

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz



Penn State-17, Iowa-12

KIRK FERENTZ: Obviously, it was a really tough, hard-fought game by both teams. Two weeks in a row, two really good defensive football teams played against each other. We came up short.

I'm really proud of our effort, players' effort. Thought they worked extremely hard out there, competed extremely hard. Penn State made it rough on us in some areas where we weren't able to execute some critical situations, do some things a little bit better.

It's a tough game for us. But we'll get back on our feet tomorrow. That's going to be the biggest challenge I think for our football team, get back on our feet, take a look at this, then we have to try to move on, see if we can't do some things next week to push forward, get back where we want to go.

Certainly got to clean up our play with turnovers, takeaways. It's a major factor the last two weeks. Did better in the penalty situation, certainly our defense answered some tough situations, did a good job there. All in all, not enough to get over the hump against a good football team.

I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. How do you feel about the defensive performance, holding them to 10 yards?

KIRK FERENTZ: We really got off to a good start. Made it tough on them. The crowd was tremendous all night long. Certainly got them into the game. That was good.

They've got a good football team. Their quarterback's play really impressed me for being a young player in a tough environment. I thought he settled down a little bit, did some good things for them, made some good plays.

Just overall I thought our defense did a good job. Certainly to put them in some tough situations, hold the way they did, that's a real credit to the way we played and fought.

Q. What is it going to take this offense to start finishing drives a little bit stronger?

KIRK FERENTZ: We're going to have to play a little cleaner, execute better. Part of that's us, part of it's the opponents we played the last two weeks. Probably a combination of the two.

That being said, there's some things we have to do better obviously: protect a little bit better, run the ball, get back to doing that a little bit better as well.

We have to make some tough plays. Brandon made a beautiful play at the end. Things like that are going to help the cause a little bit, too. A group effort.

Q. How much confidence do you have in the run game right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: I've got confidence in our football team. I think we have a good football team. We didn't play good enough this week or last week against two really good football teams. I think we have a good team, we'll get better, as long as we keep our attitude the way we need to.

It was a tough challenge getting back up on our feet this week. The guys did that well, which goes right to our leadership I think, I'm confident they'll do that again.

Really no magic formula to it. It's a matter of executing a little bit better, doing some things that are going to be helpful. Field position could help us, too. We didn't benefit from that very much tonight. Some of that was self-inflicted, some of it by their punter, too, special teams.

We just have to find a way to get over the hump here a little bit.

Q. Throwing 85, 90 times the last two weeks. Close games. Was that the game plan?

KIRK FERENTZ: Last week wasn't a big surprise. Tonight we were trying to get points. We got ourselves in a position where we were trying to catch up on the score a little bit. But you do what you think is going to give you the best chance to move the ball and ultimately score points.

I'm not too upset about that. We just got to do a little bit better.

Q. So many moving parts in the offensive line now. Hard to find consistency there?

KIRK FERENTZ: It doesn't help. It makes it a little bit of a challenge. Some positives there. Alaric looked like he played better tonight than certainly he did a week ago. Mentioned he looked rusty last week. Thought he pushed through this week, had a better week of practice. Seemed like he competed better out there today. That will help us.

Then we have some moving parts inside right now. We'll just keep pushing forward. I think we have enough to win with. We just have to get a little bit better with our execution. That was Kallenberger's first start playing a little bit of a different position. Thought he responded pretty well, too.

On the downside, we're going to lose Cole for the season. We'll just keep pushing there and see if we can't get a combination going.

Q. You hit big plays, a lot of times you try to go tempo, makes sense. A lot of times the execution after that doesn't quite match what you're looking for. Is there a common element?

KIRK FERENTZ: Tonight, for sure. Outside of maybe the sneaks, we didn't get much out of the quick tempo stuff. We'll evaluate that tomorrow, see what we think about that, maybe try to do less of it, try to find a different way of doing it. It wasn't very effective for us tonight.

Q. A.J. talked about some communication issues on defense that allowed some of those runs up the middle. Is that naked eye?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's pretty intricate. Doesn't look like we do it a lot, but it is pretty intricate of there. If you leave a seam open, a good team is going to knife through there, at least have a chance to do that. When you play a team that has a quarterback that can run, that makes it a little bit more of a challenge, too.

Again, I thought for the most part we played pretty solid on defense.

Q. Was Welch hurt?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, nicked up a little bit. Hopefully he'll be back here. Should know that on Tuesday. I don't anticipate a problem there.

Q. What do you want to see from the leaders or hear from them?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, they've been doing that. I think we've got a very tight, cohesive football team. But it starts with the older guys, not only seniors, but other guys, too. They've been doing that since the summer.

I haven't seen anything about this team that would lead me to think they're not going to show up and play or show up and practice on Monday. We don't want to assume anything either. This is tough. This is a tough loss, two in a row. Getting up on your feet, it's easy to talk about, but it's tough to do.

When you're older guys are leading the way, which I expect they will, just like they did last week, we'll have a chance to move forward.

Q. How do you try to get Tyler some confidence after that fumble?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think when he sees the film, we let a guy come back in the backfield that should have been accounted for. It was a bust out on our end mentally. It involved the player who hadn't been playing a lot, had a certain position I believe. Things like that are going to happen. It's really unfortunate it happened when it did.

Yeah, you still have to protect the football. We didn't always do a great job of that tonight. But he's a young player who has a great future. He's learning every time out. He'll benefit from this, just like I think our football team will.

Q. Protection was better this week, but Nate took a lot of hits.

KIRK FERENTZ: We're still not where we want to be obviously. We don't want the quarterback getting hit at all. Both these teams are really good pass-rushing teams. Don't want to minimize that, take anything away from them.

We're going to keep trying to push the bar up a little bit and see if we can't answer the bell, give him the confidence to really just stand there, have a little bit more time.

Q. The offense, temperature is a little bit high. What would your message be being scoring 15 points?

KIRK FERENTZ: I imagine it's pretty normal. How many points have we had the last two weeks? 15. I think that comes with the territory. The answer is to score more points. Hopefully everybody can be happy. We'll be happier if we score more points.

Q. Do you share the frustration with the offense? Is it a problem with the offense?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think we've played two pretty good defensive football teams. Time will tell. It is kind of like rankings, they really don't mean a lot in early October, late September. My guess is these teams are going to be ranked teams when the season is well into things in November.

I think you have to consider that. Does that mean we

can't do better? Not at all. We can improve. That's where our focus will be.

Q. Even though Nate is senior, do you feel like he's still growing?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think all of our players are growing. That's part of football. If you're not growing, you're probably in trouble. Yeah, I think he's growing. He's been growing, doing a great job.

The bottom line is we've played two good opponents the last two weeks and had a chance to win on our last possessions, haven't been able to quite get over the hump. It's going to be guys like Nate that will help us get where we want to get if we keep our attitude right and just keep working and try to improve.

That's the only formula there is in football. That's what we'll start on tomorrow.