

New York Giants Media Conference

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Michael Ghobrial

Press Conference



MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: What's up everybody? Good to see everybody again. Good to be back. Excited to be back and get going with football. With that, take questions.

Q. The deal with speaking before 9:00 a.m. is you have to tell us the truth, no cliches, right?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Absolutely, absolutely.

Q. How is Graham after the way last season ended? How has he looked, been?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, so in his last three games I saw the Graham Gano that he holds himself to that standard, and then I saw him there, too. It was good to see him end the season in kicking form.

And he's looked good. Year 17, a guy that's done it at a high level for a long time. There is a lot of respect that guy has just obviously entering the building and when you see the way he approaches the game.

Part of a specialist's success is not always just the production on the field but how you carry yourself in the locker room, how you carry yourself to be present, all those things he's obviously stayed connected to and happy he's back.

Q. Is Jude at a point where he could legitimately challenge for that job? Like could you have a kicking competition in the spring or is he not there yet?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Absolutely. I think if you're on this roster, no matter what position you play, you're competing. You're competing to win the job. I think everybody will have a fair chance winning whatever job it is, whether it be the kicker position or any other position.

But I would say that Jude has shown a lot of promise even from last year kicking in a game. You obviously see the leg talent, leg strength, all those things that amount to being a good kicker in this league.

Q. You guys decided to bring Ameer back. What did you see, think of that, and what did you see from him last year as a returner that got you to that point?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, multiple things. No. 1, good decision maker. I think when you're talking about the returner spot, you want a guy that when he's out there he makes good decisions, whether it's in traffic, whether it's in an open field. And then he obviously takes care of that football.

That's a priority No. 1.

Second thing you saw was production. The guy scored twice in this league, albeit one got called back, but he scored twice, which not many returners in the league last year did that. He's one of the few.

Then you're always talking about the character of a person and the competitive integrity. That guy has it. You see that in the manner in which he approaches the meetings. You hear the way he communicates with his teammates. When he's out there, he's the voice.

It's good to hear his voice in the meeting room, which you guys obviously don't hear, but he's able to do that. His teammates respect that because they know how important it is to him.

So you see just a leadership role from a returner standpoint show up, and that's why obviously he's had success and why we're happy to have him back.

Q. I think we saw Jevon kind of mix return coverage. How is that helping having a versatile guy like Jevon in the mix?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, absolutely. You know, again, on a game day, the roster size is so limited in terms of who you can use, so having the ability to have some flex in an emergency situation that can go back there and field a punt I think is critical.

He's obviously a special athlete. That's why he's had so



much success on defense. But that special athleticism translates to so many different skillsets. He's a guy that obviously can fit a variety of different molds, one of those being return ability. There is not many people in this league in general that have that ability to translate.

Like you see a defensive player with elite ball skills, a guy that can track it, which is why he's had production on defense. But also why I feel confident putting him back there in a situation.

Q. Obviously the kickoff rule is not as drastic as it was going into last year. A little bit of a tweak there with the touchbacks. How do you think that's going to work out?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, so like you said, it won't be as drastic of a rule change because we have tape of training camp a lot of our guys have done it.

But there are some differences now, so one of them being the touchback now being on the 35 yard line. So I think that's going to increase return opportunities. It's going to increase coverage opportunities as well.

The next thing is a formational difference. It might be a little nuanced, but the one thing you're able to do now instead of having two second level players on the frontline you can now have three.

So they're little changes, and I think it's allowed for a little bit more variety with what you can do in the return game, but it's also brought back a play that like I've said before was dissolving. So it's good to have this play be back and part of the game and be an integral part of winning and losing.

The drive start after one of those possessions is critical. You're the first play of offense when you're returning the ball; first play of defense when you're covering that kick.

For us, we been obviously trying to stay connected to the fundamentals it takes to put our offense and defense in good position after that specific play.

Q. I think you're pretty -- if I'm not mistaken, you're a pretty analytical guy. Do you know the numbers on starting at the 30 versus the 35?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, so No. 1, I would say I do believe in analytics, but that's not always the open line story to me. You have to watch the tape. So I could say the average drive start last year was on the 29 yard line. What does that look like based off kick location? What does that look like based off depth of kick? What does it

look like based off who you're covering?

That's where sometimes the number isn't always telling. Sometimes it has to be backed up by obviously the tape. But yeah, we try and stay connected to a little bit of those numbers, one of those being obviously the initial drive start after return being the 29 yard line.

Q. I just meant if you knew how much more likely a team was to score if they started at the 35.

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, that's always been something. We basically call it expected points based off where you start on the field. So expected points on the plus-35 obviously is going to be different than the minus-5 yard line.

And you see that percentage go higher and higher obviously the closer and closer you get towards your own end zone. So I'll give you an example: Plus-35 yard line increases your chances of scoring points, whether a field goal or a PAT, up to 80%.

Backed up, that percentage obviously starts to shrink. Let's say it's the minus-3 yard line that goes inside 10% in terms of expected points. Special teams, it's a direct correlation whether you're coming out with points or preventing points, and that's something, like I said, starting on offense, starting on defense, that series is critical for us to be able to position our offense and defense the right way.

Q. On a wider scale, we haven't spoken to you since the end of the season.

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah.

Q. When you went back and self-scouted and looked at last season, what did you come away thinking?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Just collectively?

Q. Yeah, maybe were you happy with it? Were you not happy with what you saw? Where did you maybe want to put concentration in the spring, summer?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Great question. So every year I do a deep dive on every single unit. I'll look at us, No. 1, and then look across the league. Just like I talked about analytics, I'll see where we favor in terms of numbers.

