

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

Saturday, August 31, 2019

Kirk Ferentz



Iowa - 38, Miami (Ohio) - 14

COACH FERENTZ: Obviously we're pleased with the victory. It was an excellent way to start the season. Our first half was a little sporadic at times, and we had some misfires and what have you. But I thought we really came back in the second half and played well.

All but a little turnover problem in there, and then we didn't respond very well on defense. But outside of that I thought we really looked a lot better in that second half. And the first game I think you anticipate those kind of issues. You have a lot of new players playing.

And then the other part of the equation, as I said earlier in the week, we felt like Miami was a much improved program from the last time they were here. They're a stronger, more physical team and more cohesive, very well coached.

But all in all really pleased. Some good efforts out there. Obviously Nate had a good night. Mekhi played really well. Receivers did a good job. And Tristan, where he was jumping over to the left side from the right tackle position was notable also.

And newcomers got their first action on the field, whether it was true freshmen or redshirt freshmen. I think that's really important.

The bottom line is where we are where we want to be right now. We're 1-0. Plenty of opportunity to improve. There's a lot of things we'll see that have to be cleaned up but an opportunity to be clean up and improve on. Really happy about that. And I want to thank our fans for a great environment. Night game in Kinnick. It's always special, but the crowd was tremendous. Great to have a sell out on a holiday. We're really appreciative of that.

Q. Any news on Alaric?

COACH FERENTZ: Nothing right now. Probably will know more next time we get together on Tuesday. Fingers crossed.

Q. In what ways has Mekhi matured as a football player?

COACH FERENTZ: We were just talking in there. I think just experience. He's more decisive, more

confident out there. And he made some really big plays.

There was a run he converted in front of our bench; it wasn't really clean. And somehow he got through there. It looked like a four-yard gain, but it was a heck of a run to make those four yards. And he's a great young guy, just works really hard and found his rhythm.

Q. Made a nice catch on a play, kind of had to improvise. He missed the blitz.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, looked like a slip screen; it wasn't.

Q. He made a smart release and got up field.

COACH FERENTZ: Got his eyes around him and Nate found him, made a big play kept the drive going. It was critical. Good players do that. Great to see him play the way he is.

Q. Are you happy with your offensive line's cohesiveness?

COACH FERENTZ: I mentioned Tristan going left. He hasn't done a lot of that in practice. He does some. So that was a big part. Then Levi and Kallenberger was in there too. We rotated guys around a little bit and played a lot of guys inside.

Britt played, Ince played. That's the first time they've ever played. Both Paulsens were in there. And Shooter was in there getting some reps. And then the guy -- we forget he's a first-game player actually is Linderbaum. But he played pretty good in there too. Some young faces but I thought overall those guys played well.

Q. Nate tonight really was a mature senior quarterback that you guys needed him to be. Needed some energy he was there for it?

COACH FERENTZ: Did a really nice job. We were just talking about the two runs; that was great to see. Have to work on him getting him down a little sooner. But it was great to have him pull the ball down there. It's tough on the defense if a guy will do that.

He played through some tough things. We felt like maybe we were getting grabbed on some plays and things like that. But he just kept playing and broke the ice on that.

Q. Oliver Martin, first grab as a Hawkeye, was a touchdown. How cool was that to see?

COACH FERENTZ: It's great. First it's great to have him on a football team. It's his first time playing in Kinnick. He's seen it a bunch, I'm sure but first time to have a chance to play here. For him to have success, it's a positive not just for Oliver, but our whole football team. And we're glad he's with us.

Q. Shaun Beyer made some big catches tonight.

COACH FERENTZ: He did. And that was great to see, obviously, with the graduation of our two guys or the loss of our guys from a year ago. Nate played well and we'll need Shaun and Drew. And LaPorta was in there, a true freshman. Got him started up a little bit.

We're going to need that whole group. But this is Shaun's time to go. He's in his junior year right now. And he's had some injuries he's had to fight through, but really good to see him have that success.

Q. Is that the consistency you're looking for from the run game?

COACH FERENTZ: From the sideline looked pretty good. Looked like not every play is perfect. Obviously the turnover wasn't so good. But it looked more like what we were shooting for. I thought all the backs in there, that were in there ran decisively.

Tyler lost his footing on that one, tried to get his foot down, caught up in there on that one to the left. But I thought everyone ran well. And Toren runs hard, and that's what we expect from him.

