

PAT Experiment Results In Eight Missed Extra Points

Kicks Pushed Back To 15-Yard-Line; Only 5 PAT Kicks Missed In Entire 2013 Season

BY BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. (AP) — Reviews have been mixed around the league for the NFL's experiment with longer kicks on extra points.

Regardless, it appears there's a future for them.

Eight kicks from the longer distance — usually 33 yards — were missed during the first two weeks of the preseason. The 94.3 percent success rate (133 of 141) was below the regular-season rate (99.6 percent) from 2013 when the ball was snapped from the 2-yard line instead of the 15.

Only five of 1,267 short kicks were missed in 2013.

All of this summer's misses came with the ball snapped from the 15. Snaps will move back to the 2 this week and for the regular season.

NFL officiating director Dean Blandino says he believes longer PAT kicks are "in the league's near future." The results this preseason will be brought to the competition committee, and a proposal for change almost certainly will be presented to team owners at next March's annual meetings.

Blandino isn't sure the 15-yard line will be the focal point of any change.

As with any alterations to the game, coaches and players offered a variety of viewpoints.

San Francisco's veteran place-kicker Phil Dawson didn't get a chance to try a long extra point because the 49ers didn't score any touchdowns in their first two exhibition games. He sees the positive and negative sides of a longer kick.

"It could rear its head in a game where the kicker hasn't been on the field in a while," Dawson said. "It's hard to stay loose and then all of a sudden there's a sudden score, maybe a fumble recovery, kickoff return, interception return. You might not be super loose yet. It's one

thing to go out there and pop through a 20-yarder. You back up (another) 13-15 yards and you're a little stiff, you could possibly run into some problems there."

On the other foot ...

"Any rule change that's designed to highlight what guys do well, I'm all for it," Dawson added. "If that rule change is motivated by, 'Man, our kickers are really good and we want to showcase what they do well, I'm all for it.'"

Jets kicker Nick Folk, who has never missed an extra point in his seven-year career, believes longer tries make the more accurate kickers even more valuable. But "I think

most kickers want to keep it the same as it's been."

So does Tom Coughlin.

The Giants coach sees some inequity in moving extra point placements back. He rolled his eyes when asked to assess the experiment.

"I didn't think much of it when it was suggested," Coughlin said. "There are some ways to change that part of it if the intent is to make it more exciting. I think that certainly would be one of them."

"I think you have to be aware of the fact that it's a 33-yard (kick) in November when the wind's blowing

PAT KICKS | PAGE 8

Giants Win Protest, Game To Resume Today

CHICAGO (AP) — The San Francisco Giants on Wednesday became the first team since 1986 to win a protest filed with Major League Baseball, and will now get to resume a rain-shortened game the Chicago Cubs thought they had won.

MLB executive Joe Torre ruled on Tuesday night's game at Wrigley Field that was called after 4 1-2 innings. The Cubs were declared the winners by a 2-0 score.

Now, it is instead a suspended game that will resume at 4:05 p.m. CDT Thursday with the Cubs batting in the bottom of the fifth. The playoff-contending Giants and Chicago have a regularly scheduled game set to begin three hours later.

A short rainstorm caused a delay of more than 4 1-2 hours Tuesday after the grounds crew couldn't put the tarp down quickly. The umpires said the field was unplayable and called it at 1:16 a.m.

MLB ruled that tarp had not been properly put away after its previous use. Therefore, under provisions of Official Baseball Rule 4.12 (a) (3) there a "malfunction of a mechanical field device under control of the home club."

Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer called it a "just" decision.

"The last thing you want is a playoff team feeling bitter about the result here," Hoyer said. "And obviously it was caused by our organization. It's a good outcome."

"Hopefully we win the game. We have a 2-0 lead and pick it up from there," he said.

Hoyer said the Cubs had hoped all along to play a complete game on Tuesday night, and that the Wrigley Field grounds crew and the umpires were caught off-guard by a "weird weather pattern" and a lack of advance warning of the localized downpour.

That resulted in the field "wetter than usual," according to Hoyer, who added there was no rain at his house, located 12 blocks away from Wrigley Field.

Giants President Larry Baer said in a statement: "We appreciate Major League Baseball's careful review of our protest that will allow last night's game to be continued tomorrow."

"We want to thank Commissioner Bud Selig, Commissioner-elect Rob Manfred, Executive Vice President for Baseball Operations Joe Torre and the Chicago Cubs organization for their cooperation throughout this process," he said.

The last time a team won a protest filed with MLB was June 16, 1986, when St. Louis played at Pittsburgh. There were two rain delays at Three Rivers Stadium, and the Pirates correctly contended those didn't meet the National League's 30-minute threshold for cancellation.

MLB said in its statement that after watching video of the trouble at Wrigley Field and talking to Cubs' representatives, "the Cubs' inability to deploy the tarp appropriately was caused by the failure to properly wrap and spool the tarp after its last use."

Coyotes Continue To Prep For Opener



South Dakota defensive coordinator Jason Petrino instructs the defensive backs during Wednesday's practice at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. The 19 defensive backs on the 2014 Coyote roster go into the season with a combined 28 games of experience.

JEREMY HOECK/P&D

DB's Work To Get Ready For Ducks



South Dakota tight end Aaron Ramsey, right, listens to assistant coach Tim Triplett during Wednesday's practice at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

JEREMY HOECK/P&D

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VERMILLION — With all four starters gone from the secondary, the University of South Dakota football program has some holes to fill.

And a vast majority of the options to do exactly that are faces that have never played a snap for the Coyotes.

