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OCTOBER 26, 2009, 11:41 AM

## Kern waived; Berger new Broncos punter

By **MIKE KLIS** |  2 Comments

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The Broncos have signed NFL veteran and former University of Colorado punter Mitch Berger, who replaces Brett Kern.

It appears the Broncos were unhappy with Kern's inconsistency in directional kicking, plus his tendency to boot long, low-trajectory punts that were ideal for returning.

While Kern was 10th in the NFL with a 46.1-yard gross average, he was 27th with a 34.5-yard net after San Diego's Darren Sproles returned a punt for a touchdown last Monday night.

Kern also had an NFL-high six touchbacks on only 27 punts this year.

In making their first roster move of the regular season, the Broncos not only changed punters but the holder for kicker Matt Prater.

"We'll just have to work hard this week and do the best we can," Prater said. "Mitch has a lot of experience holding so we should be fine. I was sad, though, when I saw Brett pack his bag and leave. We were really close. He was like a brother to me. It's one of the tough parts about this game."

The Broncos worked out Berger last week and signed him Monday. This will be his 16th NFL season as a punter and kickoff specialist and the Broncos will be his 12th NFL team, counting the uniforms he wore in the preseason.

He was named to the Pro Bowl in 1999 and 2004.

Born and raised in Canada, Berger punted and kicked off for Bill McCartney's CU Buffaloes in 1992-93. Drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1994, Berger's long NFL career took him last season to the Pittsburgh Steelers where he wound up punting in Super Bowl XLIII.

He had a good game, too, averaging 46.3 yards on three punts to earn his first Super Bowl ring.

"I've had some incredible highs," Berger told the Denver Post's Woody Paige during Super Bowl media day in Tampa, Fla. "I've had some incredible lows. I'm not finished. I'll keep punting as long as I can. And when I can't punt anymore, maybe I can hang on a couple years as a holder."

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