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Tommie Gets His Kicks On Special Teams, Plus While Playing In Vikings' Secondary

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Emerald's Jeremy Tommie is the Vikings' kicker and punter, but he's also a vital part of Emerald's defense as a defensive back. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Emerald High School punter and kicker Jeremy Tommie has proven he has possibly the best foot in the Lakelands, but he isn't very interested in spending the majority of games on the sideline waiting for intermittent opportunities to play.

After spending his first two seasons solely kicking, Tommie has pulled double-duty this year also playing at defensive back, where he'll line up once again when the Vikings play their first playoff game since 2005 when they travel to face

Southside at 7:30 p.m. today in the first round of the Class AA playoffs.

Emerald reached the postseason by winning three of its final four regular season games, giving coach Mike Clowney his first playoff appearance in three seasons with the Vikings.

Tommie suffered a torn meniscus during a scrimmage against Clinton in August, but missed only two games and has since proven to be one of Emerald's most reliable players. He's made 7-of-10 field goal attempts and his past five punts have all landed within the opposing team's 20-yard line

through Emerald's last five games.

It's his ability as a defensive player, though, that has caught the attention of the Vikings' coaching staff. "He's done a good job as far as coming along and working to get better as a kicker," Clowney said. "I actually think he likes playing the field more than being a kicker."

Tommie admits that only being able to come on the field a couple times a game as a kicker isn't always a thrilling role to play. "It's boring just being a kicker," Tommie said.

Because he was looking to become more productive, Tommie prodded Clowney about helping out in other areas on the team. "I didn't get to (play defense) much last year so I talked to coach Clowney about playing more defense this year," Tommie said.

The Vikings reluctance to put a kicker, usually a thin position as far as depth on a team, in a role where they have an increased chance at getting hurt was something that initially kept Tommie from playing two positions. "Before we didn't want him to play other places because we didn't want to get him hurt," Clowney said. "This year, we sort of said, 'He's proven he's an athlete so we'll give him the opportunity to play some other places for us.'" "He's played wideout, (defensive back) and then he wound up getting hurt in the Clinton scrimmage so your worst fear kind of comes true."

Once he recovered from being injured, Tommie's versatility was too apparent to keep him solely at kicker. "He's got so many other talents and at so many positions, he's the best one we've got," Clowney said. "We were in a situation where it was a must-win, so there was no point in holding him."

Through eight games in the Vikings' secondary, Tommie has 10 tackles and one tackle for a loss. Playing defense has allowed the athletic ability of Tommie, who also plays on Emerald's boys soccer team, to shine through. "He plays soccer and he's also a good basketball player. He's just a good athlete," Clowney said. "When you throw him out there and you say, 'All right, this is what you do,' he does some things you can't coach just being athletic."

As a kicker and punter, Tommie has matured past simply being able to boot the ball deep to where he's capable of placing the ball wherever it needs to go. "You've got a lot of guys where you can say, 'He's got a strong leg,' but all he can do is kick it straight down the middle of the field," Clowney said. "That's about all they can do. The one thing that's

unique with Jeremy is he's got the skill to be able to place the ball anywhere you want to place it."

Playing defense and special teams has also made him a more attractive option for colleges. "I talked to a college a couple weeks and they said, 'We're actually looking for a kicker that plays,' because these guys feel that being on the field makes these guys more competitive," Clowney said. "A lot of times you'll look at a kicker and all he'll have to do is kick. If he makes it, he makes it, but if he misses, people will say, 'Oh, he didn't have enough invested in it.' "Right now, (Tommie) being able to play reps, he's got the same amount invested as the other guys playing offense and defense."