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Michael Clay

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Kickoffs. We've been talking about that for a couple weeks, Braden back in, what goes into going back-and-forth there?

MICHAEL CLAY: Has to do with the game plan. Some of it has to do with the weather. At times, the weather favors one or the others but when you have two opportunities to use two kickers, obviously it kind of puts the other team a little bit in a bind.

Like they may have one return because one guy goes one way and then you try somebody else out there, kind of messes with their game plan.

So again when we have the luxury of having two guys to do it, it only benefits us, I think. But again, I know going out there, I think the next question will be who will be out there on Sunday. We'll make that decision as the week goes on and whoever is going to give us the best ability to advance in these playoffs.

Q. Where do you feel like Jake is going into the postseason?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, I think Jake, being around him so much and personally just talking with him, I think his confidence is still very, very high in what he's doing. Obviously he missed that 39-yarder off the left hash right there, and he thought the wind was going to play a little bit more of a factor on the ball. But he struck the ball well in terms of that, and you know, he goes back and he's always going to be his hardest critic going forward. But nice for him to come back and hit those two. They are shorter field goals, but it's also nice to see the ball go through the net right there.

So he's been striking ball well. It's not like the ball has been fluttering or barely getting there. It's one of those things where we have to keep the confidence that he has; that we have in him, because going forward, we know it's no longer the regular season. All the points matter for us to advance in this situation in the postseason.

Q. The consistency has not been at the same high level that we've become accustomed to over the course of the regular season. What do you make of that? What's your analysis?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, you almost fall victim to, you know, he had such a high percentage the last three seasons, okay, he's going out there, it's automatic. But just like in everyday life, nothing is always given to you. It's just for us to go back to our training, and you know him, just keeping that confidence and hitting the right line of sight when he comes in the stadium, when he goes out there, he still goes through his staple process.

For us from a coaching standpoint, making sure the offensive lineman are braced down. Green Bay, obviously we know, blocked a couple kicks this year, against Chicago and against L.A. So for us to make sure there's a clean pocket to and make sure operation has been up to our standard with Rick and Braden holding. Again just doubling down on our fundamentals and technique, knowing this is a very good team rolling in on Sunday, and make sure Jake has a clean pocket that he's able to perform at his highest ability.

Q. What could have been done, if anything, to stop that fake punt?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, we got just a lot of leverage right there. Identified by Tristin and EJ, but just like a defensive game plan, like when you lose the edge and they get around the corner, you never want to lose that edge. You want to make sure you can box it back in to everybody else right there.

So for us, just identifying -- the identification was there. They quick-broke us there to our left, their right. We just lost the edge a little bit with Tristin and E.J. and for us to keep that edge.

And I can do a better job as a coach in terms of the game plan going forward and helping these guys out, widening them out a little bit or loosening the edge to deter any fake of that nature.

Again for them, they did a great job trying to react to it but it's on me as a coach to have them identify, all right, gets

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out a little bit wider to ensure there's nothing going forward whether it's double cadence and them jumping offsides and us holding our edge, just like a defense. When the defense gets collapsed and gets around the edge, usually never good. It's the same thing for punt return.

Q. What about Keyshawn makes him so good?

MICHAEL CLAY: Elite speed. Great vision. A little bit similar to Turpin. If you look at his kickoff returns, he kind of lulls you to sleep in that first ten to 12 yards. Looks like he's kinds of jogging and then he hits that burst.

So for us, we have to really minimize the space he has in the running lanes, get off blocks. Great block destruction and come to the party right there, like we did on the one with Turpin that he got tackled at 26. You know, being able to eliminate those big spaces right there.

But he is a fantastic kickoff return guy. I think he's a two-time All-Pro kickoff returner. But he lulls you to sleep and he has that burst, and if you get outleveraged, we tell the guys, if you're head up, you're pretty much out of position. So we don't want to get head up. We want to keep is this leveraged out and get off blocks and make a secure tackle with him.

Q. How much confidence do you have in the weather report, or are you always consistently preparing for anything that happens?

MICHAEL CLAY: We all prepare for the worst and the hope for the best. We always have kind of an idea what it's going to be. But Mother Nature is undefeated. She could change on you just like that. I think what was it, 2013, looked like a clear day against Detroit and it was the biggest snow game of all time.

We have to prepare for all elements out there. That's the great thing about being in the northeast you get to prepare in had some heavy winds like last week. Thursday was a pretty heavy wind day and the next couple days are pretty heavy wind. Get those guys mentally prepared that you're always hoping for a clear light wind day but we're also prepared for a heavy wind day going forward.

