

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

Saturday, October 10, 2015

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame

KIRK FERENTZ: We're just really thrilled with the outcome of the football game. It was a hard-fought football game, and we knew that coming in. That's something we really tried to emphasize to our players at the beginning of the week and even last night. When you're in conference play, you've got to expect it to be tough, and today certainly was that.

The other thing we've talked about, and this goes back to last week, as well, we had a good win last Saturday, and if you're going to have a good football team, you're going to have to have the ability to turn the page weekly and get down to business. I think the team really did a good job of that this week, although in the first half not all that showed up. I thought we had really good preparation.

It was great to be back in Kinnick. We had a great crowd out there; we're really happy about that. Bottom line, the guys just really gutted it out there because there was nothing easy about this football game.

Illinois is a good football team that's playing extremely hard. They did the same thing last week, and they may have even played harder today.

I'm really pleased with the way our team showed grit out there. They fought through the entire football game.

I think we all saw something really special there with Jordan Canzeri. That was just a tremendous performance and I had no idea he had 43 carries -- a new school record.

But those yards that he got, each and every one of them came hard and were really needed, and I also thought in the second half I thought our punter and our kicker, both Dillon and Marshall Koehn really came up big. Every play that they're involved with basically in that second half was critical, and they just did a great job.

Josey Jewell stays active out there and plays really well. I thought our entire defense for the most part played tough, and then the takeaways were a big part of the game, as well.



This is another positive step for this team and this 2015 season. We're thrilled to get the victory. We'll enjoy this one and go back to work here tomorrow.

Q. And you're bowl eligible.

KIRK FERENTZ: Happy about that, but not many of us were thinking about that this week, not to discount that at all. We'd never take that for granted, but our big emphasis a three-game block of Big Ten games, and we just wanted to make sure we did our best to take each step along the way.

Q. You guys had a couple injuries; how big was it that Jordan came in and he kind of milked the clock?

KIRK FERENTZ: It was tough sledding for us there. You saw that in the first half, and it's amazing, I think we had close to 300 yards coming off the field at halftime, and that was kind of the strangest 300 yards I probably have ever seen as a coach because it pretty much was big plays; CJ pulling the ball down, a couple big pass plays. It wasn't like we were methodical or really executing very well. So that part was kind of strange.

But to that point, we've got some guys nicked up. We've got some guys jumping in, and next man in, and then next man ready on top of it.

A little bit of a fluid process, but again, the guys really settled down and the offense did a great job. That last drive was really so important, so critical, and just really proud of the guys' effort there.

Q. How does it make you feel personally when you see someone like Jordan who's been through so much have a game like this?

KIRK FERENTZ: I flash back to last year where he never could get right, at least not for a prolonged period of time. As a player it's hard to show what you can do when you're not able to. And it wasn't a lack of trying. He's been a great guy since he's been here. He passed the toughness test back in that bowl game against Oklahoma because he got whacked around that year as a young player.

It's really good to see him shoulder the load today, and he stepped up big. He wanted to. There's no question about that. We were all worried about him getting

fatigued. I had no idea he had 43 carries. But he never even looked at the bench. It was just one of those shots where he was going to keep it going. That's reflective of the attitude of the football team, especially our seniors, and Jordan represents those guys really well.

Q. On his 75-yard touchdown run, CJ checked into the play there was a different play called, he checked out. Is that a sign of his maturity?

KIRK FERENTZ: It is, and it was also an adjustment we made during the course of the game there. Again, they were making it tough; they did a few things that we didn't anticipate, so it was a good adjustment on the sideline with the staff and the players. We had good communication there.

CJ has done a really good job of giving us that option. He's got his head in the game. He's playing well physically, but really doing a good job mentally, too.

Q. As far as toughness in that play, as well, with Jordan Walsh, he was out for most of the first half with a shoulder and then came around and he had a really strong hole that he was able to cut behind?

KIRK FERENTZ: Exactly. We're running a out of the guys up front, so for him to be out in that second half would have really been tough for us. We were getting a little thin. But again -- talking about Jordan Canzeri, now we go to another Jordan, really reflective of the way these seniors are, and I think our whole football team. They care about each other, so they're going to do anything they can within reason to go out there and help our football team win.

I wasn't optimistic we'd see Jordan out there, but it was great to see him out there, I can guarantee you.

Q. What about James Daniels? He came in, played two different positions on the offensive line?

KIRK FERENTZ: I just got asked on the radio how much he's played tackle. I said, probably not enough. He's done a little bit in practice, but with Boone out, we're getting a little bit thin. He's worked out there a little, and it was tough sledding.

And credit goes to Illinois, too. This was a tough challenge today. We had one last week, and this team I said earlier in the week is a much improved football team. They played really hard today, and they're a good football team. I think they've improved immensely defensively. They're doing a lot of good things, and they played extremely tough today.

