



Crosby happy to hit a game-winner

By Mike Spofford

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He knew it was good when it left his foot, and even though it was just the preseason, hitting a game-winner meant something to **Mason Crosby**.

In the bigger picture, Crosby felt his 50-yard field goal as time expired on Friday in Indianapolis was more important for the specialist trio of snapper **Brett Goode**, holder **Tim Masthay** and himself to nail the "operation" in a last-second situation. It helped for the young players on offense to execute the drive to set up the kick, too.

But Crosby won't deny how good it felt to stroke one "pure" like that, in a tie game with the clock hitting zero.

"As soon as I hit it and lifted my head, I was already putting my hands up, because it was one of those that came off my foot and felt great," Crosby

said. "I was waiting for Tim to stop watching it."

Crosby wanted to celebrate at least a little, and why not? He hadn't made a game-winner since his first pro game back in the 2007 opener, a 42-yarder against Philadelphia.

Since then, he'd gotten just three other attempts. In 2008, a 52-yarder at the Metrodome leaked barely wide to the right, and a 38-yarder at Chicago was blocked. Last season, a 53-yarder at Washington in Week 5 hit the upright.

Crosby has never dwelled on those misses, but like any kicker he remembers them, just as fans do. He's never faced a crisis of confidence in clutch situations, though, and for good reason. The blocked one in Chicago wasn't his fault, and the other two were well-struck. Last year's kick in Washington hit near the top of the left upright and distance-wise might have been good from 65.

"I think Mason is fully confident, just like he should be," Goode said.

He's maintaining just as much confidence in his onside-kick ability, another beneficial situation to come up in preseason on Friday. Rookie **M.D. Jennings** recovered Crosby's successful onside kick with 35 seconds left after a touchdown and two-point conversion had tied the game.

"I hadn't been on the field since early in the third quarter," said Crosby, who has executed a successful onside kick each of the last two years – at New England last season and at Arizona in the 2009 playoffs. "To go out and have that as my first kick since then, it was a little challenging, but I just trusted it."