

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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## Jay Harbaugh

Weekday Press Conference



JAY HARBAUGH: Love to just get to whatever questions you guys have.

**Q. (Indiscernible) was talking about with the new kickoff rules, how you talk to the team about whoever gets ahead of this can really have an advantage. How big of a focus was that?**

JAY HARBAUGH: He has a good memory. We talked about that last year and then it's kind of evolved again this year, and maybe it will in the future.

Yeah, still feel the same way. There is just an opportunity -- there is more football being played with just more competitive snaps and everything, and like anywhere else, if you do a good job you can give yourself an advantage, give the offense a shorter field, defense a longer field, and guys really bought into that.

**Q. How, if any, have you seen your meetings change, whether it be the questions they're asking, the details they're looking for in some of the special teams game plans, has that changed over the last year or two?**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yeah, I think it's really -- I think it's improved. I wouldn't say there was ever a lack of buy-in or focus or intent. What you do see is just the growth, and like anywhere, you know, exposure to a certain way of doing things and systems, you're going to see that improvement of this is how we do things, this is the common language we're speaking, tacit knowledge of now a guy who is an older guy helping a younger guy, taking him under his wing because he knows exactly what the expectation is, or hey, this is what Coach is looking for.

So I would say most of the things like that, but that makes a big difference as opposed to at the beginning when it's -- you're trying to explain every single thing of exactly what you're trying to get accomplished.

So really a major credit to the guys that did an excellent job with all the things we asked them to do.

**Q. Now you've had two years in the NFL. What do you know now that you didn't know when you came in?**

JAY HARBAUGH: What do I know now that I didn't know when I came in? I mean, there is not enough time to be able to say. Somebody out here asked me that I think last year at some point, maybe in the offseason.

I think I said something to the extent of I imagine I'll have the same answer next year because it's just the nature of coaching and football, is that the game demands that you evolve and that you grow and keep getting better.

It's an amazing thing about it. You want to do that for the players because they deserve the best. They deserve the best answers and schemes and for you to have really good solutions to things for them to be able to look good and play well and for us to win.

It's one of the cool things about our profession, is just you learn and you realize, man, I can't believe I used to do it this way or that way. It's one the great things about it.

So tons of stuff, and I hope -- yeah, I would be hopeful that I have the same answer every year.

**Q. On Rashid's touchdown what's a detail that you noticed about that that we may not have seen?**

JAY HARBAUGH: In terms of our guys' performance?

**Q. Yeah, something that was key to making that touchdown run.**

JAY HARBAUGH: That's a good question. There is so many things, and so many things that seem minor but they add up to make a difference. There is a lot of them. I think there is a lot of aspects of the blocking that would be fun to point out, but one thing that's neat is 'Shid is so fast in that he just gets, oh, he's so fast, but the first push to the run when he really manipulates the coverage with his initial angle, keeping them where he wants them before -- he knows where he's going to go the whole time, but by pushing the ball vertically before he winds it back the same way you would ask a runner to do on, you know, duo inside zone. You know, like that's so critical to the play working.

You know, it is true that he's super fast, but there is nuance to it beyond just being genetically gifted, that he has to be able to bring to life and have the patience to -- yeah, I know I'm going to go there. I'm going to stay here until the last possible second even though it looks like I might get tackled before I wind the ball back.

It's neat, and that's an aspect of his game that he worked hard at. It helps the blockers look really good, too.

**Q. Is that built into the design of the return or is that just...**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yeah, those things are built in. You try to plan for them. Special teams is -- the amount of space in the play can lend itself to some unpredictability sometimes.

Within reason you try to say, hey, this is probably where the ball will be caught. This is what your initial course will look like, because it's going to have this affect on the defense, and then you're going to go do that.

Doesn't always play out exactly that way, but, yeah, you try to give them tools to be able to help the whole thing come together.

**Q. So that return was mostly by design, the result was mostly by design?**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yes.

