

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

Saturday, September 28, 2019

### Kirk Ferentz



KIRK FERENTZ: Certainly pleased with the way we played today. Thought the guys were focused and ready to go. For the post part we controlled every phase of the game so that was good to see.

Some concerns coming into the game, any time you come off a bye week, that's always something that you're anxious about, and you never quite have the right answer on that but the guys handled that really well, and not playing a conference opponent, that also can factor into. Bottom line is I think our guys showed up ready and they competed hard so that was good to see.

A couple highlights of the game, I think we were balanced for the most part offensively and saw some good plays from receivers, from our backs, and that's a good sign. I'll throw in Shaun Beyer, the big catch coming out of the end zone. You see things like that, that's certainly helpful.

And the other thing is we're playing pretty clean football right now. Certainly offensively, we have done a good job with our ball security. Special teams, the same way and defensively, not giving up the big play which we were victimized by last time we were out there. All in all, really pleased. We got work to do and we'll tend to that tomorrow. Take a look at the film and see what we can do, but the whole key right now, whole focus is trying to improve week-to-week. The guys took a big step forward and we're thrilled to be 4-0 at this point and look forward to moving into conference play. We'll put our attention to that tomorrow night.

#### **Q. 11 of Nate's completions were for ten or more yards -- more spread out.**

KIRK FERENTZ: We've got better balance at the receiver position first and foremost. Coming into the season expecting production and good play from Ihmir and Brandon Smith, to see Tyrone Tracy jump up there and do a good job. Nico came up with a great third down play, and Beyer, too, is that was a good play for him coming off that goal line. Get a lot of guys involved and the backs are doing a good job with their role. If we spread it around, it's always a good thing.

#### **Q. Do you see that in practice --**

KIRK FERENTZ: We do. We actually saw some flashes last year, and he flashed at times and other times he

looked like a young player, and so that inconsistency we get with younger players, but he's been improving. I've talked a lot about Nico how we saw that one coming through spring in August, and Tyrone, both those guys, they are our three, four receivers right now. I think they are both accelerating a great deal, so it's good to see it.

#### **Q. The offensive line seemed to, no matter who you had in there, do their job, holding the blocks and making room obviously for guys.**

KIRK FERENTZ: We had an advantage physically. They are a good football team and a really good program, very well-coached, but we did have a physical edge and that worked out for us.

The challenge is they are a high-pressure group and boy, they come at you hard, often and it's been that way continually. It's been a tough preparation for our guys and I thought for the most part we did well and we gave up a couple plays there where we got victimized, and at least we'll be happy with what we see on tape.

#### **Q. Have you ever called this many quarterback sneaks in 21 years?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Bill Parcells, that's all they did when he was coaching. We've been to that and then we kind of got a way from it and now Nate's done a good job with it. I think coach O'Keefe was a little skeptical, but said he's too tall. Said Drew Bledsoe is 6-5. Can't be that bad.

#### **Q. Tyler at the point of contact --**

KIRK FERENTZ: Doesn't hurt. He's an aggressive player, physical player and he's getting better every week, too. I thought the last week out was a big one for him going against a good football player and he really held his own. He's growing with confidence every week, too.

#### **Q. Some of the guys over there, they seemed to see really positive signs with this week of practice. What are some examples you saw that lead you to believe this team is on the right track?**

KIRK FERENTZ: That's what I was alluding to at the front. Bye weeks are always tricky. You're never quite sure what formula, and we've had them just about since I've been here, and I've got files. We're always kind of talking about that and what do we do, but I think

we all settled last week that the best thing we could try to do is take the physical burden off the guys that had been playing.

So we didn't do an awful lot with them physically. Got a chance to work the younger guys, which is always good. But then you worry about coming into it and we practiced Sunday. We normally don't do that. It was okay. You know, but we just talk to the guys about it's Monday and time to get going. I thought we had a good week of practice. We shortened times down but the tempo was good. Somebody asked me today if I sleep good on Friday nights as a visitor, I said, if we practice well, I do. Last night that wasn't a problem but then you're still anxious about how you're going to play. But I thought our guys came out and played good.

**Q. You slept good last night?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Fairly well. Not too bad.

**Q. What did it mean to see Brady punch one in there?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We were teasing the other two fullbacks, they were 0 for 2. Brady is going to have to work with those guys. He's been such a good team leader and the fact that he's been voted captain each week this season is an indication or illustration of the kind of respect that he's had from everybody here.

