

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Brian Ferentz



BRIAN FERENTZ: Obviously, we're 3-0. It's best we could do after three weeks but as we look at the tape and certainly it's been an ongoing process but getting a chance to take a look at all three weeks together, I really think there's a lot of room for improvement and a lot of things that we need to clean up and do a lot better as we move forward. Pleased with where we are at.

Q. How would you describe your running back right now? Obviously four guys you like a lot?

BRIAN FERENTZ: We played four guys. We're pretty comfortable with all those guys doing various things. They all have strengths. They all have certain things they do particularly well, but the reality is that we trust all four of them.

We demonstrated that early in the season at the Miami of Ohio game, it was maybe a two-score game when we had Goodson in there for most of the series. In that game Ivory only played one snap and blocked for Goodson. What that tells you is that we have a very unselfish room right there, and we have four guys that are much more interested in the team winning and the team doing well, than any kind of a personal accomplishment.

Ivory turns around the next week, has a huge play on the screen and that sets up a touchdown and obviously he was a lot more involved last Saturday and did a lot of good things in that game.

You look at what Tyler has done. He's done some really good things. Toren has been really good. And certainly Mekhi has been the workhorse, the Jack-of-All-Trades, but with him dinged up on Saturday we felt like it was best to perhaps not give him quite as many snaps, trying to be as smart as we could with his injury.

Q. You mentioned stuff you want to correct during the bye week. End of the first half, clock management, what do you see there that you wish you would have done differently?

BRIAN FERENTZ: You go back to Rutgers, I did a very poor job managing the clock. We checked the play there on first down and -- maybe it was second down. Ended up taking us a little more time.

We were sitting on two time outs. Really when you look

at the end-of-half management, regardless of the score what you are trying to do is ensure two things: You want to ensure a score and the last possession. The last thing you want to do is give the ball back to the other team and let them have a chance to go score.

I think in the Rutgers game, we should have used a time-out. Didn't manage that well. That falls on my shoulders. That was poor and probably cost an us opportunity to score six points.

You look at Saturday night, felt like at that point, we didn't want to give the ball back to those guys to end the half. Certainly we had not played our best football for the majority of that half, or whatever stoppage we were out of, I don't know, but certainly didn't feel like we were playing as well as we had opened the game. We had given up a big play on defense. We had just come up with a big turnover after a bad series offensively.

The last thing you want to do is give them the ball back. So we want to be pretty cautious. We end up third and four, and end up converting that and felt like we had a couple opportunity to take a shots at the end zone. We weren't able to hit those and put the field goal team on and hit the field goal.

I think the Rutgers one was poor.

Then last week, certainly you wish you could come away with six points, but just that's not going to be the reality at the end of every half.

Q. On the offensive line, you rotated a lot of guys the first couple weeks. Do you anticipate trimming back more as you get into the meat of the conference schedule?

BRIAN FERENTZ: No, we have guys we trust and we have guys that we want to play and develop more trust in.

The way the game was going the other night, it was just a strange game. We didn't have long possessions after the first drive. And then on top of it, right, you're on the field, you're off the field, it just becomes a little bit disjointed.

There's something to be said forgetting in the original. The game especially when you might want to make

some substitutions, but the way the game started shaking out, we went with the guys that were out there. There were some things that happened in the game that we didn't feel like Wednesday had a lot of preparation for and so we had to make some adjustments and change some things and so you wanted to go with a little bit more experience in that regard at that time.

But I think moving forward, we'd like to get all those other guys involved. Certainly having AJ back at some point will be, I think, really good for our football team. But right now we're trying to do the best we can with the guys we have.

Q. How do you feel about the tight end position? I know it's more than statistics and catches. You seem to be doing well in other phases.

BRIAN FERENTZ: Feel pretty good about it. I know we talked a lot about this in the off-season and training camp, but when everybody laughed, like, yeah, whatever, we're going to get the ball to the best player.

We're going to get the ball to the guys that can do something with it. I think right now, our tight ends are maybe growing into a role where they can get some more touches, but the reality is that we have some very capable receivers.

We're trying to get the ball into their hands and we're trying to get the ball into the back's hands and when you're playing 65 to 80 snaps a game, there's only so many opportunities to go around. Right now the ball has been targeted more to some other guys. With the things we have asked them to do, we feel like they have done a pretty good job.

