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Press Conference



Q. As you embark on this new journey of yours as a coordinator, you probably are confronting one of the most dramatic rules changes the league has seen. Are you excited by this like some of your special teams coordinator brethren and how much do you anticipate this spring and summer having to introduce this to your new players and do they have any idea what's coming with this new rule?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, it's a great question. This game is ever-evolving, and as a coordinator, there's an instance where you have to try and stay ahead of all the rule changes and find out what are all the intricacies of what those provide, and this obviously is going to be some foreign territory, but for everybody across the league.

And I think the NFL has done a hell of a job in terms of taking out the speed and space of this play in terms of kickoff to keep guys healthier, which is a big deal, but ultimately bringing a play that was almost dissolving which all the touchbacks and the fair catches that you were seeing.

So it's exciting to see. It's exciting to game plan. It's exciting to kind of find the little nuances when it comes to that specific rule change. But when it comes down to it, I've always felt that every special teams play requires a certain level of effort, a certain level of technique and a certain level of violence. So those will be the foundational pieces of that rule change. And then obviously figuring out what is our best foot forward in terms of attacking that. We'll do that this spring.

Q. I know it's only the first day. Has any player come up to you and asked you and said, can you explain this to me because I don't really understand it?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, no, it's -- like I said, it's foreign territory to a lot of people, and just in passing, there's a lot of questions. You know, it's just -- it's exciting when it comes down to it because it's so new, right, and your brain starts to go a million miles per hour because

you're thinking of all the intricacies that go on in a specific play.

But when it's so different, you have so many questions about it, right, and how your brain, whatever way it works, you start to think of like, okay, could this be the advantage, could this be the advantage. Everybody has great ideas on it.

So you know, it's exciting but players have come up and you know they have been simple questions and to the best of my knowledge, I'm going to give them those answers.

Q. Welcome and congrats.

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: I appreciate it.

Q. Along those same lines, talking to a lot of people when the rule was first approved, everybody made that jump to roster construction, and we all know special teams, you guys are always at the mercy of what's going on elsewhere on the roster. But for you, how much do you envision maybe personnel preferences changing because of the rule, and you know, there's been speculation about people may go small or faster or may take some of the bigger guys off, you have to be more prepared. How much research have you done and will continue to do to be able to construct the proper roster to have those guys be able to perform at that level?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: No, that's a great question. And I think when you look at the role special teams plays in general, you are trying to utilize your best 11, regardless of who it is. A lot of that deals with what you do defensively, what type of front you major in and also offensively, where you front-loaded in certain positions.

So when you look at that specifically, you're trying to think, okay, what is the best 11 I can get out there, and it's not necessarily hey, we are looking for more size player, hey, we are looking for more speed here or we can get small here because we can utilize this guy's quick. We are trying to find out what our best 11 is, and then when we do that, we could obviously piece together what our kickoff team

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will look like, what our kickoff return team will look like.

But that's part of -- one of the first tasks I took when I took this job was I evaluated our roster, and you know, you kind of look at where guys fit into different spots. And then it will be another evaluation as we get -- go through spring and then in training camp. It's just going to be ever-evolving. Until we finalize our whole roster, it's going to be what is our best 11 out there.

Q. I guess this rule change made it easy for us to give us a theme for your first presser. I'm just curious, does it change the type of kick returner, like the speed or the size or just that type of player to actually be the guy back there returning the kickoffs now?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Another great question. These, honestly, are all things that come up as you look through the rules, as you watch similar, you know, obviously similar things that happen in the XFL.

I think when you look at it globally, you know, those are the baddest dudes back there; the most dangerous guys with the ball in their hands. So there's a skill set that could be very productive for certain types of returns and there's another skill set that could be more productive for other types of returns.

Again it goes back to who is your best 11 and your returners are definitely part of that conversation. And you have to evolve your scheme. It's got to feature those guys, whether it's a guy that hits it a million miles per hour, or whether it's a jitterbug-type guy that can make you miss. I think both have relevance with this new rule change. It will be exciting to see what we've got.

Q. You talk about how it's new for players but you've obviously never coached this. What was your process? Did you reach out to people in the XFL? How did you get up to speed to be able to teach it to players?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, no question. The rules are very similar to the old XFL kickoff and kickoff return, so there was a huge emphasis in terms of studying that.

I think ultimately when you start to look at something new like that, you relate it back to what you know as well and then you start to combine, okay, these are the similarities, these are the differences. Now, the rule is going to be different than the XFL.

So you know, obviously navigating through what those rule changes are going to be, and still trying to figure out what is your base philosophy. I mean, those things are going to

be ongoing.

And then once you start to practice it, those are going to be new things that are going to come up. And you're going to be like, okay, this is a great way to do things, or I don't necessarily like the way this looks. Let's figure out how to do it that way.

