

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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## LeVar Woods



LEVAR WOODS: Appreciate everyone taking the time to come up and visit with us. Where things are special teams wise at Iowa. There have been some highs and some lows, some good and some bad. I've seen some young guys emerge, and some older guys doing what they've been doing.

I think if you watch us and study us over the last three to four weeks, I think there are some times where you'd say, hey, wow, they're on track, and there are some other times where we shot ourselves in the foot a little bit.

That being said, we keep plugging along, we keep working every single day and trying to improve and trying to help this football team from a special teams standpoint. That being said, any questions?

**Q. What were the two most recognizable errors the other night on special teams? What was the film review of each of those with Shaun Beyer?**

LEVAR WOODS: Yeah, I would say this, with Shaun, it's just bad ball security. Or not Shaun, excuse me, with Kyle it's bad ball security. He'll be the first to tell you that. You should always have the ball on the outside arm. He'll be the first to tell you that. It's a deal where he had a really good return, had a really good thing going, and boom, the ball pops out. I know he's sick about it today as we all are.

But Kyle is an accountable kid. He's the first one to step up and say he screwed up. He's always out there fighting for his teammates. I think the guys out there like blocking for him, because they know he could be a force back there for them and for this team, and he'll be the first to tell you that, myself included.

With Shaun, it comes down to communication. And I'm not going to say that that's Shaun's deal. That's a team deal on our part. All of us involved in communication, all 11 guys on the field, and all of us on the sideline are involved in communication, and that's something we're working on.

**Q. Is that regarding more the returner, because he's the one that can see the ball, kind of like a center fielder, if you will? And he kind of lunged toward the ball at that point, so it almost looked like nobody knew what was going on?**

LEVAR WOODS: Sure, he's like the quarterback back there. The quarterback gets all the glory when things go well, and he gets all the blame when things go poorly. It's no different than being a returner. It all starts there. But it's a team deal. It's 11 guys on the field all working for one common goal. We've all got to recognize it and be able to see it. But it starts with the call, starts with the communication, and all of us are involved in that.

Again, I bring up the sidelines as well, because we all have to scream it as well from the sideline.

**Q. From your vantage point, was Shaun blocked into the ball?**

LEVAR WOODS: I think Shaun was working, hustling, knowing he had a good returner back there, and kind of got knocked into it.

**Q. Do you think there will be changes on the return team?**

LEVAR WOODS: No, I don't think that. We've all seen some really good stuff from Kyle. He has made some plays that we've all been happy with. That being said, there are some things that we've got to fix, and that's not just him or one person. It's a team effort. It's all of us involved, starting right here, and then we've got to get it fixed.

I think too, if you've watched and studied us close, we're very, very close to being a dangerous return unit. A couple things, we're talking about turnovers from the other night, you also go back a game or two that there are some opportunities that we gave up from a penalty standpoint. We negated a 30-yard return or negated a 23-yard return. Those are hard to come by punt return-wise. And you have a returner back there that can do that, and those are things that we need to take back and get back.

**Q. How has he built that kind of equity in your program just two years, really one year now as a player? Was it just the way he worked last year when he came in on the scout team?**

LEVAR WOODS: Kyle's not the only returner we have. I think we have some good, capable returners. But talking about him specifically, I think he's built equity with his teammates and how he works and how he approaches everything and the way he goes about his

business.

Again, you mentioned last year on scout team, I think it started there for him, and then progressed kind of going forward this way.

Again, this isn't just about one person. Everyone's involved. Everyone's out there. There are other guys that we have that can return the ball, and think that the unit itself in general, I think we're very, very close to being a good unit, being a dangerous unit, to a play here, a block there, communication here or there away from being a really good unit. We keep working every single day, and that was a point of emphasis for us today in practice. So keep working on it from here on out.

**Q. Have you looked at Devonte Young, a guy that's offensively it hasn't quite worked out for him, but he seems to be working really hard in special teams, whether it's punt block or back, returning kicks. Whether he gets the opportunity, does he set an example for players that even if you're not achieving maybe what you'd hoped for on one end of the ball, that you can still work hard?**

LEVAR WOODS: Sure. I think that's what this program is built upon. Guys finding a role and executing the role to the best of their ability. Speaking specifically about special teams, Devonte has done that. This is your role, this is what it's going to be right now. All right. How can I be the best that I can be at that role?

For him, it's been special teams, and he's helped us out in some situations. He's a guy that has some experience. He's in his third year now. He's a guy that can help us on all different phases as a core player and also as an off returner and things like that in the return game. It's been fun watching him kind of progress, And those other guys out there too that are working hard.