Q. Good to see Tyler to get the playing time he got tonight?

COACH FERENTZ: Tyler, he's just done real well this whole month. And for a first-year guy seems pretty unaffected by it. I'd say the same thing about Britt and LaPorta. It's interesting seeing them in the locker room. No big deal; it was just another game for them. Those guys are a little more poised than I would have been, I know that, at that age.

That's something you like to see. But he's practiced well. He's a sharp guy mentally and he handles himself really well on the field.

Q. Update aside, what kind of spirits was Alaric in? Going down, second drive of the season?

COACH FERENTZ: He was good. He was in the locker room, he was fine. We don't know right now what the extent of it. No sense mourning right now or worrying about it. Keep our fingers crossed.

Q. They cut it to 10, and you came up the next series. That's when Tyler Goodson played. True

freshman, did you think twice about putting him in that position?

COACH FERENTZ: I did a little bit. Total honesty. We kind of mapped it out, planned it, talked about it during the week.

The guys that have been practicing well, the guys I mentioned a minute ago, all those newer guys that were in there, that was part of our plan; we were going to go with it and a chance to get them up and running.

And we all learned about ourselves tonight a little bit more. The best part about it is how we respond in the second half, because first half, sputtering here and all that stuff, we came out and played better football.

I thought the staff made good adjustments at halftime. They were doing some things that made it tough. A lot of guys we haven't seen on film and they do some things that we haven't seen them do on film.

And we don't know who they're going to play at quarterback. I thought Gabbert played really well. He made some good throws and they found some weaknesses in there, some things we'll have to coach up and do a better job of. That will be good for us since we survived it. But it was a concern during the game.

Q. With Alaric's injury, were you trying to play that many guys on the offensive line?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we were still going to play guys but we didn't know that was going to be part of the rotation, but we were going to play the guys I mentioned.

Q. The passing game, is that kind of how you envision it coming into it, spread it around like that?

COACH FERENTZ: It would be wonderful if we could keep doing that. Makes us a better football team. Last year I know there's a lot of folks on the tight ends for obvious reasons. Those guys were exceptional players and talents. We weren't as good at the other spots, but I think we're a little stronger just overall right now. So that's probably how it's going to shake out.

Q. You're talking about adjustments. What were some other keys to finishing some of those drives in the second half?

COACH FERENTZ: We did a couple things in the running game. They were down in there pretty good, what you would expect. And then thought some of the stuff -- we threw the ball down the field a little bit more in the second half. And I think that helped us, too. We just kind of loosened up a little bit and did a little bit better that way.

flexibility.

Q. When you look at Tyler Linderbaum, what he was able to do, I know he had some growing pains at times in August. But seemed no center snap exchange issues and blocking down field.

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, he really enjoys playing, enjoys competing. But for a guy playing center, the position gets hidden a little bit, but it's a tall order. There's a lot going on up there. He seemed to handle it really well today. Nothing glaring that we saw from the sidelines. He has a really good demeanor. Likes playing, likes competition. And so it's a good start for him. Certainly and anxious to see the film on him.

Q. A.J. played every snap until the absolute end of the game. He was double-teamed constantly. How do you go forward with that? Do you like when he's getting double-teamed that much? Can you game other ways?

COACH FERENTZ: There's nothing to do. If they want to double-team, that's two checkers for one, right? It's been a long time since I played checkers. I think that's a good thing. That's going to be part of the deal, and he'll have to live with that a little bit.

Wasn't double-teamed all the time, but they were chipping a lot, tight end over there and all that kind of stuff which is good football; they've got a good staff over there, good plans.

Q. Adrian Clayborn was a senior, double-teamed often

COACH FERENTZ: That's the curse of being a good player. Sometimes that happens. But that should free some other things up for the other guys. And that's a team effort out there. But he'll be good. He'll be all right.

Q. What do you know about Oliver now that you may not have known in June?

COACH FERENTZ: The biggest thing, like anybody, we have had him in the program, strength conditioning. Had him through summer camp. And now we've had a game at least to start it out. So it was a positive start for him that way. But he's been great ever since he's been here.

And we're just happy he's with us. And it was good to see him make some plays out there. Has to help his confidence. It's not like he's played a lot of football. It's got to be a good thing for him too I would think.

Q. Was he a sponge in terms of picking up what you do here?

COACH FERENTZ: He can pretty much play all the receiver positions, yes. So he's picked it up really quickly. Not everybody can do that. That's not easy to do. It's a real positive, that way; it gives us more