



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

Special Teams Coordinator Mike Priefer *5-22-19*

Special teams coordinator Mike Priefer:

Opening statement:

“Good morning everybody. I hope everybody is doing well. OTA No. 5 today. We are excited about the progress. I think the big thing that we are accomplishing in the OTAs is that we are learning how to practice. We are learning how to get from drill to drill, offensively, defensively and special teams wise. I know that Freddie has been talking about that a lot this spring and understanding how to practice and how to practice effectively, well and doing the little things better. Kind of setting the tone for getting us prepared for training camp here coming up in July.”

On the Browns selecting K Austin Seibert in the draft:

“Austin was the best kicker we felt coming out this year. He was the most experienced. He had, we felt like, the best leg. He had a great Combine, he had a great Pro Day. Spent a lot of time with him in Indianapolis and separately, had a couple of different interviews with him and really felt good about him and his mental approach to the game – understanding his craft, how he works and how his body works and how he kicks the ball. It felt like he was the best option for us at the time, and obviously, I’m not in charge of the draft, but (General Manager) John (Dorsey) and the personnel guys knew how we felt about him on special teams and how he could help us compete for that job. John did a great job in selecting him and here we go. It is going to be great competition between he and (K) Greg (Joseph).”

On the K competition, particularly given Joseph and Seibert missed kicks during last week’s OTA practice open to media:

“Where you guys were standing, I was trying to tell them to hit you guys with the ball just to make sure you guys were paying attention (*laughter*). Both those guys, I think right now are right about 9 for 10 in team. We will do another team session today. You guys probably saw them on the side. To be honest, we are working (P) Jamie (Gillan) in there as a holder and he has no experience because Jamie did all the kicking at Pine Bluff. He kicked off, punted and he kicked field goals so he has never been a holder. We had him working in those situations and those reps. Missed a couple because the holds were not great, but they are getting better, as well. It is a work in progress, but they are both very strong, very talented. I’m excited where they are.”

On the challenge for Gillan learning to hold:

“I have been there before with punters. In the NFL, punters need to hold as you guys know because we do not get a lot of time with the backup quarterbacks, backup receivers or whoever else can hold. At the end of the day, he is a very good athlete. He has worked very hard at it. He has made an amazing progress.”

On the biggest difference in Joseph’s and Seibert’s kicking style:

“I think they are both very similar. I think it is basically how they follow through or how they strike the ball. I think there are slight differences, but they are both strong-legged right-footed kickers. What I talk about a lot – you guys will hear me say this all year long – is for a place kicker to be effective, he has to have great timing so it doesn’t get blocked off the edge, he has got to have great elevation so he does not get blocked up the middle and obviously accuracy. Those three things play into it, and both of those guys do all three things well. We just have to continue. Right now, Austin does not have the timing down because the other three guys have worked out with Greg, (LS) Charley (Hughlett) and (P) Britton (Colquitt) in terms of the timing. We want them to be around 1.3, 1.30, 1.27 – 1.32 (seconds) is our parameters. Austin is a little bit slower than that right now, but as he continues to work with those guys, he will speed it up a little bit.”



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

On Joseph's working on his mechanics:

“He has worked hard at that, and that was basically the beginning of his approach. He was really inconsistent how he hit that first jab step, and that is what I noticed off of game tape last year. It was a little bit when he was coming out of college a year ago. He is much more consistent, much more effective now. “

On the process of picking the best players for kickoff and kickoff return:

“What we are doing right now is all technique work. What I have told these guys is, ‘Don’t give the officials an excuse to throw a flag. Don’t be that guy that’s going to [give the officials an excuse].’ The official, he doesn’t want to throw the flag, but if it is there, he is getting graded on every rep, as well. I explain that to our guys that he doesn’t want to throw the penalty but he will if it is a penalty. We have worked really hard on technique. We worked on it in Phase II and we are just doing the jog-through stuff against coaches. We couldn’t have done it against our players. We have talked about in meetings. We sold a lot, and now what we have been doing in Phase III and the OTAs is all technique, all fundamentals. We constantly go over footwork. We constantly go over hand placement. We constantly go over how we finish blocks effectively. Basically through that process, we are going to find out who the guys are that are going to be able to do that at a high level. They are they are not going to give up tackles and they are not going to get penalties. Both of those come into play to be honest with you.”

