

Philadelphia Eagles Media Conference

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Coach Nick Sirianni

Weekday Press Conference



Q. When you talk about having a physical football team, obviously probably starts with having players who play like that. Are there ways that you and the coaching staff encourage it throughout the season?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, we talk about a tough football team. What we talk about with tough is the physical part of the game, the blocking, the block destruction, tackling within the fundamentals. We talk about relentless effort to the football, because that's a form of toughness, and we talk about mental toughness of being able to play the next play.

Obviously my best experience with being good at those things is because of the guys, exactly what you said, guys that are in this building. But any time as a coach that you're trying to reinforce things that you want, that you really admire and want for the program and for the culture, you enforce those things on tape, in our tape today and our tape every day to be quite frank. We talk about this every day and every time we have a team meeting we talk about it.

We will put our physical plays up there. We will put our relentless effort plays up there. We will put our mental toughness plays up there to reinforce it. Good, bad, and just so it's always on our mind.

So, yeah, can't say enough of how tough our team is, in all three of those phases, physical, mental, and effort.

Q. Losing Nakobe Dean for the playoffs, what does that mean on the field and off the field for this team? And what is the organization feel about Dean and what he's done this year?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, Nakobe has had a great year. As you guys saw the reports, he's going to be out and we sure will miss him. He has made big plays all year long. One that comes to everyone's mind is going to be the interception against Jacksonville to seal the game.

He had a couple plays in yesterday's game that are outstanding and set the tone of how we were going to play. The fourth play of the game, the way he comes down -- I think the fourth play of the game, of yesterday really shows you who Nakobe Dean is. He identifies the play lightning fast. That's because of how much time he spends working on this game. He loves football and how much time he spends working on this game of football and being able to diagnose plays.

He lights up with just that physical toughness play. Just you saw everything of who Nakobe is in that play. Bam, good football IQ. Boom, physical toughness.

Yeah, we'll miss him, that's for sure. Got a lot of faith in the guys in that room, but we'll for sure miss Nakobe.

He's had a really good year.

Q. DeVonta Smith said that the Packers threw a lot of different coverage looks at you guys. Is that more of why you may have struggled in the passing game, or did you feel like -- or was it maybe that you didn't do enough to scheme guys open?

NICK SIRIANNI: You know, any time you have a good offense you can expect a lot of different things. You know, whether that's in the run looks of them showing you different runs -- pardon me, different schemes up front or whether it's in the coverage and mixing things up.

One thing that was very clear yesterday is that when you get into these games and you get into a playoff game, you're going to have things go against you and you're going to be like, man, if we could have made that play or done this better as coaches or whatever it is.

The reality of the situation, as you get into playoff football you're not going to pitch a perfect game. Not going to have a perfect game. There will be things that that team does to create mistakes. That's why it's so important that you're able to play the next play.

You know, why did we not have our best game as an offense yesterday? Well, that's always going to -- that's never going to be, oh, it's on this or it's on that. It's always going to be different things.

So as coaches we have to do a good job putting the guys in positions to succeed, and then we have to go out and execute. So it always is going to be that. That was the case yesterday.

We got to do a better job as coaches and go execute better to play a better football game overall as an offense.

Q. Hey, Nick, we've seen you do a lot of different things as far as practice goes. Some days you'll change up and turn a practice into a walk-through. Wednesday you guys pad up at The Linc in bad conditions. How do you get a sense of what the team needs as far as practice? When to go hard, when to really drive them, and when it back off?

NICK SIRIANNI: Communication with all parties. That's communication with the coaches, where you feel like we are, who are we playing, what kind of problems do they present. Can walk-through get some stuff done? Do we need to have it live with pads on? Do we need a helmet? And then doctors and trainers and strength staff, where are we? Who is going to be able to go on Wednesday? Who will be limited? Who will be out?

Talking to the players. How you feeling? Where your legs at right now? So it's just my job -- ultimately I have to make the decision I think is best for the football team. I'm always going to want to practice but got to think about everybody on this team.

And so I think the best way to say that, Roob, is it's just constant communication between myself and all parties involved to get the best information to make the best decision I can for the team on that.

I will say that I believe that the way we practice and how we practice and everything we do at practice, like there is a price to be had for success. It takes the work. It takes the grind. It takes the practice. It takes the mental. So we're very aware of that as well.

Q. I wanted to ask you about one of the guys who you're probably going to count on to replace Nakobe, Oren Burks. He's a guy obviously who has done this before in San Francisco.

NICK SIRIANNI: Uh-huh.

Q. What is the value of having a guy like that and how do you think he did yesterday when he came in?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, I thought he did a lot of good things. Did a lot of good things in the game against the Giants as well. Took him off a couple special teams with

him being in as full time player there.

He's been such a dynamic player for us on special teams, and that's a great predictor of as a linebacker, how you can play as a linebacker with all the physical tools. How are you going to do there.

