

Philadelphia Eagles Media Conference

Wednesday, October 27, 2021
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Nick Sirianni

Weekday Press Conference



Q. We haven't seen Gardner, obviously, at practice, but you have. What have you seen from him that lets you know he's ready to be your backup?

NICK SIRIANNI: The main thing is that I've seen him grow in the offense. I know you guys aren't out there at practice and what we're going through. Like if Jalen is behind the center doing a play and Gardner is back there on the other side also making the play, but behind visually. He's just growing in the offense. You kind of see that in our developmental periods, knowing where to go with the football, knowing what we're asking him to do, what receivers are going to do, et cetera.

So we already knew he could play, right? That's why he's here in the first place. So it's really what we're confident in is that he's growing in the offense, and that's because he puts so much work into it.

Q. What's the philosophy on splitting reps with the first and second team during a game week? The famous Peyton Manning thing like he took all the reps.

NICK SIRIANNI: Jalen will get all the reps. He'll get all the reps. So that's not my philosophy to say that. Now, other positions, like it's a little different. At quarterback, our starter takes all the reps. I've got no problem sharing that with you guys.

At other positions like receivers, with some of the longer periods that you have, you rotate in and out, and we rotate receivers in and out. Offensive line, same thing. They do a little bit of rotating. But at quarterback, our quarterback's taking all the reps, and that's why Gardner is standing behind Jalen while the play is going and taking the virtual, or the rep behind there, the visualization rep.

Q. I know you weren't here last year, but what have you liked out of Avonte Maddox?

NICK SIRIANNI: I just think he's scrappy and tough. That's such a requirement for the good slot nickels I've

been around. They're scrappy. They're tough. That's definitely Avonte. And then you always have to have good quickness in there because you go against different guys that are quick, particularly in the slot. You've got that short area quickness. So I definitely see that in him.

I'm glad he's our slot corner because he does a really good job at it. I see him getting better all the time. Again, that toughness is just something that you've got to have on your team, and he definitely embodies that at that position.

Q. Ertz and Flacco have been traded so far. There's still some time before the trade deadline. How do you manage that as a head coach where it looks like the organization is shifting into a seller's mode? How do you manage that? What kind of conversations do you have with the front office as all of that is going down?

NICK SIRIANNI: We're always looking for ways to improve our football team or get better as a team. Looking at this, we got picks for the future. Make no mistake about it. We're trying to win every single game. I don't have time to, like me as the head coach, I don't have time to be in a we'll build for next year or whatever it is.

My job, they brought me in here to win games, and that's my job, and that's the message to the team is it's business as usual regardless that Zach's not here anymore or Joe's not here anymore, and we're doing everything we can do to win this football game this weekend.

Q. How does the conversation go between you and Howie? These are players -- Ertz was part of your offense --

NICK SIRIANNI: I think I explained this with the Zach thing. It was a good opportunity for Zach to be the guy because he wasn't going to be the guy here. It was also an opportunity for Dallas to be the guy here, and we've got a lot of faith in Dallas to be the guy and to get more reps, and we feel like we're in a really good spot with Dallas getting all the reps and getting all the targets, that he'll continue to ascend and to be the player we anticipate he'll be.

Then as I just mentioned with Gardner, we feel really good about Gardner being it. I've got a ton of respect for Joe Flacco. I really enjoyed being around him every single



day, but if we didn't feel like Gardner was ready to be the backup, then that wouldn't have been a thing that we would have pursued.

So we felt good about the moves we made because we feel good about the players that we have here currently.

Q. What was your involvement when Howie came to you about the possibility of acquiring Gardner?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, we talk through everything, regardless if it's a trade or it's acquiring a player like Gardner. We talk through everything. So it's, hey, watch Gardner, see what you think. Then we evaluate Gardner as a staff, myself evaluate him, Shane evaluated him, Brian Johnson evaluated him, Kevin Patullo evaluated him to see what we thought, and we felt really good about the player.