Q. How much of a factor or advantage is it that Jake has played in these winds before, for the past seven years, he knows how it works at the Link and everything, how much does that help him going into playoffs and everything like that?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, it just leads back into confidence and understanding the setting of it. Especially there's a big difference when it's a day game compared to a night game.

That 4:30, usually the wind starts to die down a little bit at night.

So having that opportunity to understand that and understand where the wind is coming from just off the configuration just off the stadium, and not just him but also for Braden in punt situations, when I can let it loose or when I have to kind of play with the wind a little bit to minimize any bad kicks.

So again, it's always nice to be -- having that home-field advantage and understanding what the wind is going to do.

Q. In the past four years, you had the perspective of seeing Nick enter the postseason under unique circumstances each time. What's either distinctive or unique about his messaging going into the postseason this year?

MICHAEL CLAY: You know what, we still haven't had that team meeting with the guys yet but I think his message is always going to be the same. The stuff that got us here; our fundamentals, our togetherness, being tough and detailed. You don't just throw that away because you got through the regular season with it. You're going to double-down on that. He stays consistent no matter the day, whether it's to us the coaches and players or players, which you have to respect.

And you want to go out there and put the best foot forward from a special teams standpoint, knowing the coach never changed things up on you. He's always going to make sure you're tough, detailed and all together in this because these only going to make us go further.

Very fortunate to be with him these four years with four playoff appearances, and again, once you get into the playoffs, it's a little bit higher heightened sense. But you never want to give up your fundamentals of what got you here. You know, stay down and stay true to that to get us forward.

Q. Getting familiar with obviously what the line of questioning going into the year was about recovering from last year, but sitting here with 14 wins, No. 2 seed. How has Nick done it and navigated that?

MICHAEL CLAY: I think, one, believes in himself and what he preaches, and obviously it shows. Like you said, two 14-win seasons. And when those guys believe it and understand what the message is, it's only going to take us further.

And you know we've got great talent on this team, and you know, they don't just let their talent slide. They are out

here working. We've got some of the hardest-working people in this business. I mean, shoot, you can start from Lane to A.J. to Rick to Braden to all those guys around here.

So just having the togetherness and seeing those -- those young guys help by seeing those older guys put in the time and see what the result is. So it's always great to see that and Nick does a great job with the messaging of it.

Q. What did you learn about Cooper as a punt returner this year?

MICHAEL CLAY: I think he's just gotten better and better. Obviously his first one was a rough start in Tampa Bay. Obviously some of it not his fault whatsoever. But you could just see the confidence. You can understand why he was a good returner at Iowa. He's tough and catches the ball really well. He tracks the ball. He just keeps getting better. He always works at it in practice and it helps having Covey out there. Amo does a great job with the returners, trying to set the line, telling them they are good and telling them what to expect there. And Tyler does a great job with telling him the wind in pregame and what's happening.

But Coop has done a really good job for us and he kind sneaks up on you with a 23-yarder or a 31-yarder, those 15-yard returns or chunk plays in the first half which helps out against the opponent's net. Coop is just going to keep getting better and better and the guys are going to get better -- have been getting better at blocking on the interior. We've seen Kelee do what he does on the outside. To have that confidence in the tin guys ahead of him that they are going to block just gives him confidence to catch and get what he can.

Q. He never got an opportunity but Jahan looked pretty comfortable back there. What do you think of him and also Isaiah?

MICHAEL CLAY: Yeah, start with Jahan. He's just I smooth catcher of the ball. It literally looked like he was out there jogging and catching. He does a great job of practice Wednesday, Thursday, catching the ball. He's just very calm, cool and collected in there. The punt returner, he didn't have any opportunity but he saved, some of those balls were dying early on him, come up, catch it, net 35, we'll take that all day then.

Isaiah we know that from his time in Indianapolis and it just happened to happen where our game plan worked out knowing what the wind was going to do, kind of threw in a little different wrinkle out there. He set up great. Then you saw the speed he has to burn.

But outside of that, there was, I would say, probably five guys on there that made huge blocks. You see Johnny Wilson and Sidney on the double team did a great job driving their guy 25 yards. And Dallas, Avonte Maddox and Tristin on a single block to really cut off that back side to give that lane.

So Isaiah, able to set it up, and those five guys really kind of let him get that 51-yarder and it was a good thing to have going forward and keep that momentum for us going into the playoffs.

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