

# Neil Rackers

Contributed by Chris Yandek  
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Being a special teams player of the week for a kicker can be considered a big deal when you make three 50 plus yard field goals in one game. Arizona Cardinals kicker Neil Rackers hit one 50 and two 55 yard field goals in week seven's 25-17 win over the Seattle Seahawks. Neil Rackers was awarded his first NFC week seven special teams player of the week. He joins only Morten Andersen as the only other kicker to make three 50 plus field goals in one game.

Listen to the Neil Rackers Interview

{audio}http://thesportsinterview.com/mp3/NeilRackers.mp3{/audio}

First off how are you?

"I am doing good."

What was it like to be awarded NFC week seven special teams player of the week for three 50 plus field goals in the 25-17 win against the Seattle Seahawks on October 24, 2004?

"Well, it was obviously an honor. It's nice to go out and get the job done for the team. Especially to have a performance like that in a win."

You join Morten Andersen as the only other kicker in NFL history to make three 50 plus yard field goals in a single game. Tell me what that feels like.

"To be mentioned in the same sentence with Morten Andersen, I can only hope to have a career as wonderful as his."

You were signed as a free agent in the middle of last year's 2003 NFL season. Why did you decide to sign with the Arizona Cardinals?

"Well, it was a good opportunity. I had just come back from surgery. Arizona is a phenomenal place to kick. I have my snapper from college out here Nathan Hodel and a wonderful holder in Scott Player. It's just a good situation."

How much energy does Emmitt Smith bring to the entire Arizona Cardinals team coming from the Dallas Cowboys where he won numerous Super Bowls?

"Well, to be a running back in the NFL for as many years as he has obviously he's gotta have a tremendous character. He is just a great asset for the younger guys. You just see him in the locker room and teaching the younger guys about the game. Obviously his knowledge is priceless on the field. He is an excellent aspect of our team."

The Arizona Cardinals are currently 3-5 halfway through this season and two games out of first place in the NFC behind first place Seattle who's 5-3 and St. Louis who's 4-4. Does everyone on the team still think this team has a shot of winning the division or at least making the playoffs?

"Well, I think that has gotta be your goal. If our team does things right we are sitting at 5-3 right now. We blew a 16 point lead with six minutes left to go against the San Francisco 49ers. We lost by three to Atlanta and turned the ball over three times in the redzone. We just got to find a way to get it done. We have the opportunities, just got to get it done."

What are your thoughts on the NFC West division overall with the Seattle Seahawks, St. Louis Rams, and San Francisco 49ers?

"Well, I think it's a strong division and competitive. We got to go out and win those divisional games. I think we have an opportunity."

What are your thoughts on Arizona Cardinals head coach Dennis Green and where he has taken this team in his first season?

"Well, I have learned to go out and take advantage of your opportunities. He's gonna give us the opportunity for the long run. I can't speak for the rest time as obviously I am a kicker, but I have built some confidence from coach in my abilities. He isn't afraid to hit the long ball."

What are your thoughts on Arizona Cardinals special teams coach Kevin O'Dea and how he has helped you and your progress?

"Well, we did a lot of work in the off season on kickoffs and field goals as well. He has given us a lot of time. We also have a great routine going. Thus far I think he has done a wonderful job."

You spent the three years with the Cincinnati Bengals before coming to the Arizona Cardinals. What was it like playing your first three years with the Cincinnati Bengals and that organization?

"Well, I was treated well by the organization. The conditions I was kicking under weren't the greatest. We had an interesting field out there the first couple of years and it didn't do us any favors. It's one of those deals where I am much more grateful for the opportunities that I have with the conditions I am kicking in now."

Do you think in general NFL kickers are under appreciated in the NFL?

"No. I think more so in college than the NFL because the competition is so even across the NFL. A lot of games come down to kickers. I think the players and coaches realize that you are appreciated more at this level."

In your college days you set the University of Illinois season scoring mark with 110 points as a senior in 1999. What was that like for you and what do you remember from your college days at the University of Illinois?

"Well, again it was an honor. It's a tribute to our offense. We were scoring a lot of points and getting a lot of opportunities to kick field goals. If you go out and execute you are going to rack up the numbers pretty quickly. I just remember how close as a group of guys we were. We went out to dinner on Thursdays and have anywhere from 30 to 50 guys. It was just a really good time. We were a really close team. It's nice after the previous three to four years to finally end on a bowl appearance."

What were your thoughts on the Big Ten Conference and playing against the Michigan's, Ohio State's, and all the other tough Big Ten Universities?

"Well, at that time I considered it the best conference in college football. We just kinda beat each other up every week. There was no gimme game. Playing in front of 110,000 people in Michigan was just a huge rush from an 18 to 21 year old guy."

As a former Big Ten player what were your thoughts on the fact that instant replay is now being used in the Big Ten?

"I think it's a good thing. A lot of people say it disrupts the game, but it seems there were many calls at crucial times that were costing teams victories. I think it's something they needed to look at and was a good decision."

Finally, what do you want to accomplish the rest of your NFL career?

"Well, my goal every year is to be above 85 percent in field goal percentage. I said this year I wanted to be 35 percent on touchbacks and we're close, but not quite there yet. We have some work to do."