On when he first became aware of Gillan:

“Really, I saw him and he was on our list – our personnel guys do a great job and our scouts do a phenomenal job of identifying these guys. I looked at him on his college tape. Honestly, they did a lot of different things with him with the rugby style, moving him around. He is very inconsistent. I knew he had a good leg, but there are a lot of good legs in college football. When he really came on our radar, we had some films of (Coach Gary) Zauner’s kicking camp out in Arizona. He had phenomenal camp. I think he was the punter of the camp. I saw that tape and I was talking with (Assistant General Manager) Eliot Wolf and John Dorsey one day and they said, ‘Why don’t you just go down there one day and work him out?’ It was their idea. I said ‘OK’. Went down, and I had never been to Arkansas before. I have been all over the world, but I had never been to Arkansas before and I went to Pine-Bluff. He had a really good workout for us. We brought him into our top-30 visit, gave him a physical, he was healthy and the sky is the limit. He has a big-time leg.”

On if Gillan has a real chance to earn the starting job over P Britton Colquitt:

“We would not have brought him in – it is going to be a competition for the punting, holding for those guys for both kickers. I’m not really into camp legs. I know Britton is an older punter, but Britton was pushed last year and he was up for the challenge. I’m sure he’ll be up for it again this year.”

On if the Browns want to have 11 great special teams players on each unit:

“You said it. You said want to, and that’s what it comes down to. You have to want it here. They have to be smart enough not to get penalized. They have to obviously have the athleticism necessary to be great on kickoff coverage, punt coverage or whatever corps phase that he is on. We have some really good players here, and we are starting to identify who those players are. Through the rookies, through the veterans – I did not know this team – now, I am getting to know these guys and I understand who wants and who does not. The ones who want it, if they don’t start on offense or defense, they are going to help us out. The ones that don’t want it, if they don’t start on offense or defense, they are going to be somewhere else. They are going to be on the street. I think guys understand that. This team has really bought into what we are all about. It starts with our head coach and on down to the rest of the coaches, assistant coaches, coordinators, everybody. The type of player that we want, the type of players that helps us win football games, that is what we are trying to identify as well.

On if WR Antonio Callaway leads the way as the primary prospect for kick return:



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

“I think Antonio is part of the conversation, absolutely. (RB) Dontrell Hilliard is part of the conversation. (WR) Damon Sheehy-Guiseppi, the young man that we bought in here that is a speedster, he has entered the competition. We bought in (RB) D’Ernest Johnson, the college free agent running back; he has entered the conversation. We really have not identified the No. 1 guy yet. I think that is going to be a process. Really, when we are allowed to practice more often and do more returns and that type of thing and stay with them after practice a little bit longer and work with the jugs and the punters and the kickers, we are going to identify who that guy is going to be. That is more of a training camp type issue. We are starting to get an idea of who those guys are.”

On Sheehy-Guiseppi’s opportunity to make the team solely as a return specialist:

“In Minnesota, we had (Vikings KR/CB) Marcus Sherels, who did a great job for us for eight years, but Marcus was also our best gunner; he was also on the kickoff team. If Damon is going to be the guy, then he has to play on more than just return phases. You have to be a guy that is going to help us in the cover phases, as well.”

On if any members of the rookie class are standing out on special teams:

“(S) Sheldrick Redwine has done a nice job. (LB) Mack Wilson has done a nice job. (LB Sione) Takitaki has done a nice job. I like saying that name. Some of these college free agent guys have done a nice job. (LB) Willie Harvey has done a nice job as one of our linebackers. I don’t really like to go on because I am going to miss some players and they are probably going to get mad at me, but that is OK; they will get over it – they are rookies. At the end of the day, I think we have a really good class. We have a good group. Our personnel people and coaches identified some really good football players, and I am excited about where we are at right now and I am excited about our progress.”

On if a specific ranking for special teams needed or negative plays produced that impact wins:

“I don’t know if there is an exact number, per se. We always talk about complementary football. It is offense helping defense, defense helping offense and special teams helping both; both offense and defense helping special teams. It is all about field position. It is all about opportunity. It is all about helping our football team be in the best position possible to help us win games. Is there a number of great special teams, bad special teams, mediocre special teams? I’m not sure what that number is. I am sure it is out there. Ask around the analytical people, they are a lot smarter than I am. We hope to be a unit, all six phases, including field goal and field goal block that help our team win a lot of games here and that is the goal.”

On if the Browns could have won two or three more games last year with better special teams play:

“I don’t like to criticize what they did in the past. I know that they were not allowed to use some of the personnel that was necessary. I think that starts with the head coach, and I know Freddie has done a great job at saying, ‘Hey, Prief, whatever you need and it is going to help you win. If you need starters on offense, starters on defense to help on some of the phases, then use them and use the backups.’ Obviously, the backups are going to be on everything. To be honest with you, it starts with the head coach. Freddie has done a great job giving us a time in all three phases to be. We are a lot further ahead than I have ever been at some of the places I have been because of the time that the head coach has given us on special teams. That is huge.”

