

Notebook: Crosby credits field goal streak to preparation, focus

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Mason Crosby credits his 2011 kicking groove to refining his technique and weekly preparation regimen the last four years.

Crosby, a fifth-year pro, has made 23 straight field goals, which is the team record and tops the 17 straight Chris Jacke hit in 1993. Crosby still isn't much past halfway to the NFL record for most consecutive field goals — Indianapolis' Mike Vanderjagt made 42 straight from 2002 to 2004, followed by Gary Anderson's 40 in 1997-98 and Matt Stover's 36 in 2005-06.

"I've learned a lot about how to be a pro," Crosby said, "what works for me and what doesn't over these four years. This year, it's kind of come together."

Crosby's usual week goes like this: On Monday, he writes in his journal about all his kicks and kickoffs, which is the final step in putting that game in the past and moving on to the next one. On Wednesday, the first practice day of the week, he works on any technique tweaks and holds his longest kicking session of the week. Thursday is more for mental preparation,

including film work and mental rehearsal. On Friday, he fine-tunes any adjustments made Wednesday.

"I'm not over-thinking games either," Crosby said, "I'm allowing the whole process to take place. The night before the game, I'll think about it a little bit, and then game day I focus in and know I'll need three hours of 30-second increments with sharp focus to be successful."

Shawn Slocum, the Packers' special teams coach, said another factor in Crosby's kicking groove is continuity with fellow specialists Tim Masthay, the holder, and Brett Goode, the long snapper.

The three worked together all last season, and this is the longest stretch Crosby has worked with the same kicking unit in his five seasons.

"It's not only the kicker," Slocum said. "That's very important. If he can count on the ball being placed and leaned properly each time and the laces show up pointed at

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the goal post most of the time, the whole process has a lot less seams in it.”

Bursting pipes: Coach Mike McCarthy remembered the Packers’ turning-point loss at Tampa Bay in 2009 as a day at Raymond James Stadium that started badly even before kickoff in what would be a 38-28 loss to the previously winless Buccaneers.

The Packers dropped to 4-4 at the halfway point of ’09 after that loss but since are 30-8.

McCarthy said that before the game he was standing just outside the training room in the visitors’ locker room when a hot water pipe burst over his head.

“It didn’t get much better from there,” McCarthy said. “It was crazy. Water’s flowing all over the place, it took them about 20 minutes to turn it off. The locker room was flooded, guys were out in the hall getting taped. We went out and the game started pretty good for us. I did a bad job that day. It’s a game we remember, they had not won a game, they were coming off their bye week. Our team was reminded of it in the Wednesday team meeting. It was definitely a wake-up call.”

McCarthy said he was disappointed in himself for failing to stop the Bucs’ fourth-quarter comeback from an 11-point deficit. In the past, he has said he probably worked the team too hard in practice that week trying to get the players to put behind them the second of two emotional

losses to Brett Favre’s Minnesota Vikings.

“Every time you can’t get the game turned around as a head coach, I take that very personally,” McCarthy said Thursday. “We had a chance to jump out in front that game and we never got it back. Then in the fourth quarter with the sacks and things that went on there, just felt like I didn’t do a very good job.”

Extra points: Linebacker Desmond Bishop, guard T.J. Lang and running back Ryan Grant returned to practice after missing Wednesday. Bishop didn’t practice Wednesday because of the death of his grandmother, Lang because of his father’s health problems and Grant because of a cut on his knee.

The only Packers players who didn’t practice Thursday were left tackle Chad Clifton (hamstring) and outside linebacker Frank Zombo (hamstring). McCarthy has declared Clifton out this week, and Zombo also isn’t expected to play.

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