



Crosby Gaining Confidence As Season Nears

By Mike Spofford

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When the 51-yard field goal left his foot in the fourth quarter at Seattle's Qwest Field last Saturday night, Mason Crosby didn't even need to watch it.

If he had, he would have seen that it likely would have been good from 61 yards. But the fact that he didn't have to watch it was just as important.

"As soon as it came off my foot I knew I'd hit it well and made that one," Crosby said. "Sometimes when you hit them and you see it going in, I take my eye off it. I knew nothing was going to go wrong there."

"It felt good to hit a longer one in a game situation, to start moving in that right direction for the season."

Crosby has been moving in that direction ever since a rather shaky first week of training camp, when punters **Tim Masthay** and **Chris Bryan** were working out some kinks as holders. There were some ugly kicks during field-goal periods in practice that first week, but to his credit, Crosby didn't complain.



It would have been easy to, and he might have been justified. Crosby is coming off a 2009 season in which he endured the worst slump of his career. During the second half of the year, he missed a field goal of 43 yards or closer in four straight contests. The fourth one came in Pittsburgh in what turned out to be a one-point loss for Green Bay.

So it would have been natural to assume that doing everything in training camp to keep Crosby confident and in a rhythm would be a priority. But instead, with Masthay and Bryan competing for the punting job and the coaching staff insisting that the punter be the team's holder so the specialists can maximize their practice time together during the regular season, Crosby had to sacrifice his consistency while the new holders searched for theirs.

"Mason has handled using two holders like a true professional," special teams coordinator Shawn Slocum said. "He's been very instrumental in their development, and that's an important part of the process. Being the guy who's kicking the ball that they're holding, I think it's very important, and he's done great with it."

Crosby admitted it's been difficult switching back and forth between the two, and that's likely to continue the rest of the preseason as Masthay and Bryan take turns as the holder for an entire game. But he has reached a point where he'll feel comfortable with his holder no matter who it turns out to be.

"We worked through a little bit of growing pains the first couple days, but we put in a lot of work and a lot of effort," Crosby said. "Those guys, give credit to them completely. They really work hard at what they do -- punting, holding, everything they do on the field. It's good to see these first two preseason games go pretty solid."

That solid work has Crosby 3-for-3 on field goals, hitting from 33, 34 and 51 yards, and 6-for-6 on extra points. Masthay held for him in the preseason opener against Cleveland, while Bryan was the holder last Saturday in Seattle.

Crosby's kickoffs have been impressive, too, and evidence that the core strength and flexibility work he put in during the offseason was worth it. He has boomed six of 11 kickoffs into the end zone, with two touchbacks. Two of the four kickoffs that have been run out of the end zone were 7 and 5 yards deep, respectively, kicks that are probably touchbacks during the regular season when return units don't take as many risks.

In addition, two of his five kickoffs that have not reached the end zone have come down on the 1-yard line, and he's been successful when asked to kick directionally.

"I'm just trusting my steps," Crosby said. "However I line up, I'm trusting the ball is going to go where I want it to. That's been my process all spring through field goals, kickoffs, everything. I do my operation, do my steps, and let it happen. Don't overthink it."

That approach developed in part from what Crosby learned in the offseason as he reflected on last season's slump. As frustrating as it was at the time, he called it a positive learning experience, was thankful to the organization for publicly supporting him as he battled through it, and believes in retrospect it's potentially something he needed to endure to become a better kicker.

Thus far, he's having arguably the best training camp of his four-year career. Crosby did miss one field goal during practice on Tuesday, from 43 yards out, going 6-for-7 overall from distances ranging from 28 to 45 yards. Prior to that, by unofficial count he had made 17 of his previous 18 attempts in practice.

With the early holding hiccups in camp behind the unit, Slocum also feels Crosby is having his best summer in Green Bay.

"Probably so," Slocum said. "He's further along in his career. He's at a point now where I expect and he expects to have an excellent season."

How excellence will be defined is up to Crosby and Slocum. Both have stated in the past they'd like to see his field-goal percentage in the 80s, a mark he has neared but never quite hit. He came oh-so-close his first two years, at 79.5 percent in 2007 and 79.4 percent in 2008, before dropping to 75.0 percent with the late-season struggles in 2009. Crosby also would like to post more touchbacks than his career high of 17 set two years ago.

He knows he's capable of achieving all of that, as are his teammates and coaches. With the work he's done in camp so far, he's hoping there will be fewer and fewer kicks he'll actually have to watch.

"I feel like I have the right mindset," Crosby said. "I feel I've done a really good job of building and not taking steps back, and making sure that each day I'm doing something to get better. As far as my mindset coming into the season, I feel this might be my best one."

"I put a lot of stock into what I practice, but also (it helped) being very objective with the hold and everything, how we worked through that, not getting frustrated, not letting things work on me at all. It feels good, and I'm looking forward to

the season. We still have a few more weeks here to just make sure everything's tight, because once the regular season starts, there's no excuses for anything."

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Lions RB DeDe Dorsey getting his legs back

BY DAVE BIRKETT
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How could DeDe Dorsey look so good in one exhibition game and so bad in another? Camp legs.

Dorsey caught four passes for 41 yards and carried four times for 21 yards against the Broncos, sparking two fourth-quarter scoring drives. Against the Steelers, he had seven carries for 20 uninspiring yards and lost a fumble inside the Pittsburgh 10.

"Anybody who saw the first preseason game, I had zero legs," Dorsey said. "I couldn't hardly walk, let alone run. I had a very horrible game. This game felt a little better -- legs came. Hopefully as the body gets acclimated to being out there and playing again, just get performances back to where they've been."

Schwartz said Dorsey played well against the Broncos but needs to shine on special teams to separate himself in a crowded tailback mix. Maurice Morris and Aaron Brown also are fighting for time behind Jahvid Best and Kevin Smith.

"He's had a good camp," Schwartz said of Dorsey.

Injury report: Receiver **Calvin Johnson** did not take part in either of Tuesday's practices because of a sore left ankle.

"It's football. Stuff happens," Johnson said. "I'll be all right."

Defensive ends **Jared DeVries** and **Lawrence Jackson**, kicker **Jason Hanson**, offensive lineman **Trevor Canfield**, and defensive backs

Paul Pratt, **Aaron Berry** and **Jack Williams** also sat out both sessions. DeVries returned to practice Monday after missing most of camp with a leg injury.

Louis Delmas, **Brandon Pettigrew**, **Stephen Peterman**, **Shaun Hill**, **Jason Fox** and Smith sat out one session, and safety **David Roach** left the afternoon practice with what appeared to be a right calf injury.

Dizon surgery: Linebacker **Jordon Dizon** said he's still a few weeks away from having surgery on his left knee.

Dizon, who suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in the second quarter of the exhibition opener against the Steelers, said he also suffered damage to his medial collateral and posterior cruciate ligaments and strained his calf and hamstring.

By waiting on surgery, Dizon said doctors are hoping his stretched MCL and partially torn PCL will heal themselves.

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