his foot, something you guys are familiar with. He's just been outstanding, and he's all about football and getting better and taking care of his body.

With Jake, he's been nothing but a joy to work with so far.

Q. Can you kind of take us into the cut to the initial 53 from a special teams coordinator standpoint? Obviously we've seen, especially in Philadelphia with a great special teams and you were here previously, the

Maragos, the Bramans. Do you kind of pound the table for certain guys? I don't want names, just kind of the philosophy of how things are for you as you guys near that cutdown.

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I think it comes down -- regardless of what coach you are, there's some guys you're like, Yeah, this guy I would like. But it's a collective effort, and Howie and Nick have done an unbelievable job in terms of just taking the input from not just myself but everybody around the building to not just not the 53 but the best 70.

You guys know with COVID and everything that happened last year, if you're on the 70 you could be up that next day. It's getting the best 70, and I thought they did an unbelievable job with that. To get these guys ready to be on special teams. Like you reiterated, we had the Bramans and the mayor goes, but it's going to be a collective effort. It's got to be all 11 really, whether you're a starter or a backup.

I think as much time as we put into offense and defense, they put the same amount of time into special teams, and the players do the same thing. They're ripping to go out there and help the team in any way possible. You never know who's going to be a starter week in and week out, so it's our job as coaches to get these guys ready two, three deep just in case we get put in a pinch, hey, you've got to go out there, they're on their P's and Q's.

They're not sweating about it. They know what they're going to do and they're going to do it at a high level.

Q. Getting back to the returners, I know obviously their usage on offense or defense will dictate whether or not they're available to you, but would you prefer to have certain guys just established in those roles, or will it be dictated by situations?

MICHAEL CLAY: I think for me personally, it's getting all these guys ready for that opportunity. We're able to have at least on this team a lot of returners that are good enough to do it and be effective at doing it.

For me, it's just making sure they're confident and they're ready to go out there, regardless of the situation they're in. You never know what's going to happen. There could be an explosive play on offense and we can't use them at the special teams situation. That's why we have another guy in the holster ready to go to excel at the same, maybe even better at that level.

For me it's just making sure everyone is comfortable and everybody is ready for when their number is called, and I



think everybody has been embracing that, regardless of the situation. If my number is called, I'm going to go out there and I'm going to put my best foot forward to help the team.

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