Q. I'm just wondering if you've ever thought of being a teacher because it sounds like that there's going to be a heavy emphasis on that part of this that if it were status quo, everyone knows the deal, now you're the expert in this new rule in terms of with your players, of course.

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: That's so funny. So my dad was a teacher and my sister is a teacher. Now she's in administration. I've always felt that coaching is synonymous with teaching, and that's one of -- the forefront of my pillars in terms of being able to get our players to understand certain things is I have to find a great teaching progression for them.

So there are, you know, people in my family that have taught, and again, you're always trying to figure out, what is the best way you can relay information to your players and we deal with a variety of different learners, trying to learn your learners. Figure out what their strengths are, what their challenges are and ultimately get them to compete at the greatest level.

Q. Two questions for you. One you mentioned you evaluated the roster. Your thoughts on Gano and Gillan.

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: I'm excited to work with both of them. You know, you have two veteran guy, Graham, who has played 15-plus years in this league who has obviously done it at a very high level; and Jamie who is coming off a really strong year. Both, I think, are elite in terms of NFL specialists.

So I'm excited to work with them. I know they have a lot of talent and it's going to be fun.

Q. Your process on joining this job, obviously there's only 32 special teams coordinators, and I'm sure you wanted any of them, but having been in New York with the Jets, obviously, I'm sure you know that there was a lot of talk about Brian Daboll being very hard on his assistant coaches. Was that something you welcomed? Was that something that gave you because? How did you feel through the interview process about joining this staff?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: You know, honestly, I was a coordinator in college before, and then the opportunity to coordinate again was always going to be very exciting to me, especially at the pinnacle of our profession in the NFL.

When I was with the Jet, my focus was totally on being the best assistant special teams coach that I could be. So there wasn't necessarily any knowledge of anything outside or building, and it's no different here. I was so excited to get in front of Dabs and it's been so cool getting to know him and the staff. It's been a lot of fun just in terms of, you know, acclimating to those processes here, and it will be fun to work with these guys.

Q. Building off of the evaluation piece, what were your impressions of overall of the units coming in and what do you think is the ceiling of these units?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: So some of the things that I look for, you know, when I look at special teams players are instincts, toughness and football IQ. Those are three things that you kind of evaluate, whether it's different schemes or anything, you're trying to figure out, again, it goes back to putting your personnel in the best situation for them to have success.

So those are three things that I kind of look at and you start to categorize guys, players, into two special teams categories. That, to me, is interior core players and outer core players, if you just look at like interior punt, your guard tackle slots and PP, and then your outer core players are your gunners, your speed guys.

When I evaluated this roster, it was kind of like deciphering where guys fit in that mold, and then you start to look at what are guys' strengths, what are guys' challenges, how do we improve that, and also figure out what were the technique differences to where we can get guys acclimated to a new scheme, new technique and then ultimately be able to play at a high level.

Q. You've been around in the college ranks. You've spent a lot of time, of course, with the Jets, a couple of seasons there. Can you just talk a little bit about what you have learned throughout this journey to get to this point and how you're going to use that as your foundation now that you're at the next level?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, it's so cool to be in this position. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity. But I understand an opportunity is not an outcome. And I think of, obviously, where my roots were in college to start and the road it took me to get to the NFL.

In all that process of all the different universities I coached

at, being with the Jets, my main focus was always trying to better myself as a coach and as a teacher.

So that's always been the forefront of kind of what I carried with my coaching philosophy. And it's so cool now to be in the NFL as a coordinator for the New York Giants. You know, I have a smile on my face when I say this is the New York football Giants and it's a pretty cool moment to be able to say that.

But it's exciting. You learn different ways to do things, whether you're the guy in charge or not. You learn, you know being obviously what are the best moments of your teaching progression. Certain techniques that you really like. It's really a culmination of all those places that I've spent time at; a credit to all the players that I've encountered, and they are definitely part of this journey and ultimately have made me the coach that I am today.

Q. You're obviously not on the field at this point. You're just introducing yourself to these players. What is your process with players at this point? You don't have your 11. What's your process with players? What are you trying to learn about them at this point as you -- as you try to figure out who your guys GOING to be?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, it's a great question at this part of the year, do you have meetings, so you do get opportunities to teach your new schemes, your new techniques and the way I run my meetings is very interactive.

So I get to hear these guys talk, how they communicate things. Because a lot of it deals with how they see the play, how they see the technique and that I think is a forefront of how you teach everything once you get out to the grass. Before that I want to know exactly what they are seeing.

So it's going to be a lot of me learning how they learn. It's going to be me learning necessarily how they see certain schemes and certain techniques I'm teaching them and what questions they have. So it will be a good opportunity to get to know the personnel on our roster.

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