



RICHARD HIGHTOWER

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR

15TH NFL SEASON x 6TH WITH 49ERS

Richard Hightower is in his 15th season in the NFL and fifth as the 49ers special teams coordinator. He returned to San Francisco in 2017 after previously serving as assistant special teams coach with the team in 2015.

From 2017-20, the 49ers kicking unit ranked tied for second in the NFL in made field goals (124) and fifth in field goal percentage (88.6). In addition, San Francisco's punt coverage ranked second over that timespan, holding opponent punt returns to an average of 6.2 yards per return (Ind. - 5.7).

In 2020, Hightower helped P Mitch Wishnowsky record the ninth-most punts inside the 20-yard line (25) in the NFL while finishing in the Top 12 in both net (41.6, 12th) and gross (46.9, 11th) average. K Robbie Gould converted 19 of 23 (82.6 pct.) field goal attempts and earned NFC Special Teams Player of the Week honors in Week 12.

In 2019, Hightower led the 49ers special teams unit that had an average starting field position of the 32.1 yard line in 2019, ranking second in the NFL (NE - 32.7). San Francisco also held opponents to an average starting field position of the 24.7 yard line, which ranked seventh. K Robbie Gould connected on 23 of 31 field goal attempts and finished the season with 110 points, marking his third-consecutive 100-or-more point season with the 49ers. He was also named Special Teams Player of the Month for December for the third-consecutive season since joining the 49ers in 2017. Rookie P Mitch Wishnowsky registered a 44.9 punt average which ranked second among all rookies in franchise history (min. 20 punts). WR Richie James Jr. ranked seventh in the NFL in punt return average (8.0) and 10th in kickoff return average (21.4).

Under Hightower's tutelage in 2018, San Francisco's special teams units flourished. K Robbie Gould set the 49ers single-season franchise record for field goal percentage (97.1), as he connected on 33 of 34 field goal attempts and finished the season with 126 points. He also set the franchise record for most consecutive field goals made (33) and finished the season connecting on each of his final 23 attempts. Gould was named NFC Special Teams Player of the Month for December and was a two-time recipient of the NFC Special Teams Player of the Week Award (Week 2 & 15). Rookie WR Richie James Jr. was named All-NFC kick returner by the PFWA as he averaged 25.2 yards per kickoff return, which ranked seventh in the NFL. James Jr. also registered the team's first kickoff return for a touchdown (97 yards) since 2011.

In 2017, the 49ers special teams units excelled under Hightower's guidance. In his first season with the 49ers, veteran K Robbie Gould had a career year, leading the NFL with a career-high 39 made field goals and finishing third in the NFL with a career-high 145 points. Gould's 39 made field goals were the second-most in a single-season in franchise history (K David Akers - 44 made field goals in 2011) and tied for the third-most in a single-season in NFL history. P Bradley Pinion set a career high with a 41.3 net punting average and the punt coverage unit ranked second in the NFL, allowing 4.2 yards per return. The 4.2 opponent punt return average was the eighth-best in the NFL since 2001.



As an assistant special teams coach with Chicago in 2016, the Bears kickoff coverage team finished seventh in the NFL in opponent drive start average. Deonte Thompson led the NFL in kickoff returns with 35 and ranked second with 810 yards. Punt returner Eddie Royal scored on a 65-yard touchdown on Monday Night Football against the Philadelphia Eagles, while Sherrick McManis led the Bears in special teams tackles and finished top 10 in the NFL, recording 13 stops.

In 2015, Hightower first joined San Francisco as an assistant special teams coach. That season, Hightower helped the 49ers punt coverage unit rank eighth in the NFL allowing just 6.4 yards per return, while working with rookie P Bradley Pinion. K Phil Dawson was 10th in the NFL with an 88.9 field goal percentage (tied for the fourth highest percentage of his 17-year career at the time).

Hightower spent the 2014 season working on offense in Cleveland assisting the wide receivers after working as an assistant special teams coach for four seasons in Washington (2010-13). With Washington, he worked under longtime special teams coordinator Danny Smith. Hightower also spent two seasons (2012-13) as the assistant defensive backs coach with Washington. Over his four seasons in Washington, they ranked third in the NFL in kickoff coverage, allowing just 21.2 yards per return, including leading the league in 2010 and 2011. Hightower's coaching on special teams helped Lorenzo Alexander lead the NFL with 21 special teams tackles en route to being named the NFC's special teams player in the Pro Bowl, in 2012. Hightower was also instrumental in the development of first-year kicker Kai Forbath, who broke an NFL record by hitting his first 17 field goal attempts and led the NFL with a 94.4 field goal percentage.

As assistant defensive back coach, Hightower helped the unit rank sixth in the NFL in interceptions (37) and tied for second in the NFL in interception returns for touchdowns (seven) over the two-year span. DeAngelo Hall led the NFL in defensive touchdowns (three). In 2012, Washington ranked first in the NFC in passes defended and had four returned touchdowns.

From 2006-08, Hightower was on Houston's coaching staff as a coaching assistant (2006-07) before being elevated to special teams assistant (2008). In Houston, he served under widely respected then-special teams coordinator Joe Marciano, who had more than 30 years of experience coaching special teams at the time. In 2008, Houston was 11th in the NFL in kickoff coverage (22.3 yards per return). Punt returner Jacoby Jones finished fifth in the NFL and second in Texans single-season annals with a 12.1 average, including a franchise single-season record two punt return touchdowns. Kicker Kris Brown set franchise records for points (124), field goals made (29) and field goal percentage (87.9). In 2007, the kick-off return unit featuring Jerome Mathis and Andre Davis became only the fourth team in NFL history to score four touchdowns on kickoff returns in a single season.

In between his time in Houston and Washington, Hightower spent the 2009 season as wide receivers coach at the University of Minnesota. Under his tutelage, Eric Decker was named a First-Team All-Big Ten selection that season before being selected by the Denver Broncos in the third round (87th overall) of the 2010 NFL Draft.

A native of Houston, TX, Hightower earned his BA in marketing from the University of Texas where he was a three-year letterman and special teams standout for the Longhorns. He went to Austin as an academic scholar and later earned an athletic scholarship after walking on. Following his senior season, then-head coach Mack Brown and his staff voted Hightower the D. Harold Byrd Leadership Award winner.

Hightower and his wife, Lanet, have two sons Jaxson and Kaden and a daughter, Reagan.

HIGHTOWER'S BACKGROUND

YEARS	COACHING BACKGROUND	HEAD COACH
2017-current	Special Teams Coordinator, San Francisco 49ers	Kyle Shanahan
2016	Assistant Special Teams, Chicago Bears	John Fox
2015	Assistant Special Teams, San Francisco 49ers	Jim Tomsula
2014	Offensive Quality Control, Cleveland Browns	Mike Pettine
2012-13	Assistant Special Teams/Assistant Defensive Backs, Washington	Mike Shanahan
2010-11	Assistant Special Teams, Washington	Mike Shanahan
2009	Wide Receivers, University of Minnesota	Tim Brewster
2008	Special Teams Assistant, Houston Texans	Gary Kubiak
2006-07	Coaching Assistant, Houston Texans	Gary Kubiak
1999-2002	*Wide Receiver, University of Texas	Mack Brown

* Player