I don't think you can under value the contribution of a guy like Nate Wieting makes to the whole offense and the things that he's out there doing. He plays a multitude of positions for us and does a lot of things. He comes up big on a scramble the other night. Keeps us from being second and ten. Puts us at second and four. Just a really solid guy. Catches the ball at the end of the game, probably not really a very good play called.

He catches the ball and is able to get a bill. This guy is a good player. Unfortunately for him just the balls haven't gone his way right now. I think that's a good problem to have, but it seems like every year no matter what, somebody is not going to get the ball enough, right. I think that's the reality of it. The good news is none of our guys can ask for a trade.

Q. At the end of the game, was that simply you want to go win the game?

BRIAN FERENTZ: No, it's both. But at the end of the

day, you certainly want to stop the clock. So you want to try to give yourself the best chance to make a first down but the clock was clearly much more important than anything at that moment. So that's another example of really poor game management and ultimately that falls on my shoulders, as well.

You want to win the game but you want to give yourself the best chance to win the game. I don't feel like we had done that up until that point.

Q. Is there a point real late in the game where you go from obviously want to win it but make sure you don't lose it?

BRIAN FERENTZ: No. I wouldn't say that. Every decision that you make throughout the course of the game, whether it's the end of the half, whether it's the first play of the game, you're trying to make sure you're making a decision that gives you the best chance to win.

For example, at the end of the game, we're in a situation where had we made a first down on any of those first three plays, you would see our ball carrier immediately get down once he got past the sticks. We're in a situation there where going and scoring doesn't help you win the game.

We learned a hard lesson in Minnesota in 2015, come out, a 60-yard run, hit it against our goal line defense, totally unexpected, just grind the situation out and all of a sudden we score a touchdown. Now they can and get a two-point conversion. They can kick an on-side kick. That's the only way we can lose the game.

Penn State two, years ago, the only way we can lose the game, we lost it. We probably lost the football game is by scoring a touchdown, because now you give them an opportunity to come back and take the football.

You're trying to manage all those situations the best you can at any given point. But it's not so much about trying not to lose the game. Although, this the greatest football coach I've ever been around, his whole mantra was you can't win it until you don't lose. So everything you do, you're trying not to lose the football game, but that's how you win, ultimately, is you just try to make smart decisions, which I don't think we did.

Q. When you look at short yardage on third down, traditionally you have 22-personnel and the numbers don't bare it out, but it's not real successful. Is that a scheme that you guys feel married to over a long period of time and will continue going forward?

BRIAN FERENTZ: What numbers don't bare it out? Traditionally, so championship level for us would be 75

percent on third and one. I mean, we've hit that every year that I've been here.

I guess I would disagree with that, No. 1.

And No. 2, we were actually in 23-personnel the other day. It wasn't 22. I think we probably outsmarted ourselves on that one, too. We went out there, we wanted to show it so we ran a little dive play. We wanted to take a shot later in the game.

I think basically by being in that personnel group, we announced the shot because that particular personnel group had only been in third down, I think twice last year, both in the Penn State and one was a shot.

Now you're trying to seal the edges up, get big blockers in there and make a first down. That's ultimately what you're trying to do.

Q. Oliver Martin only played two snaps, is he just behind the other guys?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I will tell you right now, I'm not going through that this year. This guy plays, that guy doesn't play -- if guys are out there producing, that's the way it is.

Q. The weather delay, keeping everybody focused?

BRIAN FERENTZ: You play the game. Any good football team I've been around, you show up, any time, any place, anywhere, that's what you do. They had the difficulty of having to restart, stop, all that stuff. But hey, those guys were dealing with that, too. We weren't dealing with anything they weren't dealing with. I thought both teams handled it pretty well.

There's nothing you can do about it. So what you do is you try to stay focused and you try to keep the guys into it, which they did a great job of. There's nothing for us to do, really, and then you go back out.

Once the game started again, then it was really a non-issue, but that stop and start for a while was certainly a little bit different than anything we are used to. But at the end of the day, they are playing by the same rules we are playing by. Just comes down to trying to do the best you can to handle whatever comes at you and that's how every game is.

Q. Last year, Nate Stanley put too much pressure on himself -- feeling more comfortable, and how do you evaluate his play and the confidence he has right now?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I think he's played pretty well. We missed a couple throws the other night. Certainly wish we would have had the last one back down in the end zone. Thought we had a chance to score the

touchdown there, and we didn't make a great throw.