It's obviously a different mental game. What a great indicator of how with are as a linebacker as far as how you tackle and get off block, et cetera, is how you do it on special teams when there is a lot of space to do it in.

So he's done a great job. Great person. Great teammate. Really enjoy having him on this team. He's had to step in and play just like so many of our guys have had to this year. Because it's a long, long, long season you're going to need everybody. You're going to need all bodies. Going to need everybody ready to roll.

Oren has been consistently ready to play and played well and performed well every time he stepped onto the field. As bummed as I am that Nakobe doesn't get to play, I'm excited for Oren and his opportunity to play.

Q. I'm just interested from a head coaching perspective, how you watch that Rams-Vikings game tonight? Are you alone with notepad, pen, and paper? With your coaching staff? What's the approach from your perspective as you guys prep for whoever you're going to play watching that game tonight?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, we'll have to do a little bit of work on both teams. Obviously we played LA earlier in the year so there is a little bit of familiarity there on that. But they've also changed as we've changed.

We haven't played Minnesota, so today will be about that work. Really you get some stuff from a television copy. There are some things that you get, but during that time that the game is being played we'll be working off the tape that we have, a little bit on LA, a little bit on Minnesota.

You're going to watch the game as you're preparing. We been in this situation before. This happened in '22 when we didn't know if we would play Minnesota or the Giants. As we were watching the game, all right, the Giants are winning; let's put more stock into this.

So today up until that point, you're going to have to do a little bit of work on both teams. And then as the game goes on, we'll watch it, on in the background, and we'll be preparing for both those teams until the game changes or may not change at all.

And so that's kind of how that goes. The other thing is just

gave you a little bit more time today when you don't know exactly who the opponent is to really get the corrections fix from yesterday.

We have some things we have to clean up from yesterday, so that's always the first part of a Monday. Even more so, you can spend even a little bit more time here on that today not knowing who you're going to play.

So it's a different type of night, but you try to handle all the different scenarios that scheduling and things challenge by leaning on your past, leaning on things like that.

And so we have been in this scenario before and we'll handle it similar to when we have before.

Q. Nick, there was a couple scenarios on third and long in the game yesterday where you guys opted to run it or not be overly aggressive. What are the different factors that went into that approach?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, I think you'll see that we're not afraid to run the ball on third down scenarios. Ever. When you're able to run the ball on third down you present different challenges to the defense. The defensive coordinator has to think about his run fits with all his different exotic blitzes.

That always puts fear into a defense that they got to be aware of that. Can't just pin their ears back and rush. Different times call for different scenarios. You know, I don't believe we got any yesterday on long runs. Is that right? We didn't convert any on third and long, I believe, right, Tim?

Q. Right.

NICK SIRIANNI: But there has been third and 19 against Jacksonville at the 19. We run it there. Saquon busts a long run for a touchdown.

Third down can set you up for fourth down. Sometimes you're playing it to get the first down. Sometimes you're playing it to solidify points. Sometimes you're playing it to strike fear into the defensive coordinator's mind. Sometimes you're playing it because you want to get the ball to Saquon in that particular case to break one.

A lot of different reasons for it. You know, yesterday had some different reasons for it. Yeah, and so we played those how we wanted to play those yesterday.

Q. You mentioned some of those corrections on offense. Just wanted to get your thoughts. The offensive line as a whole, those guys have such a high

standard. Couple of them said we were too leaky. What did you see from that group specifically? Sometimes they're really hard on themselves.

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, there is no doubt. I think there were times that -- one thing that we talk a lot about that we want to constantly be is on the same page. There was a couple time that we weren't on the same page as a full offense.

Now, that happens. Again, I go back to this: The teams are, the more you're going to be presented with challenges. Again, you're not going to pitch a perfect game. It's our job to embrace the adversity that happens there and understand how to play the next play.

And so there were a couple times there. Couple times that you lose a one-on-one matchup here and there. I thought we had some really good efforts from the offensive line; really good performances from the offensive line.

You know, I just think Lane was awesome against a really good rusher that was over top of him. We got a lot of good performances there. But it's that constant fight of always being on the same page. That starts with us as coaches of spelling out every scenario you can get. Here is what we do in this scenario, in this scenario. How, the better you get as an offense, the more you're going to get stuff that you didn't even know they had.

But it is still our job as coaches to present everything that could possibly happen and put them in those positions. Then we got to go out and execute it. Again, that's something we can be better at from yesterday.

Q. Just ask you about Saquon could have had a 75-yard touchdown run yesterday. Took a knee. What did you think of that? Is that something you think about or prepare for during the week? What did you think of it in the moment?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, for sure. Dallas -- you go back -- I'm just trying to think of the couple times we've had that. Dallas Goedert had one of those against Washington I believe in 2021. He wasn't in the open field but he got the first down.

Once you can take knees there, you know, you slide because we've seen a couple things happen. You know, so I think, again, Dallas had one in the Washington game I believe in '21. Caught a little pass in the flat. Bam, he slides. We took three knees, won the game.

