



New York Jets

Brad Smith's 106-yard kickoff return gives needed spark to NY Jets in 29-15 win over Colts

By [Star-Ledger Staff](#)

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Brad Smith returns a kickoff for a 106-yard touchdown for the NY Jets in Sunday's game against the Colts.

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INDIANAPOLIS — Brad Smith stood in front of his blue metal locker at Lucas Oil Stadium, stunned.

He had just been informed his 106-yard kickoff return for a touchdown was the longest play of any kind in New York Jets history.

"That's awesome," Smith said after the Jets' playoff hopes stayed alive with Sunday's 29-15 victory over the previously unbeaten Colts, who pulled Peyton Manning one series into the second half.

"All the great players that have played here, especially in the last few years with Leon (Washington) and Justin Miller and those guys — that's a testament to (special teams coach Mike) Westhoff and the guys he puts on the field."

With their offense producing only a field goal on the way to 9-3 halftime deficit, the Jets needed a spark.

Smith provided it.

"It's one of those, 'Ah, stay in.' Then, 'Oh, oh, great job. Way to bring it out,'" Jets coach Rex Ryan said. "We felt good about our return chances. Brad did a great job, had super blocking, just a super play. It lifted us."

The Colts two kickoffs in the first half went for touchbacks, all reaching the middle of the end zone.

Tired of simply fielding the ball, Smith said he had a green light from Westhoff. When he saw the first kickoff of the second half come down a little flatter and little faster, it was an easy decision.

He bolted toward the wedge blocks of Rob Turner and Mike DeVito as quickly as possible.

"They did a great job of setting up the block and making the read definite," Smith said. "We had a couple guys on the double team, and after you hit the double team, you try to break to the outside and get up the sideline, and that's exactly what happened."

Smith's return is tied for the second-longest kickoff return in NFL history, two yards' shy of Ellis Hobbs' record, which came against the Jets on Sept. 9, 2007. Smith's 106-yarder is tied in NFL history with Roy Green (St. Louis, 1979), Noland Smith (Kansas City, 1967) and Al Carmichael (Green Bay, 1956).

Only one of Jets' five first-half possessions against the Colts went for more than 30 yards, netting a field goal.

"That gave us all the momentum in the world," Jets running back Shonn Greene said of Smith's return. "Just to come out after halftime, have that happen and go up on them, it's a great confidence builder.

"We needed that. I think the momentum carried on to the defense."

Smith's kickoff return is the Jets' second special teams score of the year, and he has both. He returned a blocked punt four yards for touchdown against New England on Nov. 22.

It's also a continuation of the former Missouri quarterback being more involved in the Jets' success. He threw a 27-yard pass for a first down out of punt formation on fourth-and-7 in a 26-3 victory at Tampa Bay Dec. 13.

In a 19-13 win at Buffalo on Dec. 3, Smith had a key 21-yard run.

"I'm so grateful to God for the opportunity to contribute to this team where it's headed now," Smith said. "We've got one more game to play in this regular season, and hopefully we can get in the playoffs."

The Jets, who clinch a playoff spot with a win Sunday against Cincinnati, were better overall on special teams.

A week after botching three field goal attempts in a 10-7 home loss to the Falcons, the Jets had Smith's touchdown return and made both field goal attempts against the Colts, Jay Feely hitting from 35 and 43 yards.