You look at what he's done through three weeks, it's been pretty good, pretty efficient. Keeps us out of some big plays. Like I said earlier there were some things that happened in that game where -- I can't say enough about the job their coaching staff does. They have a tremendous football coaching staff. Their defensive coordinator, John Hancock, is in my opinion one of the better coordinators in probably college football. I don't know where he ranks on that deal, but I know there are famous guys, like Brett Venable gets a lot of publicity. When I turned on Clemson the first week, they were playing John Hancock's defense.

I think he's a pretty good coach, and he certainly threw some things at us that we didn't expect and that we had not anticipated or prepared for. That's the hidden value of a guy like Nate. Nate is able to get us in and out of plays and deal with some looks that were a little bit different, handle some pressure looks, make some adjustments. The last pass to Ragaini, we missed the throw but actually that was not the called play. You can see in the very last seconds, Stanley gives him an adjustment on the route. Saw something in the coverage and it was there. We just didn't make the play.

But a guy like Nate, that's what you can't necessarily put into words what he does for you. He's just in total command out there.

Q. Winning a game in that environment, does that help you going forward in hostile environments?

BRIAN FERENTZ: We are going to play in a lot of big games. What we talk to our football team about is you can only handle whatever is in front of you. So they schedule these games and you play them one at a time. The best you can do every week is win. That's certainly the ultimate goal.

But where we play, when we play, that's all out of our control. We've had three different kickoff times. We've had home games, away games. We've had delays.

None of that is within your control, so you're just trying to do the best you can to handle each environment and each day as they come up. But I think they did a nice job the other night. The one thing I know is it didn't get easier. It's going to continue to get probably a little bit more difficult as it goes.

Q. The freshman center who seems to play really well his first couple of games. Is that something that you expected? Because he's a young player and has a lot on his plate, and going up against a guy that's probably an NFL-calibre player.

BRIAN FERENTZ: Tyler has done a pretty good job.

We talked about that in the off-season going back to at least August, I remember a question about him. I think I said something to the effect of: You don't notice him very much, which I think is a positive thing.

We were talking about a first-year player at that position. I would echo that right now. I know he gives us some leadership up front. He pushes the tempo, and those are the things you want out of the position. But I think he's kind of a microcosm of where we are offensively. There's been some really good things, but there's a lot of things we have to clean up and improve on moving forward here and he's the same way and would tell you the same thing.

You can't ask for more out of a guy as far as toughness and competitiveness and those types of things.

Q. You were ask the about the tight end and you're saying right now -- essentially the running back, too, how much is this your vision when you took over as offensive coordinator to add more to the arsenal?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I don't think so. I think that stuff gets overplayed. I think that you look at the best offensive football teams, they find a way to get their best players involved. That's ultimately the goal.

Right now we feel like we have pretty good skill guys at the receiver position in the running back room. So we are trying to get those guys a little bit more involved and try to play in personnel groups where we have as many of those guys on the field as possible and do things to get the ball in their hands. That's what you're always trying to do. You're living in a world where you're taking what the defense gives to you some extent while still trying to have your best players involved.

So if we are trying to run quarterback draws for the rest of the year thinking that that's going to be our whole running game, that's probably not very smart. But the other night, it was available, so you're trying to take what they give you.

Then I thought going back to what they did, I thought they did a lot of really good things to take away some of the things we wanted to do and they were trying very hard and successfully at times to make us play left-handed. So that's something we have to improve upon moving forward.

Q. Felt like Nate was looking more deliberate or a match-up driven thing?

BRIAN FERENTZ: Well, two of them were called. So yeah, that was probably more deliberate.

But you know, when you play a team like that where they are going to have a lot of opportunities to see a three-man rush and eight guys in coverage, there's different philosophies to pressure the quarterback. They used both the other night. They can come after, and they can add the coverage.

But when they are adding the coverage, and certainly you make it more difficult to throw the ball down the field, but at the same time, you'd better be really tight and you'd better be really disciplined in your containment of the quarterback. Otherwise, there's some opportunities to use your feet and pick up some yardage. Those are things that we've talked about.

If you look at his development over the last three years, he's certainly been more willing to make plays with his feet and it's helped our offense.