Again, that's awesome. Now, you get one in the open field and he could have scored, but you take three knees, you

win the game. Why do you do that? Because when you're in those scenarios you don't want to give them another opportunity for freaky things to happen.

Memphis played -- I don't remember -- in the bowl game. Memphis played somebody in the bowl game not too long ago. The guy intercepts the pass. Same scenario. Defense has same scenarios at times. Sydney had it last week. Guys intercepts the pass, gets up, runs, and he's about to go down and the guy pops the ball out.

There was a play in a Chicago versus San Francisco game probably about five years ago. Same thing. They completed the ball. Same thing, he's running with it, the guy comes and pops the ball out, they get an opportunity.

Happened in Cleveland versus the New York Jets two years ago. Cleveland scored, put them up two scores. Gave the Jets an opportunity to come back, you know, score, get the onside kick, score again, win the game.

It happened to us in a pre-season game in 2021. Same scenario. We stripped the ball. We stripped a ball from the Jets in 2021. We should have just recovered it and went down. We scooped, we scored, we were up one point at the time, then we went up eight.

Jets got the ball to mid-field, completed a Hail Mary against us, and converted for a two-point conversions. In these games you can tie. You never want to win -- or lose on something you can completely control by going down.

And so that's something we practice. That's something that we talk about. That's something that Saquon asks before we went in. Hey are we in -- I won't give away our word -- well, he said it yesterday -- no mas. I'm like, yeah, yeah, we are. That means get the first down and go down.

He performed it perfectly. It'll be a clip that we'll show just like we show Dallas' and all the other ones forever.

You do that for the exact reasons I said. Now, when you go up three scores it might not make that big of a difference. Go back and look at the Cleveland one. I think it was Flacco was the quarterback for the Jets at the time and led them right down and they won the game from it.

You don't mess around with things like that. You have an opportunity to take knees, you take those opportunities.

Q. If you think back to your role meeting before the season, what role did you envision for Nolan Smith, and how did that evolve after Bryce and Brandon went down?

NICK SIRIANNI: Yeah, you know, we talk about roles for the defensive line, you talk to them as a whole because you know it's going to -- the group rush mentality is going to be critical, getting all those guys to work and operate as one. You can't be great without the greatness of others.

I always thought that was going to be important for those guys. We love to talk about -- like you guys ask me about physical toughness. One thing that's always on display is the way a defensive end controls the C gap and can control a tackle or a tight end.

And so I know how physical Nolan is. I've known how physical Nolan is since the day he got here. He's heavy handed. Big time hitter. You know, man, he is so tough.

So we talk to that defensive line, about how they set edges and how important that's going to be for our run game success. I kind of talk to them like I said as a group, Zach. But Nolan, how heavy handed he is, how important he's going to be there, and then like I said in the pass game, about the pass rush and rushing as a group and winning your one-on-one matchup opportunity as you get opportunities to do so.

Nolan is physical. When you talk about roles it's our job to put the guys in the roles they can succeed at. Nolan Smith will always be a physical player. That's just who he is. Those are his habits. So that was a big talk to him at the beginning of the year during that roles meeting.

Q. I just wanted to know what your assessment was of Jalen's performance after watching the film?

NICK SIRIANNI: I thought he did a lot of good things. As an offense, as a whole we all want things back from that game. What I was so impressed by with Jalen is that we were up kind of comfortably by two scores for a majority of the game. Every time that the Packers cut it to one score, whether it was 10-3 or 16-10, Jalen led our team right down the field, you know, making big time plays, checking the plays that really helped us. You know, just being the winner and quarterback that he is.

Is he going to want plays back? Of course. The offensive line that we talking about going to want plays back? Of course. Are the coaches going to want plays back? Of course. That's the way a game goes.

In pressure situations when he needed to have extreme focus and lead us down the field to score, he did.

That's what you want out of your leader, out of your quarterback.

Q. Going back to Nolan Smith, you mentioned he's always been physical. When you think back just to his development this year, what did you feel like has clicked for him the most that has allowed him to have this kind of growth from year one to two?

NICK SIRIANNI: Time and patience and getting better every day. You know, we live in such a world where it's like instant gratification. That's just not -- anything worthwhile is going to take time. Anything worthwhile is going to take time.

That's development of players, coaches, everything. Nolan is the example of that. You know, if you can get -- that's what Kobe Bryant used to talk about all the time, how can I get a little bit better each day?

If you add up all that growth mindset stuff, add up all the increments you get better, eventually you're doing this the entire time and you're going to reach your ceiling. God willing you reach your potential.

I just think he's an example of that. Again, I just feel like there is so many things that we have to fight with outside noise just to make sure that -- don't believe the hype whenever one is telling you how good you are. Don't believe it when everyone is telling you you're a bust. Just put your head down and win and get better.

I think that's what he's done.

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