On Kitchens saying he would give more time to special teams that other coaches in the past:

“You can’t be lip service. When I read that quote, I started sweating so now the pressure is on. If he is going to give me the time, now we have to execute. That is fun. That is a great challenge. That is what I love about my job – get to work with the whole team to benefit our football team and help our football team win a lot of games if we play well, and that is the goal.”

On if the Browns were not able to use certain players on special teams last year:



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

“It looked like some of the better players on special teams were on the sideline on some of those plays, which I don’t understand. At the end of the day, you have to put your best players out there, and sometimes your best players are starters on offense or defense. You might have to use a (LB) Christian Kirksey, might have to use a (LB) Joe Schobert, might have to use (S) Damarious Randall on some of the core special teams to help us win. Those guys have bought in and they are going to be there if we need them to. I would not use them a lot – that would be dumb on my part. I want to win. It is not all about just special teams. It is about all – offense, defense and special teams. If we can use some starters on some of these phases, then great. If we don’t need them and we have good backups, we won’t need them.”

On how many players make the special teams core:

“I think your backup safeties, the third and fourth, sometimes fifth safety; your third, fourth, fifth wide receiver; your fourth, fifth, sixth linebackers; your third, fourth, fifth corner; second and third tight end; second and third running back. All those guys, your fullback, those guys make up your core special teams players. Those are the guys that the group of people on gameday – you guys know we only dress 46 players – so we are going to have to make sure our players come from that group.”

On conversations with head coaches when asking to use certain players on special teams:

“The great thing is that our head coach is not just lip service. He has already shown it in this early stage of us being together that he wants to do well on special teams. We have had (RB) Nick Chubb on every drill. We don’t put him out on the punt team, but the first couple of phases. He is in every meeting, even now. He has done all the drill work. (RB) Kareem Hunt is doing all the drill work. (TE) David Njoku is doing the drill work. These guys who are going to play a lot of offensive snaps for us. (CB) Denzel Ward is in every meeting – punt, punt return. He is always ready for us if we need him to because if I am going to ask those guys to perform for us, I have to prepare them. That would not be fair to them if I didn’t do that. When the head coach says get them ready, I am going to get them ready. If we need them, we need them. If not, we will get those backups ready to go.”

On if it is frustrating knowing players could contribute on special teams but are not made available:

“It can be frustrating, but I don’t let it frustrate me anymore. I guess when I was younger and a little bit more of hothead – my daughter is over here; she can attest to that I am a little bit of a hothead. At the end of the day, just like when I was in the Navy, you are given resources and you are given a job to. Take those resources and get the job done. Same thing in coaching football. The resources are the players and the time that you have. It is my job to get those players ready. If I can’t use some guys, I can’t use them, I have to move on and I have to understand the big picture. I think I do. If a guy is banged up and we need him just on defense, well, he is only going to play defense. If a guy is banged up on offense, same thing. At the end of the day, I am going to use the guys that are available. When Freddie says these guys are available and use these guys, I have to get the job done. That is my job to do that, and that is why this time of the year is so important. We are preparing so many players that could or could not play on gameday. We have to prepare them to be on there when we need them.”

On if there will be changes in technique and scheme:

“I think technique, absolutely. I think scheme, I am not out here. I am not going to out coach another coach on scheme. I think there are a lot of great special teams coordinators in our league that are in our division. Our division has great coaches. At the end of the day, it is my job to make sure that we have the best schemes possible to take away what our opponent does well or how we think we can attack them. It all comes down to technique, it all comes down to want to and it all comes down to the players.”

On if Sheehy-Guiseppi was dominated primarily with speed in college:

“I think so. I just saw his workout to be honest with you. I was down in Pine Bluff when he came in for the workout. I just watched that workout. He showed his speed and athleticism.”



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

On how S Eric Murray can contribute on special teams:

“Absolutely, he is a great one to bring up because he was very good at Kansas City. He was well trained. They are very well coached at Kansas City. He has want to, intelligence, athleticism. He knows if he is not starting on defense then he is playing on all four core phases and he has bought into that. I love having a guy like him around. We have had several guys like him. One of our linebackers here, Ray-Ray Armstrong, has done a phenomenal job. He has had a great spring. He has bought into what we are teaching and talking about. Guys like him, they are going to be the leaders of our special teams units. It is like anything else – offense, defense or special teams – you need leaders to be effective. You need leaders to be good.”

###