

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz



KIRK FERENTZ: First of all just really happy to get the victory. I thought our players fought hard and played hard. Needless to say, North Texas did the same thing, they came in ready to go and had a good game plan on both sides of the football and those guys really competed.

Certainly compliment their effort. There was nothing easy out there today. You watch the film, watch the game and it's obvious we have a lot of work to do right now and that's what's in front of us. I think probably my biggest concern is we have to improve faster, seeing some things that need to get addressed and improve on a little bit better there.

But, you know, I think part of that, too, at halftime the coaches did a good job of making some adjustments, and certainly we played better in the second half. This team has been resilient, they have pushed through things -- the challenges that get in front of them, and certainly the second half we did a lot better, time of possession, third down conversions, fourth down conversions. During the course of the game some of those things were really positives and part of the deal was we were hoping to keep their offense off the field and we did a good job of that in the second half as well.

Those are things that I think stick out right now. We're happy to be 3-0. It's not easy to be 3-0, and then it's exciting to start conference play here, too, so that starts up here tomorrow afternoon. I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Do you know the health of Akrum and James?

KIRK FERENTZ: Akrum tried to walk out without an ice bag, so sent him back in for that, but it doesn't look like anything serious. He just didn't feel real confident in that second half. James, we'll have to see. I don't think it's anything overly -- I will probably know more Tuesday but I'm not overly concerned, but hopefully he will be okay.

Q. You said something to Toren, to hang in there. After a couple of games of seeing him not play, he was in the game.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, you know, one thing I told the team in there, both Toren -- last spring we found out more about Toren. He had a great spring.

Then with, you know, Ivory, it's been more so since August when we got going, but both those guys have really practiced well. They really conduct themselves well. Toren is a tough, hard-nosed runner, that's his deal, and Ivory has impressed us with his ability to focus. He's a really quietly serious guy and that's unusual for a guy just out of high school like that.

He has a good skill set on top of it, and to me it was no surprise that they played well. I think we all had really good confidence in them. You always worry about a guy's first couple of carries, just to get his confidence level, but both those guys really did some good things, and they both missed a couple of runs today they will see on film which will help them down the road, but they both gave us -- they're a big part of us winning this game.

Q. What about going on fourth down?

KIRK FERENTZ: You know, at that point we just kinda felt like we needed to do something. We were just running in quick sand a little bit and just felt like we had to try to get something going. It was a great call and great execution. Nate is not out of the woods yet, but you think about the progress he's made from week one, when we were out here last time, he was struggling a little bit, but the last two weeks he's really done a good job of sitting in the pocket and finding the open guy and getting the ball there pretty accurately.

So that's really good. That third down, fourth down stuff to me is really impressive. Big part of that was Nate's dealing. He did a good job there.

Q. When did your fourth down philosophy change?

KIRK FERENTZ: It started the year the new Kirk stuff started, you know, quite frankly! (Laughter.) And I don't know if because of our approach to fourth down or those fakes didn't work, I'm still trying to decipher that. I think we started a different approach, and that was an out-of-season study we did, and we just talked about it, and we spend a lot of time talking about it every Thursday ask now -- and part of it is the feel of the game. That particular juncture I just felt like we needed -- you're either going to dig in and do something or we were going to keep screwing around here, so I felt like we just had to do something.

Q. What about the change at safety?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, just the change-up, and we've felt good about the way Amani has been playing, so we kind of see all three guys pretty even right now we may start a three-way rotation, but we will play that by ear.

Q. Did you say anything to Akrum after that play?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I just told him he's too good of a player to do. Close, not close, but why give anybody an opportunity to have to make that decision. He's too good of a player for that.

Q. It's kind of odd, a high step, it's like strange, isn't it?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's why I think it's a point of emphasis. Although I thought pants over the knees was a point of emphasis, too, and I saw a game on TV last night and the guys looked like they had shorts on. I'm not sure how that works, but anyway that is a point of emphasis, that celebration stuff, just like coaches on the field.

Q. Is your team progressing?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's interesting. I can't prove this scientifically but, my experience is like you keep banging away. We did practice. You would not have known it in the first half but we practiced better this week than we have thus far. My experience is sometimes it just kind of shows up at funny times and sometimes it doesn't show up for a while, and that doesn't mean you're not getting better away from the game, but, you know, the only thing I know and what I've learned is you've got to press as hard as you can press and hope it starts showing up at some given point.

Those two young backs, they're good illustrations of guys that practice well. Those guys do it every day and it showed up out there on the field. We can get better in a lot of areas right now and we gotta keep swinging the bat right now.

Q. Not much flow in the game today --

KIRK FERENTZ: The obvious thing today was just the plays that got reviewed. I was told before the game that we had more cameras. I have no idea what the normal number would be, and I don't know if there is a correlation between more cameras, more reviews, it's just -- I'm not making judgments, should they or shouldn't they, but it kills momentum, especially that one down to the right of our bench and we were going in for a score.