**Q. Some people have talked about...**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yeah, maybe I'm misunderstanding. I wanted it to be a really good play.

**Q. No, I mean, it went to the side and you can never --**

JAY HARBAUGH: You're saying where the ball ended up towards the end of the play?

**Q. Yeah. Did it go as designed?**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yeah, I thought the ball would -- on that particular one I thought it would stay to the left of the kicker. Yeah, you have ten players that you're blocking, or nine or eight depending on the play. Each person, you think you know what they're going to do, but it takes -- you're never sure what they're going to do in that moment.

So one guy goes left when you think he's going to go right and the ball might find a way in the different gap. You try make sure that players know, hey, I'm pretty sure this guy is going to do this. If he doesn't, this is what might happen,

and you try to prepare them for things like that without burdening them with 1000 possibilities.

So you're trying to find that balance. That played out very close to what we expected. Still there is that element of chaos that makes football and special teams in particular really, really fun.

**Q. People have compared the new kickoff to have kind of like a run play. Do you look for inspiration in run offenses and things like that when you're designing returns?**

JAY HARBAUGH: I would agree with that statement, but I wouldn't say it's like you're going out looking for specifically run plays. But you do see -- on special teams you see and find inspiration all over the football field, whether it's offense or defense.

So you'll see things and say, oh, that's -- or maybe the way an offense might manipulate a really good edge setter or pass rusher to try to widen them or slow them down. Like you'll get things like that happening on kick return as well.

So I think especially with how creative our offensive and defensive coaches are, you can see things in our own building where like, oh, we could do something like that even just beyond the run game.

**Q. I think that's five touchdowns you guys scored this year with the four returns and the one in Pittsburgh earlier this season. (Regarding putting points on the board.) To do it that way, what does that mean to you that you guys have been able to do that?**

JAY HARBAUGH: Really just proud of the guys. They deserve to have all the success just because like we were talking about before, the investment that they have, that they put in day in and day out, unselfishness and commitment to doing it right and respecting the opponent in the process. They deserve to have success.

It is a little unusual to have -- in our world a 20-yard punt return, you know, might be three, four of those in a week in the NFL. Two first downs, that's a big play, but probably get lost in the shuffle of most games, and in our world those things are a big deal. So when you have touchdowns happening where it's everyone notices, it is, it's a little extra cool because you just want it for them because they get to get some limelight and people talking about them.

And a lot of those guys are so much of the spirit of your team and they bust their butts. Just cool to see them get recognition for that.



**Q. Mentioned are Shaheed's speed. Beyond that, that's the obvious part. What makes him special?**

JAY HARBAUGH: There is a vision element. There is a courage element. Probably the two things that come to mind. He also fields the ball really clean, which is underrated. Especially now you're seeing a lot of untraditional kicks and kickers have issues fielding the ball. That's costed teams dearly field position-wise at times.

So that's a kind of thing that gets taken for granted until you see it happening. You're like, man, really glad we have a guy that catches the ball so clean. That gives you the chance to get the play started really well, and then the speed at which he can catch the ball moving forward, I mean, to be able to rock into it and catch the ball with momentum is one thing, but when you're the fastest guy on the field and you're doing that, there was a return in our game, the second one that he caught at like the five or six yard line, he's at like the 12 in like a quarter of a second.

The speed at which the ball gets up on the defense is -- that's such a small detail, but makes a huge difference. We had to talk to our guys about understanding that when he gets the ball at the five, it's really -- it's as if he's catching at the eight or the nine, and it's going to affect the timing of the blocks and the spacing and all that stuff.

I could go on and on. Yeah, it's a lot more than just him being fast. He works really hard at it, which is neat.

**Q. When their kicker tried to trip them on that, what were you thinking when you saw that?**

JAY HARBAUGH: Yeah, yeah, I saw right away. I just was hoping they would call it just because it's not allowed. (Laughter.)

Yeah, that's all I'll say about that.

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