There are 19 defensive backs listed on the 2014 roster, and their combined game experience in a Coyote uniform? 28 games.

"Every day is a work in progress, but I see a lot of positives," senior defensive back Steve Tellefsen said after Wednesday morning's practice in the DakotaDome.

Tellefsen, a cornerback, played in eight games last season, recording 10 tackles as a back-up. He is the eldest of the group, although USD brought in two junior college transfers to provide immediate help — junior corners Michael Lilly and Chris Tyler.

The rest of the defensive backs include eight true freshmen, three redshirt freshmen and five sophomores.

And so, a week and a half from the Aug. 30 season opener at Oregon, the Coyotes are still using pencil to fill out a depth chart for the secondary.

"We just don't have enough games," head coach Joe Glenn said Wednesday. "We can't beat each other up enough in practice to really tell who's going to play when the lights go on."

Behind Tellefsen, the next most-experienced defensive back is sophomore safety Tyson Graham, a converted wide receiver. He played in all 12 games last season (not every one on defense) and recorded five tackles.

Then comes sophomore safety Zeke Lewis, who played in eight games last season. The other three sophomores (Will Armstead, Jacob Warner and Adam Juhl) didn't appear in a game, and neither did the three redshirt freshmen (Peter Hubert, Luke Worden and Graham Resseque).

The true freshmen include Dylan Jiles, Noah Roberts, Adam Harris, Andrew Gray, Alex Coker, Alex Gray, Brandon Colpitts and Isaac Armstead.

Whoever takes the field will be ready, said Lilly, a transfer from Santa Ana (California) City College.

"We'll be ready for the challenge, we just have to keep playing hard," he said. "We just have to get the calls right and make plays."

One of the adjustments Lilly said he has had to make is having two defensive schemes on the same play. For example, USD could call man-to-man defense on one side of the field and zone on the other.

About the only thing certain at this point is that 15 defensive backs are "in the mix," Glenn said.

"Who comes out of that, we'll see," he said.

If there's a silver lining to not having much experience in the secondary, it's that depth is being developed in a hurry, Tellefsen said.

"We have guys that can step in at any time and get the job done, so that pushes everyone to be better," he said. "We all really like each other, it's a blessing to be with these guys."

And yes, being part of a group tasked to replace four senior starters is a welcomed challenge, Tellefsen added.

"Nobody really knows us, and that drives us even more," he said. "If we keep preparing and do the little things, we'll be all right."

Being thrown into the fire right away in a place like Eugene, Oregon, should bring the secondary up to speed — literally — in a hurry, Tellefsen said.

"We've got a big future, but we still have to work hard to get there," he said.

Another Converted QB

Aaron Ramsey is trying to follow in the footsteps of a number of Coyote quarterbacks to find success at another position.

That recent list includes Tyler Wilhelm, who caught 22 passes last season as a tight end, as well as receivers Nick Meyer and Josh Vander Maten. Last season, Meyer caught 23 passes with one touchdown, while Vander Maten hauled in 19 passes with two scores.

Now comes Ramsey at the tight end position.

COYOTES | PAGE 7

Colleges Add Luxury Touches To New Stadiums

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Lining the brightly lit hallways of Populous, one of the leading architectural firms behind college sports, there are hundreds of scale models and graphic renderings of college football stadiums in various stages of renovation and construction.

There are blueprints for Kyle Field at Texas A&M, in the midst of a \$420 million redevelopment. There's a model of TFC Bank Stadium at Minnesota, the recent replacement for the Metrodome as home of the Golden Gophers. And there are pictures of McClane Stadium, the glitzy new home for Baylor.

Each project showcases ways Populous is helping schools to lure fans to their next-generation stadiums in an era where good seats are not enough: enhanced Wi-Fi, better video boards and party decks for socializing. The results are twofold: The flashy facilities offer a better game-day experience while also generating more revenue than their predecessors.

"When you do a stadium, it's not a normal building. It's a building, but it has to wrap this big stage where all this athletic drama takes place," explained Jeff Spear, a

senior architect at Populous who's been responsible for many of the projects, including the Baylor stadium. "What they want is a reflection of their university and a stadium that sells their brand."

When it comes to trends in stadium design, the folks at Populous are experts. The Kansas City-based company traces its roots back more than three decades, and has been responsible for everything from Reliant Stadium in Houston to the main Olympic stadiums in London and Sochi, Russia.

"The thing about college football is it's this big event where you're rooting for your alma mater," Spear said, "and now your alumni are returning to campus and spending money."

That's the hope, anyway. Flat-screen televisions have made the home viewing experience better than ever, and the rising costs of tickets and travel have sent many fans to watch games from the comfort of their couch. It's a problem that has plagued professional sports for years but has trickled down to colleges, where the prevailing notion was that the alumni would always show.

At Tennessee, in the heart of the football-crazed SEC, attendance sagged for years before a modest bounce-back last season. Yet empty seats still abound at cavernous Neyland Stadium, even with recent improvements that reduced capacity, improved premium seating and offered other enhancements, such as LED signage, better restrooms and wider concourses.

In the Big Ten, eight schools showed a decline in average attendance last season.

"We're grateful that we continue to sell out our stadium during some times in which it's not as easy as it once was," Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione said. "People have chosen to allocate their resources somewhere else. That doesn't necessarily mean they are less interested in following their favorite sports team. There are other demands on their resources."

To counter those demands, Oklahoma recently announced a \$370 million renovation to Memorial Stadium that will hardly add a seat. Instead, it will create new plazas — "fan cooling areas," for example — improved team spaces and the kind of sizzle that appeals to recruits.