We'd had personal experiences with Gardner. Obviously coming out in the Draft, we knew how smart he was coming out in the Draft. We spent a lot of time with him there. Then obviously, playing in the same division as him. So there was a lot of -- we knew a lot about him, and then we did our homework on the things that we hadn't seen in the last couple years, like when he wasn't playing the Colts or whatever.

So that was my involvement there. Hey, do you like the guy? Do you feel like the guy can be a backup for this football team? My answer was yes. So that was the conversations in house with that.

Q. Nick, you began the season with very young receivers obviously. After seven games, how do you feel that group is progressing to this point?

NICK SIRIANNI: What you're very aware of is how fast this group is and how explosive this group is and how explosive they can be. I think that's kind of been like -- there's no secret. I'm tight with Gus Bradley, and after the game, he just like, whoa, you guys are fast.

So you really see that speed, and you really see -- so that's something that you can't coach is speed. I'm definitely seeing -- I've definitely seen our guys take steps forward in their progression as players. I do believe they're getting better.

But there is some things that you have to adapt to in the NFL that you don't see in college or you don't see as second year players. That's always going to be something we're going to focus on is catching that football when it's not right where it's supposed to be or where there's a guy on your back. So that's something we've spent a lot of

time on. That's something we've got to continue to get better. I feel like they're getting better at the route discipline and the routes that they're running.

If I'm nitpicking one thing, it's that we've got to continue to get better on the contested catches that we need to make when it's there. I'm not saying anything to you guys that I haven't said to them, and so that's where we've got to get better. But I've definitely seen improvement through all the other things, and I'm seeing improvement there. It's just that's got to take another step up to another level.

Q. When you look at the young guys on the defensive line, Tarron and Marlon, it looks kind of like they're just not playing more.

NICK SIRIANNI: Obviously, we're strong in that area. It's tough. We're a young wide receiver group in general. The young wide receiver group, the young guys are playing because we're young in that spot. We have some veterans on the defensive line, so some of the lack of reps of some of those guys is not due to who they are but who's in front of them, right?

I've talked to our team -- I've talked to everybody on our team about their role and what I think their role is. I think that's a really important thing, like, hey, there's no surprises in what your role is. Their role right now is to be the backup to those guys and be ready to be ready when they're called upon.

Tarron was called upon a couple times, and he's performed well, and we're going to continue to have confidence in him when his number is called, but right now it's to be the backup and really take advantage of the reps that they're going to get and that they get. I know marlin's been down the last couple games, but when you get that opportunity, whether it's in practice or in game, really take advantage of that opportunity.

Q. Is there anything you have to do as a head coach to try to keep it together after a bad loss and the records you have, or is it just business as usual?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, of course. Like there's got to be a message that I have to keep everybody together and to keep everybody -- it's really that together and keep everybody sticking to what we really want to do.

This is what I said to the team today is that I said the results aren't there right now, but what's going on here is that there's growth under the soil. I put a picture of a flower up, and it's coming through the ground, and the roots are growing out. The roots are continuing to grow out. Everybody wants to see results. Shoot, nobody wants to

see results more than us, right? We want to see results too.

But it's really important that the foundation is being built and that the roots are growing out, and the only way the roots grow out every single day and they grow stronger and they grow better is if we all water, we all fertilize, we all do our part, each individual, each individual coach, each individual player, each everybody in the building, that we do our part to water to make sure that, when it does pop out, it really pops out and it grows.

So that was my message today. So I'm always -- like I said to you guys before, I'm always thinking of different messages to give to the team that are either messages that I think really fit to the situation that I've gotten before in a situation from another head coach or from my dad or whatever. So that was my message today because we are going through tough times and everybody wants to see results.

But just keep doing what we're doing, keep watering, and look at yourself first and know are you watering and are you fertilizing every day? So when it's time to pop, it will pop.

Q. Feeding off that point, as a head coach going through this for the first time, how much of a challenge is it for you to stay confident and stay true to your core beliefs and really what got you here and made you successful?