**Q. Brady Ross every week, what's he showing you to earn that trust?**

LEVAR WOODS: Yeah, I think Brady, I think everyone in the room and everyone on this team will look at Brady in that regard. He doesn't say a whole lot, but he works incredibly hard. He leads by example. When he does speak, people listen and people know he's serious when he does speak. He's a very genuine person.

He's a guy, like I said, by example, first and foremost how he works and how he goes about his business.

**Q. You look at the strides that Colton has made what can you attribute that to based on last year, he was pretty inconsistent. This year he seems to**

**put the ball where he needs to put it?**

LEVAR WOODS: I think Colton, we've mentioned this before in previous press conferences, I think he's been very, very diligent how he goes about his work right now. I think he was embarrassed from last year. He'll tell you that, personally embarrassed. And I think he's taken it upon himself to really be diligent and work hard at what he's doing and be better at his craft.

He's not where he needs to be yet and he's not where he's going to be, but I think he's on the right track. He's on the right track, and I think he's in a position to keep performing and keep doing well.

**Q. How much have you had to arm wrestle Phil or Brian to get guys on special teams?**

LEVAR WOODS: I just go to the head coach, and he says yea or nay. We look at everybody on our roster, who can help on special teams. I try not to use guys that I know are key to a certain play or key to a certain position that, hey, if we were to lose -- let's say we put Nate Stanley back there as a returner, that would not be very smart, okay.

But that being said, we're trying to do everything we can to help this team all three phases, offense, defense and special teams, so we're trying to find the best guys for that role.

It's not always a starter that's the best for that role, if that makes sense. There are some guys that maybe don't get the opportunity to play on offense or defense, they may be better suited for a specific role on special teams, so we look at them first.

But both coordinators, offense and defense have been very forthcoming, very willing to say, hey, go ahead, use them, whatever you've got. So our thought right now is we'll try to use the starter for two, maybe three phases at the most, then after that we're not going to use them for six phases, if that makes sense.

**Q. Is Hooker one of those key guys up front? Is that why he's key?**

LEVAR WOODS: Hooker has been back there returning punts. He's fielded some balls back there as well. That's sort of more scheme related or a game-plan related than anything.

**Q. Amani Jones the other day he brings such energy. He must be a guy that you like having on there, because he's obviously physical, but he also kind of has that special teams energy.**

LEVAR WOODS: I don't think it's any secret I love Amani Jones on kickoff coverage. Just as you said, he brings a different energy. My comment to him was where has he been, you know? I've been waiting for

him. But you hit the nail on the head where he does bring a different energy in how he covers kicks. When you watch that play closely, he was actually blocked on the ground and got up and still made a woo-hoo hit as you termed it.

But love Amani Jones, love his energy, love what he brings to the table.

**Q. Not a lot of punt returns or at least very few, how satisfying is that for you?**

LEVAR WOODS: That's part of our scheme, it's part of what we're trying to do. We're trying to limit returns as much as we can. On the return aspect, we're trying to get as many returns as we can. If you look globally around the country, college football returns are up from a punt return standpoint. Even for us they're up. I think we have 11 returns so far this year. That's up from this time of the year typically over the last three or four years.

Again, if you look across the country, all numbers are up punt return-wise, so it must be punters are getting better.

**Q. The rugby style is kind of new. I don't think Kirk liked it as much a few years ago. Other teams were doing it, and now he seems to be all in. Is that because the college rules are so much different than the pro rules? Where the pro rules a couple of guys can be the gunners. In college everybody can leave and it gives you that extra second to get guys down the field?**

LEVAR WOODS: I think the rule set it up. In the NFL only the outside guys and men on the line of scrimmage can go down before the ball is punted. That's totally different in college, anyone can go down as soon as the ball is snapped.

So I think that lends to that scheme, and it lends to the different formations you see in college football, allowing you to get extra gunners down the field. It's helped us out, and we're not only a rugby unit.

We also traditional punt as well. So I think just more -- I think in general we've done that. It's been good for us. We're not the only team in the country or in our conference that does it. It's been effective for people. You know, hey, when the job is to get field position, whatever we can do to get the field position is what we're going to do.

**Q. Wanted to ask you about the long snapper. So that means things are going all right.**

LEVAR WOODS: Are you trying to jinx us? Yeah, I think Jackson stepped in, and Jackson has done a good job. Jackson's not the only one. We have a

couple other snappers that could step in and do the job as well. Jackson has been the guy that's been in there, and he's done well so far.