It felt like we stood there for five minutes, and I'm not sure what we were reviewing at that point, but that's the part that's tough. You know, but you want to get the calls right, I get that, too, but I don't know where that line is.

Q. Your thoughts on Mason Fine?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, you know, part of it is having a good quarterback and a good system. This quarterback I said on Tuesday, I'm -- I thought he was really good. After seeing him today I think he's been better than we thought. He's just a really good football player. He made some throws today you wouldn't recommend to most guys. Not saying they were Seneca Wallace, that one he threw in '02, but they were tough throws.

When a guy can do that, that puts a little pressure on you. They've got a good scheme mix, they execute it well. I thought our tempo improved in the second half. I thought we started playing a little bit better, and that's gotta be a team thing. We've got a big challenge coming up again this week, and I'm sure we will have one the week after that.

Q. What was your view of Epenesa penalty?

KIRK FERENTZ: We'll see it on tape. I mean from what we -- our perception of that play was he got blocked into the quarterback. So those things are going to happen and that's not a reviewable play. That's the way it goes, but our sense is we'll know tomorrow it wasn't a flagrant play on his part, or a dirty play on his part, and you just say hey, sometimes that happens.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: I mentioned Toren earlier, same class. He's done a lot of good things in practice. We've been really happy with him. You're just always afraid to throw a guy in the water, part of it, and I'm glad we did, and maybe we rotate those guys, because all three of them are all pretty even in our minds.

Q. You're not afraid to use guys, right?

KIRK FERENTZ: I kept reading in the papers up until August that we don't have any receivers, so I figured, hey, we might as well play the young guys. And Ivory has worked his way into the mix just because of the way he's been practicing, so he's kind of in that group.

Amir has done a really good job, and Brandon is a guy who is coming along a little bit, and certainly we've been impressed with Ivory, too.

Q. You came out and played better in the second half.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we played a good second half just in general. I think we had three -- our first three possession were fairly long. They were good, sustained drives, we possessed the ball 21 minutes. So I felt good about the way we played in the second half.

I think the coaches made good adjustments at halftime to alter a couple of things and kind of got us going a little bit and defensively I thought we played good in the second half, too, so I feel good about the second half.

Q. Stanley, what is it about him, inside of him that makes that possible at the rate he's done it?

KIRK FERENTZ: There were ugly plays that first game, if you were here you probably would have noticed. But there's no way to -- I say it all the time there is no way to give a player experience, they have to go out and do it and sometimes they've got to suffer a little bit while they're doing it and he plays a position that is so prominent, prominently observed and on top of it the way we do things it's a hard position. To your point, I was thinking about that, I don't know why, the other day but flashback to C.J. Beathard at Pittsburgh in '14 where he burned two timeouts on the goal line and we're in a goal line offense, and we're running a high school play and I say that in an endearing way.

We've only got three plays on the goal line; right? He burned two time outs down there, and Brian threatened to kill him on the sideline. And C.J., one of the best players we've ever had, but that's where he was at that point in '14 and that's where Nate was a few weeks ago. The improvement he's made is encouraging for us, and there are a couple of bumps coming, we all know that, but he's done some impressive things so far. Today he could have got rattled, last week was a week to get rattled, but he gives you that same look all the time, which is okay with me.

Q. You've been in games like this before, Central Michigan, where you had injury, you had penalties, and all of the sudden you're in a dog fight. What made you guys persevere this time, not comparing it with the other ones, just, hey, you're down you 14-10 --

KIRK FERENTZ: Two topics on that one. I was talking to Dolphin and Ed on the phone, and I'm trying to remember the last time we came out like this, where we came right down the field, and then did something stupid, no touchdown and I can't remember what game it was, but I know it was out here, but we still came out and won the game, but you're like really? The ones you're citing the outcome didn't come out so well, and at halftime we decided we're going to get going here, and we played better, and didn't leave the door open to be in that position where it might be a disappointing outcome.

The one thing about this team, I guess we're three for three for digging holes, you know, we're pretty good at that. These guys fight through it and play through it and I trace that back to January. The attitude has been

really good with this team since January. The thing I'm happy about is I know we could improve a lot more, but I would be a little happier if we could pick up the pace on that one, and hopefully we're going to be able to do that.

Q. Injury wise where are you guys at overall?

KIRK FERENTZ: It doesn't help your continuity. I think some of the hiccups we saw in the first half, pass protection, some stuff there, usually if a guy comes through unscathed that means we blew something, and I think we had a couple of those today. Those are -- I don't want to blame it on the rotation stuff, but we have to do a better job of getting cohesive.

That's one challenge right now. We've got to be more cohesive playing together. It's no different than a basketball team, you know? If you play seven, eight guys, guys have to rotate, but they have to know each other's moves. The other thing is, it leaves you pretty thin. We're getting thin here. We threw Wirfs in there at the end. He didn't jump off sides, looked like he blocked his guy, and it's a start for him, and he's in the Army now, so we're rollin'.