

# Philadelphia Eagles Media Conference

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

## Michael Clay

Weekday Press Conference



MICHAEL CLAY: Morning everyone.

**Q. What led to the decision to let Jake kick off? Is that something that's going to be going forward?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, like I told you guys all before, we have the luxury of having two guys that can kick off. We just felt with how the wind was going Jake was the better opportunity with the direction and location we wanted.

Like I said, he did a great job keeping it out of Turpin's hands. He only caught the ball twice from a special teams standpoint.

Again, when you have two guys, like you guys asked of Covey or Cooper, when you have the luxury of having two guys that can be good kickers and punt returners, we are going to use it in the best way possible just to put the team in the best position possible.

**Q. You mentioned keeping it out of his hands. Was that part of the reason why Jake was in there?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, like I said, it was a left-to-right wind and he kicks it better going to the right.

**Q. This is a big question: How would you evaluate your special teams this year?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I mean, some ups and downs, just like anything else. Been some good highlighted points from the specialists, where Baltimore, Braden kind of kept them back in there. We had the block against Tampa Bay from a field goal block standpoint. Then we've had some missed cues that we never want to put our team in a bad situation.

I think the guys have battled hard the entirety of the year and rose to the occasion at times. Turpin is a very, very good returner, as you guys probably all know. Being able to corral him on that kickoff and cause a penalty right there, the specialists keep it out of his hands.

All in all, the special teams unit, we've proven to get better at weeks and at times we haven't lived up to that, but I thought we did a good job battling throughout the entirety of the year.

**Q. Is Jake the kickoff guy going forward?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Guys will find out Sunday at 1:00 I guess.

**Q. Was one the reasons why Braden had those duties throughout most of the year was to preserve Jake's leg?**

MICHAEL CLAY: It think it was just all a conversation. We really didn't know what this new kickoff return was going to look like in terms of returns. Braden being a little bit bigger body, a guy that if it did break, get a tackle here and there.

Also, we've had some pretty good weather really for us to allow him to go out there. He had a pretty good touchback percentage. Went down in the Washington game. Obviously 18 degrees.

Again, when we have those two guys, give them the opportunity we can use to our advantage, we're going to try to put the team in the best possible situation whoever we use on kickoff.

**Q. This is the first time we're talking to you since Covey went on IR. Obviously Cooper has done a really good job as punt returner; also his duties on defense. I mean, as the playoffs approach, is that something you guys have to kind of keep an eye on?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I think we keep an eye on it every week. Coop has been doing an unbelievable job on defense, especially the rookie coming in. Done an outstanding job for us as a punt returner. The guys that are blocking from a punt return take pride to keep Coop out of the way, and Coop has done a really good job understanding the speed of punt return and the guys covering.

You saw on the Dallas game, he got 14 yards and then got out of bounds just to mitigate any the hits he needs on his body. Again, week by week we always have these



discussions from Coach Sirianni to myself to everybody around here just to put the team in the best position moving forward.

**Q. ... return on Sunday, would it be nice...**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, and we have plenty of options. You have Ainias, Jahan, possibly Coop. We are going to go in day by day and game plan like we usually do and get ready to put the guys in the best possible way to go against the Giants and get a win against the Giants.

Another division rival. You always want to end on a high note going into the post-season.

**Q. If someone were to return a kick in the regular season would you be comfortable using him in the off-season?**

MICHAEL CLAY: I think everything is on the table in the post-season. It's not like you have another game. Obviously we always have these conversations going forward, but whatever will put us in this the best way to win a game, we're always going to think about that.

I think you have seen Kenny last couple runs have gone past that 30 yard line a couple times. Had that big one to the 39. Kenny has been doing like -- I know we kind of beat a dead horse here with Kenny Gainwell, but he has been doing an unbelievable job in the return game.

Had the kickoff tackle against Turpin. Like I said, he's one of the few players you come across that you just are infatuated with.

**Q. What perspective did you have on Sydney's scuffle and ejection?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, obviously when you see it on the TV you see right there, but during the play, I was kind of just looking down the field. I saw Kelee was on the ground and something going on there. Make be sure nobody just runs on the field. We don't want to put anymore.

Unfortunate that it ended up with a brawl, but that's just something we make a learning experience for Sydney. When the whistle blows, so he doesn't put anybody else in a bad predicament going forward.

When you have a guy like Sydney Brown you're not going to take away his tenacity. You got to make a learning point to hone in that emotion after the play stops just so you don't put anybody else in a bad spot.

**Q. What do you think Sydney brings to the table as far**

**as that, you know, playing on the edge like he does? Is that contagious?**

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, when you got a guy that plays with so much emotion on the edge right there, it brings a spark and a different kind of mindset that you kind of need in special teams.

Very similar to defense. You know, everyone has their own edge in their own way. You can see Coop, when he gets in a little bit of a dustup, he's just smiling. But I guess that brings an edge in that way. BG, he's probably the king of trash talk. Brings that different edge.

Sydney does it through a physicality standpoint, especially on the outside. So he does bring an edge. You always want your guys to back each other up. I think they do a good job on special teams of backing each other up and trying to get out of those dustups and make sure we don't lose anybody going forward.

**Q. 5:00 tomorrow night, what's your plan?**

MICHAEL CLAY: I mean, see what Oregon can do down in the Rose Bowl. I think last time we played Ohio State in the Rose Bowl we lost. Unfortunately I was part of that. Hopefully it's a different story and we keep proceeding on for in college football playoffs.

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