Tough, hard-nosed guy. Came here as a linebacker. Fullback is a graveyard for all former linebackers. That's where they ends up in that stack. But he takes a lot of pride in it and helps set tempo for our team and offense. Tremendous young man. He's been a great leader and he'd better hang on to that moment because they don't get too many of those historically around here, so it was pretty good.

**Q. The running backs know the drill by now that even if it's not your week one week it can be the next. A game like this, what kind of confidence does it do for Toren Young, obviously the big and explosive plays throughout?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I just talked about Brady and I'd use the same descriptions for Toren Young. He has a great attitude and adds a lot to our football team and makes us a tougher team. Good to see him get on track. The bottom line is both these guys have improved so much during their careers here and it's a credit to both of them because they work hard. They are prideful guys. You know, when you see that improvement, that's great.

And to your point earlier, there's no master plan or design. We kind of have a plan but you never know how it's going to shake out. So all four of those guys really have done a good job of being ready when they

are called upon.

**Q. What does it mean for your offense when you can have not only one running back step up like Toren Young did today but the other guys go for 90-plus yards?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's unusual. I don't know that we've ever been in that situation. We have confidence in all four of the backs. The older three guys we know very well. We came into August part of practice really feeling good about those three players, kind of like the receiver group, but now Tyler is an addition we thought he was a good prospect coming out of high school, but you know, everything he's done here he just seems on face but just acts like he belongs.

Think about Tony Moeaki, same way. Walked on campus, young guy -- you put him with the seniors and he played like a senior. That's a rare ability for a kid and Tyler has done a good job so far.

**Q. Looks like there's a maturity with the passing game now that we haven't seen for a while, and part of it is Nate's ability to grow with these receivers because they all started at square one together. What kind of growth have you seen collectively to where they reached this level?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It all goes hand-in-hand, and I don't want to speak for Nate, but I'm guessing he would tell you it's a lot better picture than it was, and they would probably say the same about him.

I think everybody is kind of growing through the process, to your point, and then the other element is that we are getting pretty decent protection right now. That's a key component, also. When he has had to step out or take the ball and run, he's done a good job of that, and that's part of the growth process, as well.

**Q. Your most total offensive yards in your tenure here, does that indicate just how much of a higher level this offense is operating at since you've been here?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, I think we have a few more play-makers maybe than we've had some years, and guys that can do something or get open or make a tough catch and maybe do something after they catch the ball. That helps. Having a veteran quarterback helps. Having linemen doing a pretty capable job helps.

I guess the bigger picture I'm happy about, I didn't know the numbers until a little while ago, but I'm just happy that we showed up ready to play. That to me is a good indication in week four coming off a bye that the team is thinking right, and if you're thinking right, then you have a chance to improve and that's -- to me, that's the race we're trying to run right now week-in and

week-out.

**Q. Did you come out of this pretty healthy?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Seems like it. Hopefully. Haven't got any bad news yet. Hopefully nobody ruins that. Next trick is how guys wake up in the morning, but as far as I know, I think we are in pretty good shape.

**Q. Alaric Jackson dressed today -- is that positive sign for next week?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It is. He was able to start doing some work this week. His conditioning level is probably not what it needs to be but I think he feels pretty good right now. We'll know more after we practice next week but it's encouraging, at least. Merriweather is kind of in the same boat. I think he's pretty close to being ready to go. Hopefully next week we'll have him.

**Q. Carson King was in the stadium today. How special was it to have him here participating in the wave and be here with the Hawkeye fans?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think the whole story is pretty neat. The wave is well documented. It was organic. It just happened. You know -- what it represents is so fantastic, and it's a nonpartisan thing. It's for Iowans and all people to feel good about.

Here is a guy two weeks, I didn't know Carson King from Johnny Carson but the next thing you know, there's \$2 million that's been raised from people as I understand all over the country.

So you know, all the crazy stuff going on in our world right now, and here is a really nice thing. It's a gesture, selfless act by an individual, who happens to be from our state. Maybe we can make him an Iowa Hawkeye fan one of these days, but fan of the hospital -- I don't know how you couldn't be if you didn't have any knowledge about it. It's great.

**Q. How do you feel going into Michigan with the way things are with the team right now?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, I'd feel better today the way we played than I would have if we had gone out there and kind of stumbled around. The biggest thing is our team has been working hard and if we do that, we give ourselves a chance. The way I'm looking at it, we've got eight conference games in front of us. I'm guessing they are all going to be a challenge and they are all going to be tough. I know next week will be.

We'll take it a week at a time and really the focus tomorrow will be on this game, trying to get things cleaned up, corrected and then the coaches will go to work on them after we done with the players.