

August 30, 2014



A Postgame Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

KIRK FERENTZ: We're really excited to get the victory. I know as coaches we realized this was going to be a really hard-fought, tough ballgame. UNI has an excellent football team, a lot of really good players back from a year ago, and they're extremely well coached and they played extremely hard today, so it was a really tough ballgame on both sides. We really tip our hat to them, and we're just really happy to come out with a victory.

I thought our guys played hard. There are going to be some good teaching moments to learn from, but the most important thing is they played hard down the stretch, and you'd better be doing that in the fourth quarter or it's going to be a long year. That was really a positive.

Q. What were some of those teaching moments?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, a couple that jump right out to me in the first half, we had the ball inside the 20, they put us down inside the 20 and we couldn't move it out either time and put our defense out there at midfield, and that's a situation we've practiced a lot. Just little things like that that can really change a game. Not making it on 4th and short there kind of swung momentum a little bit, but just some of those bigger things, and then obviously some match-up stuff we're going to have to get cleaned up in the passing game.

Q. 200 receiving yards for David Johnson. Is that more him or the defense?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think a combination of both. They caught us a couple of times, and I've seen them do that historically. They do a nice job, and they've done it especially since he's been

there against several teams, so he's an excellent player. They have a good scheme, and then we didn't play smart enough at times, either. That's clearly something we're going to have to get addressed or we'll be playing in tough shape.

Q. Where did this game turn in your favor?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, you know, I think probably as good a thing that happened out there, coming up with the defensive stops in that fourth quarter. Things weren't going great. We had given up some big plays, and that makes it tough to play good defense. You can't play good defense giving up big plays like that, but I thought in that fourth quarter our guys really -- the last three or four series -- really knuckled down and played at a higher level than they had been playing.

To me we learned a lot about ourselves today. I think the effort was certainly there. I think for everybody the want-to was there, but it's hard to simulate a game, and that was a real good one for us to go through.

Q. What did Tevaun do for you? He made a couple plays for you. Was that by design or him --

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, the reverse was by design. We didn't quite script out his route that he ended up taking. I've never seen one quite like that, at least in a real game. But that was a big play in the game, obviously, and then the catch he made down there. I'm eager to see it on a replay because that looked like a thing of beauty live. But if you're going to have a good team, you need guys stepping up and doing some things like that, and that certainly was a big deal, and Derrick Willies coming down with that ball and the deep ball down the middle. Things like that are going to have to happen if we're going to be any good.

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Q. Were you ever close to changing things up with CJ Beathard?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, not at all, and if we do it, it's going to be because we've talked about it. We kept both guys alert that we might go with that situation. No. I thought Jake played a really good game.

Q. On the other side of that coin, the slot took over late in the fourth quarter.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I thought the whole group up front really started playing with a little bit more juice and energy, and that's important because that's where it's tough. That's where games get decided.

Fortunately for us they did that. It was great to see Jaleel Johnson get in there and be disruptive. He's a young player who hasn't played much, so if we can get six, seven, eight guys involved in that rotation that'll help us. It's always a good thing defensively when you're getting some pressure up front with the front four guys.

Q. What did you like about your linebackers?

KIRK FERENTZ: You know, it was a good start for them, good first game, certainly Bo's play was an excellent play over there on the bench picking that off, and he made a nice play down in the red zone. But it was a learning experience, and we knew that coming in. It was going to be -- there were going to be some challenges, especially based on the opponent we're playing, and those are things we'll learn from, and we'll address those during the week and see if we can't be better next week.

Q. There were some red flags obviously, things you didn't do as well as you wanted, yet you still get a win, whereas last year you didn't.

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, to get a win was great, and the other part about it, you talk to players, and I think they understood. I don't think anybody in our camp underestimated the challenge that was in front of us, and I don't think it was a matter of, boy, those guys came out flat, didn't look ready to play, and that wasn't the case at all. We made it hard on ourselves, again, not moving the ball out, giving up some big plays. But yeah, to play in a game where you have to compete all the way to the end, which is what the case was and then win, I'd always take the win no

matter what. But to do that, that's a good thing, especially for our football team.

Q. Was the rushing game a concern today? A bunch of guys with 30 yards or so.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yes and no. To their credit, I'd just mention I think they're extremely well coached offensively. I thought they did some things defensively that really made us adjust a little bit and do some tweaking on the sidelines. That's a credit to them, too, which is no big surprise. They did their homework and they were ready to go. That will come around, but we're going to be fine there.

Q. What happened during the two or three plays there Johnson got way wide open and burned you for about 200 yards there total?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think it's a combination of a couple things. They've got a good scheme, and I've seen them utilize him in that way against a lot of folks, so it wasn't like we didn't know it was coming, but it's a matter of doing something. He's an excellent football player and we've got to play those better because we'll see that again for sure starting next week.

