

There was yelling from the linemen toward the sidelines, some directions shouted out by the coaching staff and, just like that, Pitt's offensive unit was replaced with the kicking team. Seconds later, redshirt junior Kevin Harper blasted a 46-yard field goal that split the uprights down the middle. Before anyone on the field had a chance to catch their breath, the team split into position drills and was moving full-speed ahead.

"I'm getting used to staying around Coach Graham during practice," said Harper, "because you never know when he's going to call for a kick. It's not just the other guys who have to stay on their toes. We're all moving fast."

Harper said that the practices have been just as different for him as they have for every other position player, as he and the kicking unit are adjusting to faster practices with different obligations.

"The last few years, we would know exactly when we were going to kick and what it was all about," Harper said. "This is more live kicking — more like a game situation, even. At the end of practice today I had to run 90 yards down the field to kick an extra point. I didn't see it coming. It really keeps you going."

Pitt's punters are on the same page as Harper. Redshirt sophomore Matt Yoklic, for example, said the kickers are involved more with the rest of the team during conditioning and drills.

"We're definitely running a lot more," Yoklic said. "When it comes to the conditioning aspect, we're out there with everyone else, doing the same things. Practice is different in that way. As far as the punting itself, it's still about getting the ball out and getting good hang-time on it. There are just a few changes on the punt formation itself, but really nothing too big."

Yoklic and Harper each backed up All-Big East performer Dan Hutchins — who punted and kicked field goals — last season. Each mentioned that they're preparing to step into a big-time role for the Panthers this season.

Harper, who handled kickoff duty for Pitt in 2010, mentioned that his leg feels better than ever and he feels like he will be improved in nearly every aspect of his game by the time kickoff begins in September.

"The leg feels great," he said. "I'm just looking forward to a great season. I think we're all looking forward to that."