For James to be thrown into that situation, this will be a great learning experience. Same thing with Jerminic Smith, our other freshman who was out there playing

today. For him to have a little success is good. It would have been great for him to get one more catch there at the end, but that's the next step. You've got to start somewhere. So these are all really positive experiences, and if we can go through some of those turbulent spots and still come out with a victory, to me I see that as a real positive as we go down the road.

Q. The hurry-up Illinois offense, did that force some adjustments?

KIRK FERENTZ: I've had a lot of respect for Coach Cubit for a long time. Going back to 2007, we got a firsthand taste of it and that wasn't fun. I thought in that game, their offensive play was as good as we've faced. I can think of one other, too, that stands out in my mind that he wasn't involved with. So he's a great football coach and a great offensive coach.

They made it tough on us. They had us in some spots that really put pressure on us, but our guys kept fighting and came up with the big plays and again, the two takeaways were really big. They've done a good job with the turnover takeaway margin. I think I mentioned that Tuesday, and that really helped us today.

Q. Jordan had four big catches but then he also had a couple of huge blocks down the field. That seems to be kind of rare for a true freshman.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, but that's what we're seeing in practice. He's carrying himself really well, and I think he's taking the coaching that he's getting really well. Bobby Kennedy and Greg Davis, they work with those guys, and that's something we expect our guys to do. I'd say the whole group has done that, but for a true freshman to do it, and I'll be quite honest with you, in recruiting -- he didn't have to block much. It's not like he was against it. It just wasn't something he was asked to do a lot of.

It wasn't like we knew that coming in, but he's really done a good job in all regards. He's an eager learner and works hard in practice.

Q. You were surprised Jordan had 43 carries; did you not want to go to a backup?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm not keeping track. There's no pitch count. I don't believe in it in baseball.

But anyway, I've heard good pitchers say that; older guys that have said that. But in a game like this, you go with your best players. We had to. The game was on the line. We didn't want to give it back to their offense by any stretch, and then to get points out of it, too, down the road is good. But we were -- as long as he could go, we were going to go with him.

Q. Can you talk about the injuries?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, Drew was on crutches. You guys all saw that. He has a knee injury. I don't know the extent of it yet. And Ike has got a lower body or lower leg. We'll know more tomorrow, but I'm not sure yet at this point.

Q. I know you have people charting plays, and no one is saying, Coach, it's 43?

KIRK FERENTZ: Who cares. I mean, if the player is affected then we're going to try to get him out, but as I was watching him closely, the only time he did come out, he got the wind knocked out of him it looked like a little bit. He got up really slow, so we got him out of there. But in a situation like that, you know, the thing of it is, it's the first time somebody went over 200 since Shonn Greene. Shonn was the same way, especially with the game on the line. That's what good players do. They want to go out there and do their part, and I'm not comparing either of these guys to Michael Jordan, but good players want the ball in their hands. They want to try to do what they can to help the football team, and it's a real credit to Jordan's mental toughness because he -- it's been six hard games now.

Q. He's had a lot of carries before this game. You didn't seem the least bit flummoxed by it.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I've got to go right back to Fred Russell, who was not the biggest guy in the world, and I don't know how many carries Fred had, but I know it was a lot in that two-year span. If he had come back for another year, we'd have run the crap out of him again, too, just because he's a good football player and that's what they like doing.

So it's more about guys -- the size of his heart and his determination and desire, and today with the game on the line, I thought Jordan did a wonderful job for us.

Q. What does that carry number say about your offense right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, today was a little different attack certainly, and we had our problems in that first half. You know, those guys -- and credit goes to them. Both their lines I think are much improved from when we played them whatever it was, week 10 or 11, probably 10, I think, so I think both their lines in my opinion are much improved. They're playing with great effort. So it was a tough challenge for us, and we're going through some -- a little turbulence with injuries and guys changing in the lineup and what have you, but proud of the way our guys fought through that. They kept battling, and that last big possession there was really critical for us, and just happy to come out ahead there.

Q. In 26 years have you ever played a true

freshman at tackle?

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably not. I think -- is Bulaga the only guy that's played up there? I'm pretty sure. We had him at guard, and you know, Mike Jones played left guard. That was 2003 right there in the bye week. I called him on Saturday night. I think he was at his grandmother's house. Little things you remember. But, do you want to play? Yeah, I'll play, and that was it. But it was guard, you're right, left guard.

Q. Jordan carried 75 yards for a touchdown and 11 carries running down the clock. What's that say about him?

KIRK FERENTZ: They were both huge in the outcome of the game. But I think, again, it's just a testament to his determination and his courage because those were hard yards. Everybody knew what was going on there, and you know, he could have put his hand up and said, hey, I need a break, but he's a strong team leader right now, and he laid it out there for us.

