

# Philadelphia Eagles Media Conference

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## Michael Clay

Weekday Press Conference



MICHAEL CLAY: I guess I'll start off by saying we didn't play well enough special teams-wise, especially in the coverage phase, primarily kickoff coverage. We put our defense in terrible situations with, one, starting off the game with a penalty is not what our standard is, then coming back and letting them have a big return.

So again, just for us, from a special teams standpoint, there had been some good instances we did have in that game, but overall wasn't up to our standard. We put our defense in a bad spot.

Kudos to Vic and them getting some turnovers right after those bad spots, but again, we've got to be better, especially as we're ending this regular season and getting into a playoff football type mode, especially going against Dallas. We all know KaVontae Turpin is a dangerous returner, but not up to our standards when we played against Washington.

Happy to holidays to everyone.

### Q. Was it more on the depth on the kickoffs or with the actual coverage?

KELLEN MOORE: I think it was a mixture of both. Obviously we like a little bit more distance on our kickoff. We can't have a ball land at the 16-, the 15-yard line. But it's never always on one person. There's 11 guys out there.

First of all, it starts with me from the top. I've got to get these guys far more prepared in terms of getting off blocks, violently shedding, and again, kickoff coverage, very similar to defense, you can make up for a mistake by hustling to the ball and just playing with some fundamentals of block destruction. I don't think we did a good enough job of getting off blocks, so again, it all encompasses the entirety of the kickoff coverage unit.

### Q. How much did the elements play a factor in the landing spots of those kicks, and what can you do to

manage it? The elements probably aren't going to get any easier.

MICHAEL CLAY: Correct. Like I alluded to, playing in the northeast, you've got to understand that that ball is just not going to travel. It was like 20 degrees on Sunday, and we knew that going in.

But again, what can help out, I think on our third kickoff, was that the placement, it makes the returner go left and right because it just adds an extra second or two for our coverage to get down there, and when we did that, we strung it out, and they were down at the 22-yard line. So just better precision on our location on kickoffs to help out the coverage team, but again, it comes down to us getting off blocks and tackling well. We just didn't do that well enough.

So again, as much as the weather changes, it's not like it was an unknown or anything like that. We know we play in the northeast. We know it's cold. We've got to make sure that we tighten things up as it goes on because we hope to have some more games up in the northeast here.

### Q. What has gone into the decision to have Mann handle kickoffs?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, he's just done a great job all year. I think you could say the last game against Washington probably was his worst one of the year, but Braden has done an unbelievable job for us both punting and kickoff wise to give us a chance to cover, so we don't want to make a rash decision on that because he has done a really good job for us going forward.

### Q. Is it he has a stronger leg or you guys are trying to preserve Jake?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, a lot of it has to do with can we preserve Jake going forward, and Braden does have a very strong leg. He's always had that, going from college. But it's always a topic of discussion week by week, so again, we may switch it up, we may not, but what Braden has done for us kickoff coverage wise has helped us out a lot, given us some opportunities to cover inside the 20, some balls that have gone past the landing zone, checked up at the 9 and given us an opportunity inside the 20.



Braden has done a good job, just not his day in terms of the distance on kickoff, but again, we're ready to go, get ready for a really good returner in Dallas in Turpin.

**Q. You guys have data for everything. Is Jake's leg strength the same as it ever was or a little bit --**

MICHAEL CLAY: I mean, I think just like anything else, it may decline, it may improve, but I think it's been pretty good leg strength regardless.

At times you've just got to deal with the elements, but I don't think the leg strength declining or going anywhere with Jake has done anything in terms of affecting our decision.

**Q. What was your read on that 56-yarder?**

MICHAEL CLAY: I thought he hit the ball great. Going into that wind, it was kind of coming out this way, and he even thought he hit a really good ball and you could see it kind of died on him the last five yards right there. It was a great job by the offense to at least give us an opportunity to go trot out there for a 56-yarder, and he struck the ball well, stayed on line, it just didn't have the distance right there.

If we would have got an extra yard and a half, maybe it would have went in right there, or if it was five degrees warmer it would have possibly gone in.

Kudos to the offense working that little under-two-minute drive to give us at least an opportunity to try and get three points on the board before the half.

**Q. Does Braden have the leg to get the ball on a cold day, like you said, low 20s, to get the ball down to the goal line or close to it?**

MICHAEL CLAY: I mean, he's showed a couple times that it did get to the goal line right there. I can't predict. Sometimes it's cold but you have a better wind at your back would help out. Pretty stagnant day in terms of the wind. He does have a strong enough leg, like you say, to get to the goal line. Just a couple times he kind of undercut it.

On the first one he was trying to drive it through the wind and came too fat, and it dove on him at the 22, so there is a fine line in just tweaking little things like that but keeping the confidence of Braden up to get us down there and our coverage units to help nullify some of those big returns.

**Q. The field goal at the end of the half, obviously you're communicating with Nick about how far you want to go. Was that about the line you were hoping to**

**get to?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, the communication has been awesome with Nick the entire time. He gave us the parameters of hey, if we get this on this down right here, this 4th down, if we get this many yards, with the time being right there, let's go out there and let's trot out the field goal unit, and we hit that stipulation we wanted to, and like I said, if it was five degrees warmer, hopefully that ball would have went in. It was right on line, and Jake had struck the ball all game very well.

**Q. With Jake, he did hit a 50-yarder late to put you back on top. I know you've been pretty consistent with his process and his confidence, but to finally get one from 50 this season, do you think that helps?**

MICHAEL CLAY: I think it's always great, especially in that game. I think we got down one, so to put us up two right there on a 50-yarder in that weather condition is outstanding, and one, it starts with the operation. Rick threw a great ball back. The field goal team kind of goes unsung. They've been really good in terms of protecting Jake, outside of probably Cleveland where Myles Garrett cleared everyone, but outside of that it's been very, very good in terms of our protection. Those guys don't get enough credit, those offensive linemen and J.D. going out there.

But the operation was outstanding, and you saw that ball traveled very well. He struck it very good and put us up a score at least to give us an opportunity, then go back and forth and come back with that 40-yarder also to make it at least a touchdown-worth game right there. Always great to see when the ball goes through the uprights.

**Q. When you have a kicker like Aubrey, when you try and defend him or try to rush, especially those long field goals with a lower trajectory, do you have to try and change your personnel in order to try to get a block or what have you on one of those things because he's got such a strong leg?**

MICHAEL CLAY: No, I think if you really look at our field goal blocking, they get great penetration. J.D., J.C., Moro, Book, they do an outstanding job of getting some penetration up through the middle, and you can see Isaiah, he gets very close every time going on the outside.

Our personnel has been outstanding in terms of field goal, and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. It's just an added thing as you get into these later months, lower trajectory, get our hands up a little bit quicker with some penetration and hopefully we tip one or block one. But Aubrey is a great kicker. We all know that. So it's another challenge for us

to make sure we keep three off the board.

**Q. On that kickoff that fell short of the landing zone, anything specific that happened?**

MICHAEL CLAY: He just mis-hit it. He hit it too fat on the ball, and it just dove on him. Not like we were trying to do anything special or anything like that. Like I said, he tried to cut the wind and just hit it too fat and it just dove on him.

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