Again, the tape has to be revealing to me, too. I appreciate the fact that guys fought through the entirety of the season last year. You saw a lot of production happen towards the back end of the season, more consistent play, and the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

thing that I'm echoing to our guys over and over and over again is consistency is the truest measure of performance.

For us on special teams we want to be the most consistent unit on every phase, every game, doesn't matter where we play, is consistency.

When we do that, we put our team in position to win. We've obviously had a lot of explosive plays on special teams and we have given some up. So it's correcting those mistakes and obviously just being as consistent as possible.

The thing I appreciate with the guys now is the guys that return feel that. The new guys coming in are obviously embracing that and we're coming together as a team and competing and doing all the things we need to do.

Q. I know you don't sign the guys or whatnot, but I'm sure you have some say in -- when you have a punter who's a free agent, do you want him back or make a switch. What did you see from Gillan that you brought him back?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, No. 1, that is a difficult place to punt, right, our stadium. We embrace that. So when you are looking across the league of guys that have the ability to have success in that stadium, No. 1 being you look at guy that's done it before.

I believe Jamie had an awesome year last year. When you look at the numbers, again, that won't always be telling. What he did do a great job was he pinned the opponent inside the ten yard multiple times.

When you talk about playing complementary football, you pin the opponent inside the ten yard line, defense takes the field, expected points goes less and less percentage-wise.

He excelled in that fashion.

The second thing he excelled in was obviously the field punts in a windy situation, understanding the ability to control returners.

So Jamie just excelled in so many different attributes to be a successful punter in that stadium that we're happy it's back. He's hit the ground running and doing a nice job.

Q. Chris Board has a nice track record in a special teams role in this league. How important was that signing or how important can it be for you guys?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, Chris, No. 1 comes from a playoff team, so you bring a guy that was part of a winning

culture, and then you bring a guy in that is -- it's not his rookie year, right? Seventh year in the league. So just not the veteran experience. It's a guy that's produced consistently every year he's been in the league.

He's been one of the Top 5 leading tacklers on special teams for the past few years. You see all the traits physically that he has show up when he's doing all his drill work. Then you obviously see the mental side of the game, too. He's just covered so many kicks that he sees the game at a different speed than other people.

Where some guys may do the drills, they may do the technique, they don't always have the experience to say, I've been in this position. He's been in this position so many times and he's produced. So having a guy like Chris is awesome because even starting a drill in those practices it's like, Chris, you're the first guy up. Okay, fellas, that's exactly how I want it to like look.

We call those guys tone setters. It's not always something that they have to excel in. It's sometimes just your actions. He is a guy that embodies all that.

Q. How important is it to sign a guy like that? Was that a goal for you, that we need to find that guy, the tone setter, the veteran?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, no, he was a guy that I've followed the past few years. I'm like, I hope one day I get to coach this guy, so obviously when we signed him I was ultra excited because I know his ability and I know what he can do to impact this team.

So really happy. Really happy that we signed him, and excited to coach him.

Q. Who among the draft picks did you say, when they came in, you said, that's the guy, that's the guy?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: Yeah, so I evaluate everybody that's a projected draftable guy, and then undrafted free agents as well. Don't necessarily get into when a guy is picked and all that.

For me when I'm a guy awaiting these college guys, you see none of our game anymore translates to what they did in college in terms of the rules, right? New kickoff, new kickoff return, new punt, new punt return. Those are all completely different now.

You do see the purest form of football still: Block destruction, using your hands, ball skills, football IQ. You see those things show up offensively and defensively.



When I'm looking at these players I'm looking at what can they do? When I'm looking at everybody we accumulate in the draft process, okay, this guy has a skillset to do this, this guy has a skillset to do this.

I'll give you an example. Scattebo is a physical player. You see that with his running style. When I look at him, okay, he's going to have the toughness to be able to compete with interior core roles. I wouldn't have any issue matching him up against an inside backer in this league because I know he has that physical trait.

There is always a piece of every one of these draft picks I'm like, okay, this is how I can use him. Ultimately preseason will be telling for all these guys. Excited all the guys are here, and they've all come in with chips on their shoulder, excited to compete, and are learning the game, but also showing me why they belong in this league.

So I know I just singled him out, but there are other guys in that instance as well.

Q. I couldn't help but notice in rookie mini camp, and I get it, it's rookie mini camp, but while you were working with Scattebo, Abdul Carter was there, too, No. 3 pick in the draft. I can't imagine those guys playing special teams a lot. Is that something you're taking under consideration?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: You know, like we'll never get into roles this early in the year, but the one thing I will say about Abdul is regardless of where he was picked, that guy is a competitor. Obviously has a special skillset which is why he went so early.

I would be fired up if he was on our special teams units, you know, but we won't get into obviously the volume of snaps. That always depends on how much defense, offense a guy is playing.

The one thing I will say is like you gain from those instances like truly how competitive a guy is. When a guy has obviously the feel that he's a really good offense and defense player and still shows up and is willing to learn, willing put the effort, you're like, okay, we got the right football player.

Do I want 50 Abdul Carters? Absolutely. Yeah. Those guys are special, special players. But, yeah.

Q. Just to get back to Cam for a quick second, how much tackling has he done and do you have start from scratch?

MICHAEL GHOBRIAL: With any offensive player, like how

much tackling do they actually do unless there is a turnover. You don't see them pursue a ball carrier and go tackle.

The one thing I look at is how he tracks in blocking. So if you can track inside backer blitzing, if you can track a defense end pressuring off the edge, that's to me shows up in the skillset of tackling. Because I'm like, look, tackling is all about tracking.

If you track and have the ability to take an extra step, it's about form fitting at that point. So I do think that's something we got to stay connected to with any offensive guy, but specifically with him it's going to be more so the fit of the tackle. I know he can track because I see that with the block mechanics.

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