Q. After the 11th carry, he still had a little energy left?

KIRK FERENTZ: He does, and you get in a game like that, especially in that fourth quarter, that's where it's going to get won or lost, and that's something we're trying to always emphasize. And our crowd was into it, too. I can't say enough about the crowd. It was just a really good day in Kinnick, and it's fun when the crowd is into it and the team is playing, and they're responding for them.

Q. (Inaudible.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I think so. I'm not saying exactly like this, but in 2002, we had Colin Cole, who did an unbelievable job yesterday delivering a great message, not a good message, to our football team. We just had Colin and Dallas Clark, two teammates in the locker room with us. I talked to both of them, I said, it felt a little bit like the Purdue game in 2002. I think we traveled to Penn State and came back here and ran into a buzz saw just like we did today. When you come out ahead in a game like this, there's no guarantees, but there's nothing negative about it, absolutely nothing negative to winning a football game like this.

Q. Jaleel Johnson, specifically he's never going to be near the top just because of the position he plays, but he seems to be able to really wreak havoc, especially in that first half?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think Jaleel is really playing well, and as concerned as we were about our offensive tackles because of the guys we lost, we lost two really good defensive tackles, too, and I think the combination of what Jaleel and Nate are doing, we're playing better defense right now as a team, and they're part of that because that's -- you've got to be strong up the middle

on any team, and those guys are really doing a good job with not a lot of experience, so I'm really proud of them.

The only thing he blew today, we blew -- we go three plays of teamwork, and then the twos come in in pregame. For whatever reason, he came out after two, so they had 10 guys on the field on that third play. Luckily it didn't count.

But to me it was the lowlight in his day. I noticed it. I'll talk to him about that tomorrow.

Q. Was there any thing to keep you optimistic on Boone Myers?

KIRK FERENTZ: I hope so. We'll see, though. I don't know that yet. He's climbing the ladder, so it would be really good if we could get him back. Hopefully we'll have Ike back, but I don't know that yet, either. If not we'll figure something out and we'll be ready to go.

Q. What was the difference in the defense after he got hurt?

KIRK FERENTZ: Same thing I just said about Jordan Canzeri I'd say the same about Drew. I'd say it about just about all of our seniors. They're doing all they can to help the football team, and Drew is just -- he's totally immersed in this whole thing. It's a shame, it's just a tough deal. You go back to '81, Bruce Kittle getting hurt up at Michigan. When a senior gets hurt and can't play, that's a bad deal, and he just came off that elbow injury, finally getting back to being full speed. I thought he was really close to drawing a couple holding calls today, but we didn't quite get there. He would have.

But he's still invested. He's going to do all he can, and hopefully we can get him back. We'll keep our fingers crossed.

Q. Did LeShun Daniels have a setback this week or just continuing to --

KIRK FERENTZ: No, we're not going anywhere, so we're treading -- we're just kind of treading water and that's not good enough, so we're starting to take a little different approach right now, and we'll see what this week brings, but we just made the decision this week to try to let's see if we can't start climbing the ladder a little bit more.

Q. Marshall Koehn, after the streak he had, this is the third week he's missed a kick. Is there any concern there?

KIRK FERENTZ: No. I mentioned Jaleel in pregame. Marshall's PAT, I'm not saying it wasn't good, but it was close, so I don't know if that carried over. But when we had to have it, he came up big. He came up tremendous in that second half, as did Dillon. Those

punts that Dillon had in that second half were money. It was right on the spot, and you know, you're not going to have it all the time, but I'll tell you, when you needed to have it, talk about those two guys, you talk about Jordan Canzeri just wanting the football, and those things are good to see, so those little things, we're going to get them ironed out, we'll have a week to work on them, we're going to need to, obviously, but when it's out there on the line, that's a good feeling to know those guys are right there.

Q. How did you feel like the offensive line played?

KIRK FERENTZ: A lot of ups and downs, especially in the first half, a lot of turbulence. But that's football. We knew they were better, and they threw some stuff at us today that was a little bit out of character for them, too. They did some things, to their credit, little wrinkles that made it a little tough on us, and some of it is just fundamental stuff, but we'll get that corrected and we'll try to make some improvement here this coming week and get ready for another challenge.

Q. Why do you think Illinois had some success with Geronimo Allison?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's a good player. He's a really good player, and that quarterback is a good player, and they've got good schemes. They're not easy to defend. You know, that's the starting point. But you've got to be able to get the ball off, too, and to me, this is one man's opinion, last year their offensive line was not the biggest challenge that we faced, but I thought they played well today. They're a good football team. They've done a really nice job.