Q. How was this game different than a Big Ten opponent or a Pittsburgh on the road?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll tell you at the end of the season, I guess. But the bottom line is it was a tough game, and that's what we expected, and my guess is we've got about 11 more of them on our schedule. I don't see many easy ones. The good thing is to come out of it on the right end of it, and the most important thing from this point on is learning from it.

Q. In retrospect is it better to win a game where you have to play the whole way versus beating a team 50-0? Do you learn a lot more?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not during the game, I wouldn't agree with that. We haven't had too many of those recently, but it's just not the nature of college football anymore, and as you know, we're involved in an awful lot of close games. This is pretty much 60 minutes of turmoil in your stomach, and I might as well get used to it because that's usually how it feels. Particularly, again, we have a lot of guys that haven't played football or much

football around here. For them to go through that and survive, that's a good thing.

Q. How about Rudock's play today?

KIRK FERENTZ: I thought Jake did a really good job. He was good in the spring, did an excellent job in camp... he's a really good football player. I'm thrilled he's on our team.

Q. A lot of Rudock's passes were four to six yards and then the game kind of changed on the two deep balls. Was that by design?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not necessarily. You take what they give you and what have you, but the way they were playing we tried to come up with a couple ways to get it downfield a little bit better, and it was good to see us connect on a couple.

Q. (Inaudible) Derrick Willies (inaudible) is it good to see him though, actually get in the game? He made a terrific catch on that.

KIRK FERENTZ: It is, and he's had his ups and downs, kind of like he did in the spring. He's had the same thing in camp. Again, he's a second-year player, so that's just part of the deal. But for him to make a big play, that should give him confidence. He's practiced well, so it's just a matter now of just keep bringing him along.

Q. Josey Jewell, is he going to be out a while?

KIRK FERENTZ: It looks like he might be. He won't be in next week, I know that, and then hopefully maybe after that. We'll see what happens. He was injured during practice Wednesday afternoon.

Q. What impressed you most about your team today?

KIRK FERENTZ: Just the resiliency, and they played it until the end. We didn't have any choice, but sometimes you don't answer, either. I think the guys amped it up there in that fourth quarter after struggling, and it wasn't much fun there for a while. They were moving it pretty good. Really pleased to see the defense anchoring there a little bit, and I thought we made good adjustments on the sideline and the coaches were communicating and talking. Those are positive steps. I thought Marshall, he had that one field goal, but otherwise he performed pretty well.

Q. Talk about what it's like to get that momentum and good feeling right out of the gate.

KIRK FERENTZ: Not even close. Rick mentioned, last year it was the other way around, and those are -- you don't get them back. That's one thing about sports and anything you do. You don't get them back. Good to get the victory. We all knew it was going to be very hard and very difficult and challenging, and yeah, they didn't show up with anything less than their best effort.

Q. How much of the game plan was to spread the carries out and have four guys with fresh legs in the fourth quarter?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we were going to kind of play it by feel that way. That's probably something we'll continue to talk about and discuss how we utilize those guys. But probably the biggest difference from a year ago is LeShun Daniels I think has really improved a lot, so he's entered into the fray a little bit. Damon had a good camp, so it'll be ongoing, but we wanted -- to have fresh backs in the fourth quarter is a good thing.

Q. They always say teams are making the most improvement between game one and game two. I don't know where you stand with that. Last year maybe it didn't come true because you started in the second game?

KIRK FERENTZ: Like I said on the radio, we sure brought that axiom -- most of those old axioms are true, but the rest of that axiom is it's what you do with it during the week. You have to make it happen. So we've got a real good opportunity here in the next six days. I don't want the guys worrying about it this afternoon, but when we come in tomorrow we'll get on that film. Clearly we need to make strides, and that's part of the deal, though. That's what the challenge for the whole season is. We need a good week of practice certainly, and we'll be playing a tough opponent again next week.

Q. Overall what do you think about the UNI quality? Do you think they could be an FBS team if the enrollment, if further attendance would allow it?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if I'm qualified to answer that. I just know they're an excellent football team. You look back last year, their record isn't what they were used to. They've

got pretty high standards. They've played really well for a long time. They had some key injuries that I think really affected their football team, but they've been a good football team for as long as I can remember. It's no different than '09 or '12, the last couple times we've played them. It's been a knockdown, drag-out fight, and today was the same. They're an excellent football team.

Q. Are you satisfied with your tight ends' play?

KIRK FERENTZ: For the most part, yeah. It would have been nice to come up with that one pass there to the right of our bench there, but that's a play Ray will make. He's made a lot of big plays for us, but I thought overall they did a pretty good job. There's going to be room for improvement, I'm sure, when we look at the tape.

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