

OUTBACK BOWL: FLORIDA VS IOWA

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Kirk Ferentz

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Florida - 30, Iowa - 3

KIRK FERENTZ: Certainly we're disappointed with the outcome. Today was a tough day for our football team, and just want to start off by thanking everybody associated with the Outback Bowl. Top to bottom everything has been first class like it always is here, so we're very appreciative of that. It's been a great experience for our guys.

I think our team has really had a good month. They practiced well, prepared well. I'm not sure there's a thing I would go back and change. Ultimately today we just didn't play well enough to come up with a victory against a good Florida team, so we certainly give them credit, salute their effort out there, and congratulate them.

Really in a nutshell, there were two big plays in the first half for us, two big series or events. Us not converting the 4th and 1 down on the goal line and then the big play they responded with a little bit after that, and to me the third quarter was a big, big swing, as well. We drove the ball and came out with no points and then they went the other way. To me that was kind of the story of the whole thing.

And then just last thing, it was a tough day for us. Certainly we're disappointed to lose, but it doesn't define this football team. This team has been great to work with. They've had a lot of good moments on and off the field. They've done an outstanding job, and that all starts with our seniors.

We had 14 outstanding seniors on this football team. Going back to January, there's just -- they've been working hard, doing a great job, and just really, really proud of them, very appreciative of their efforts, and again, all the things that they've done, off the field, on the field, academically, character, whatever it is, and then football-wise. 20 wins in two years now and 35 in the last four years in their career.

I think just all you had to do is look at that fourth quarter, you see the effort of a guy like Desmond King, one of our most notable players, Jaleel Johnson. Other side, LeShun doing what he did and CJ Beathard playing not at full strength, but just what toughness and courage he's got.

I could go through the list of all 14 guys, just really proud of them and very, very appreciative of all they've done throughout their careers.

Last thing, just want to thank our fans again. We traditionally have had great fan support, going back to '81 when I first got introduced to Iowa and Iowa football, and that hasn't changed, so we appreciate that, and we're very appreciative of them following our team.

Q. That 4th and 1, talk about that.

KIRK FERENTZ: Not at all. The thought process there, obviously we thought we were going to score or we wouldn't have gone for it. Then the other thing that factors in, if we don't, we've got them on the 1, so we're hopeful that we can get field position, get back, and at least get back there and have an opportunity.

You know, big part of the game, we've been an opportunistic football team this year, and to come up short there in the red zone and then earlier in the game, as well. Those are the little plays that we have to make if we're going to have a chance to compete against a team like Florida.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: About Florida's defense? I think they're pretty good. I thought that coming in, and after watching them live, I'd say the same thing. We've got great respect for their team and their coaches. They played really well today.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: No, not really. I mean, I do you tell they would say the same about -- I would think they'd say the same about us. I think at this point you might see some wrinkles, that type of thing, little things, but overall, I think they played like we thought they would. They just played better today.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, that was where it all happened right there. Yep.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: You know, if he -- first of all, he thought he could go back and play, which he always does, but then secondly, when he was playing, certainly he was limited in what he could do. He wasn't going to run, but he wanted to compete. I think we certainly owe it to him. He's had a tremendous career and laid it out there for us game in and game out.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Oh, it was huge. Yeah, it was huge. Those two plays, us getting stopped and then -- even then, I think it was an 85-yard touchdown, right, so it wasn't like they had great field position. But for us to be successful, we have to be -- do the little things right, and we came up a little bit short on that. We've done a pretty good job of that overall this season, but to come up short 4th and 1 and then give up a big play like that, it's hard to play good defense giving up big plays, but credit goes to them. They executed well, and that guy made a heck of a run.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, it's combination. We're probably better on the run than we are throwing it right now, at least this season. And then on top of that, they've got an NFL secondary. They've got some guys that can play. It sounds like you cover them so I'm guessing you know they're pretty good, and we thought that coming in, and we ditto that right now.

Q. How do you put a cap on the season?

KIRK FERENTZ: You know, I evaluate seasons on a lot of things, not just wins and losses. That's certainly part of the criteria, and in the court of popular opinion that's certainly a big, big part of it, and I get that. I understand that. But the little things that the teams do and the way they operate, the way they work, and again, I mean, we didn't -- this game didn't turn out the way we wanted to, but I'm not so sure -- just right now what I would change this month. I think the guys really did a great job with our preparation. I thought our plan was good. I thought our game plan was good, and there were just some things that we didn't execute, and those little details mean a big -- a great deal to us. I mean, they're just really important for us.

But again, I'm proud of our football team. I think we had a good football team, and just very proud of them.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, we'll take time and think about it and talk about it and all that kind of stuff, get feedback from our players, feedback from the staff. We'll talk to other people, too, but again, as I stand here today I feel really good about the way we went about things. I think we had a good plan and just came up short against a good football team today.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, that's a goal every year. In a perfect world, we want to be balanced. Some years you do a better job of that than others. This year we had to lean to the run pretty heavily, just like in '04 we had to throw it just about all the time. Those things happen, circumstances factor into it. But our goal is to be balanced, and then it's just a matter of us trying to get to that point.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, yeah, we've played good teams. That would be the first commonality I'd throw out there. But I don't think so. I thought last year we did need to reevaluate and look at things, which we spent a lot of time on. I might feel differently a month from now or two months from now, but right now as I stand here, I feel like we had a good plan. I think we really practiced well. I thought our guys were ready to go, and I thought they played hard today. It wouldn't have mattered, effort necessarily as it was execution.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: First half or second?

Q. First half.

KIRK FERENTZ: No, I wouldn't use that as an excuse. We missed some tackles there, but I'll credit that -- that guy is a big guy, big, strong guy. Credit him for running through there. But no, I don't think he was a big factor today, I really don't. I thought both teams handled it pretty well it looked like.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: To prepare for them? Like what do you mean?

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, the plays they run. We executed them like they scouted us, and what did they play, 13 games, I think. They had 13 -- we had 13 games, they had 12 to look at. You can't look at them all and they don't all pertain to what you're doing anyway, but they're a good football team.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, I mean, he's always going to say he's going to play. If he had a broken leg, that would be his answer. We've had a lot of tough guys come through the University of Iowa and play football at least in my 27 years, and he's right up there at the top. They don't come any tougher. So that's our -- we have to look and see what it looks like, and if he's going to be in harm's way then we're going to get him out of there certainly. First and foremost there's a medical decision to be made by the doctors and trainers, so it starts there. But if he could go, he was allowed to go, much like last year, he played limited last year. It's just a tough way for him and all the seniors to finish up because I can't compliment those guys enough, whether it's CJ Beathard or guys that weren't starters, just what a great group. So that part is tough.

But that's part of football. We all signed up, and the good news is all those guys will move on. They've got a great future in front of them, all 14 of them. It's been a pleasure to work with them.

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