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Good Sense of Timing Saves Feely and Jets

By GREG BISHOP

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Jay Feely has worked as a licensed financial adviser and a professional place-kicker. But his real strength, at least for the past 18 months, has been crisis management.

On the field, Feely has helped rescue the Jets' season, filling in for the injured starter Mike Nugent and kicking 12 field goals at a 75 percent success rate. Off it, Feely went as liquid as possible with his investments a year and a half before the financial crisis hit.

This is Feely, according to his teammates, who have little trouble rattling off his strengths.

"He's got a lot of wisdom," long snapper James Dearth said. "Politically, he knows a lot of information. He's good at golf. He gives great feedback. He's basically good at everything he does."

This has been the strangest season of Feely's eight-year career. He was dumped by the Dolphins in the off-season, despite making 21 of 23 field goals in 2007. He started the season unemployed and was picked up by the Jets after Nugent sustained a thigh injury in the season opener.

And now this: Nugent practiced in a limited role on Wednesday, and he could play this week.

"It has been strange," Feely said. "You go through struggles, and they help you mature as a man. I hate being away from my family, but you learn from it. It hasn't been easy professionally, either."

Feely made four field goals last Sunday against the Bills. He also connected on a 52-yard attempt to force overtime against the Raiders a few weeks back.

But his knack for timing came in handy far from the confines of the football field. In 2005, while playing for the Giants, he met Peter Grandich, a financial expert who also did some work



Peter Grandich, second from right, was the keynote speaker at a recent financial seminar attended by (from left) former NY Jet Sack Exchanger Joe Klecko, NY Jet placekicker Jay Feely, and NJ Jets punter Reggie Hodges.

as a chaplain for the Giants. Grandich said he gravitated to Feely. They shared a Christian faith, a love for sports and backgrounds in finance. Through the years, they kept in touch, and Feely attended a Grandich financial seminar last month.

“An outstanding young man,” Grandich said. “You would love to have him as a son, or better yet, a son-in-law.”

Based on conversations with Grandich, Feely took all his investments except the long-term ones and his 401(k) out of the market 18 months ago. Now, based on the information he received at the seminar, Feely is ready to move back in.

“You can never time the markets,” Feely said. “I don’t pretend to try and do that. It’s not a sound investment strategy to try and do it, either. When you see underlying problems, it’s prudent to step back. People don’t do that because they have greed, and they fear missing out on big returns.”

With one crisis effectively averted, Feely latched on with the Jets, playing in the familiar confines of Giants Stadium, after Nugent’s injury. He did not have training camp to build relationships with teammates. He did not have a regular holder early on. The Jets used two punters, Ben Graham and Reggie Hodges. His family was not in the area for support.

Still, he fit in immediately.

“You don’t know how a guy is going to do until you’re put in those pressure situations where the game is on the line,” Coach Eric Mangini said, referring to last-second field goal in Oakland. “That was a pressure kick.”

Feely said he did not consider his situation temporary, but it could end as early as this week if Nugent returns.

Grandich, for one, could see Feely entering several different arenas after football — perhaps politics, sports announcing or a return to financial advising.

“But he’s shown a lot of leg,” Grandich said. “No matter what happens with the Jets, he’s done enough to catch on with another team.”



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