NICK SIRIANNI: Very, very confident. Schemes can change, and I think you've seen us change little by little, on offense particularly, little by little each week to adapt to what our players do and what we think we're doing well and et cetera. So schemes can change. Schedules can change. Hey, we need to give these guys a little bit more rest.

But like those things that like what we're talking about that I know are true, like competing, connecting, accountability, football IQ, fundamentals, we have to deliver in those. Again, like I said, there's other things that we have that we talk about that we know are so important to us, like I have to double down on those things and I have to stay the course of what I know is true.

Again, it's not just because we're 2-5 right now. It doesn't mean that everything I put together and everything I thought of in my coaching career, like those five core values and other things we talk to our team about, that doesn't make that any less true, right? So I have to stay committed to what I know is true and what I know works and change the things that you need to change and just

continue to double down on the things that I know are true and know it works.

Q. But do you feel like you're tested?

NICK SIRIANNI: Of course. You're always tested. When you're 2-5, it's easy. Human nature says to you, are you doing the right things? Are you doing the right things? Well, the last 15 years of my coaching career or the last 30 years of my life of being on football teams and being around football teams, that didn't all change. So of course you're being tested because I'll do anything to put our team in position to win a game.

So there is things that obviously that we change, but the things I know are true, not changing. I'm not changing because I know in the long run, if you continue to nurture those things, water those things, fertilize those things, the roots grow stronger and at some point it will break through.

Q. But are you lacking a voice that's been in your shoes that you can go to?

NICK SIRIANNI: Am I -- oh, I got you. No, I don't believe so. I don't believe so. I have great people that I can talk to. There's no secret. I talk to Frank. I go through a rough patch, I talk to Frank. My dad's been a coach forever. I talk to him. My brother's been a coach forever. I talk to him. Gus Bradley's been a coach. I get to talk to him.

These guys that I have at my -- I don't want to say disposal. These guys -- every time Frank Reich sends me a message and it's a voice audio voice, I'm like this guy is unbelievable. He still takes the time to mentor me and to be a guy that I still look up to. And I have those around the league, and I have those outside of the league.

Q. They're not in the building?

NICK SIRIANNI: They're not in the building, you're right, but I can call them when I need to call them, and I can talk through things with them when I need to talk through things with them. I'm very confident in that, and I'm very confident in the people I have in my corner, and I'm very confident in all the resources I have and the way I can get in touch with them.

Q. If you look at your score this year with points in the fourth quarter, what do you make of that?

NICK SIRIANNI: Again, we've got to be able to start fast. I think we've been good -- I saw a stat the other day. I thought we started, our first quarter scoring, we're in the top five or top ten. So there's this middle gap where we're stalling out.

What I make of that is offense. This is what -- again, I'm telling you guys some things that I tell the team, right? To me, it's like in that game the other day too, like we were having these drives that stall out. Why do they stall out? Well, we had a turnover on -- we had two turnovers, right? That's not why the drive stalled out because that was the first play of the drive and it was the last play of the drive after a long drive.

But it was like we were in a third and three two times. So we were in a third and three two times, and we got silly penalties, right, that put us in a third and eight. That's a lot harder. Can we convert third and eights? Of course we can convert third and eights, but it's a lot harder to convert third and eights than it is third and three. So it's a lot of those little things.

We've gotten better on penalties as the year's went. We were the most penalized team. I still think we're the most penalized team, but the last two weeks we've been the least penalized team. In the offense, it's the consistency. It's the consistency of playing in the first quarter and playing in the fourth quarter and playing like that in the middle so drives don't stall out because, again, I do feel like we're moving the ball and then you get to a point and it stalls out.

Well, what happens? Well, a drop could happen, or a mental error could happen, or a penalty could happen, or a minus play could happen. Those are all things that put you behind that we really account for and what we've talked about before, our 85 percent rule, that puts you behind. We didn't hit our -- I thought we did some good things on offense this week, but we didn't hit the 85 percent rule, and you can always look at that like that's why we stalled here in this middle of it.

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