

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

Saturday, October 1, 2016

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



KIRK FERENTZ: So obviously today was a disappointing outcome for our players, coaches, fans. We had a great crowd out there. They were really into it. Just not a good way to finish.

Ultimately we didn't play well enough, we didn't coach well enough, and Northwestern did a better job today.

As we move forward, the biggest thing we have to do is try to eliminate the things that have been holding us back right now. It's a fine line between winning and losing typically, and I think a lot of our issues right now are things that we've got to try to get cleaned up a little bit. 3rd down obviously, stopping the run, and the biggest thing is just playing cleaner and more efficient, and those little mistakes, those little errors tend to put us in a position to make it difficult to have success, and those are things we've really got to do a better job of. We've been focused on that. It didn't show up today, so we'll keep pushing for it.

We'll go back to work tomorrow. It's the 24-hour rule like always, and we'll see what we can do there. The bottom line is right now we're a 3-2 football team with a lot of football left, but clearly we need to improve, and that's the task for tomorrow.

Q. Last year you talked a lot about just like the small margin between being a 12-0 team and a 7-6 team. What are the things that are happening right now that maybe didn't happen prior to today?

KIRK FERENTZ: A lot of it is self-inflicted quite frankly. I'll start with the penalties, the penalty situation. We came into the season playing pretty clean football the first two games, and one thing we are, we're protecting the football pretty well. The turnover-takeaway deal has been good for us. But those penalties, the little things that look almost somewhat innocuous, the impact they have or can have, they're really big.

The one situation in the second quarter, it looked like it was going to be a 1st down and ends up being we got a holding penalty or whatever and end up in a long yardage situation. We're not good enough to dig out of those kinds of situations, especially when we put ourselves in a hole. We've got to make sure if we're in a hole it's because the defense put us there, not ourselves.

Q. Desmond had a ton of return yards. Is that a testimony to his ability?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. I thought our guys battled until the end. That was a positive, and the biggest positive was our kicking game today. We thought we'd have an opportunity in the return game on both phases, but still, the guys have to block well, and then Desmond and Riley both did a good job returning. Yeah, really pleased; they work hard. Both those guys I'm sure are really tired right now.

Q. Riley had a big day today; for a fifth-year senior who came in as a walk-on, is that in any way gratifying to see him step up?

KIRK FERENTZ: I thought he did a good job last year for us as a reserve receiver, and then also played special teams in a real quiet way, but he did a great job.

And certainly with Matt out now, he's got to take a bigger role offensively. But he improved during spring ball, had a really good camp, so with every phase he's taken positive steps.

Somehow we're going to have to try to keep him a little bit more fresh because he got worn out today. But he's just a heck of a football player, great attitude. Everybody needs to follow his lead because he's really on the right track.

Q. You guys were sacked six times today, and CJ's last interception he was hurried on that one. What do you see there, is it protection, receivers?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's a little bit of everything. Protection has not always been what it needs to be. Sometimes it looks like there's nothing happening, there's no rhythm or tempo to it, and we're holding the ball back there, and that's not a good thing, either.

We're going to be in those situations. We're probably going to have to come up with better ways probably of getting the ball out quicker. The other thing we can do is try and help ourselves, not be in those 3rd and longs, the 3rd and 7, 8s and pluses, those types of things, and some of that ties into the penalty stuff again.

Q. How much did the 79 rushing yards impact things?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's not good. But when you get

six sacks, your negative yardage is going to hurt you, and when we never get a rhythm or tempo going, which we did in the second quarter, we looked a little bit like we were in sync there, we looked like a pretty healthy, good football team. But we're not doing that enough right now, and part of that is the stuff that we inflicted upon ourselves. Those are things that you can control a little bit, and we've got to get better at that.

Q. Did you coaches think you'd have a handle on this team five games into the season? We're hearing the same things from the players.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I don't know if you ever get a handle on a team quite frankly. It's a work in progress. The team is a work in progress. Every week is a different story, different adventure, and it's been that way historically.

We're trying to shape our identity. We've had an injury or two, so that modifies things, but it's going to be a work in progress, and that's the work in front of us the next six days.

Q. Did this team kind of lose it during all those penalties that were called?

KIRK FERENTZ: The most disappointing thing in that whole sequence was probably our lack of poise, which got us an extra 15 yards. Penalty calls are going to happen; good or bad, they're going to happen. But then talking about self-inflicted things, that's just a lack of poise. We're not good enough to give up 15 yards, whether it's a sack, a penalty. We're just not good enough, and not many teams are.

First thing you've got to do if you want to win games is not beat yourselves, and I'm not talking strictly about that penalty, but the other things that we're doing wrong, the false starts, holds, whatever it may be. Those are things we're going to have to clean up, and hopefully we can get that done in a week's time.

Q. The Northwestern kid who got hurt, did you see that or did Coach Fitzgerald say something to you?

KIRK FERENTZ: It was a pretty crisp block by one of our players on the kick return. Everything that Pat said, it sounds like things are okay, they were just taking real precautionary steps. He obviously got great medical attention, so hopefully everything is good there.

Q. (Question about playing up tempo)

KIRK FERENTZ: Up until that time we really didn't talk about having any tempo or rhythm. We didn't have much. It was just a little change up to try to get us in a groove a little bit. Clearly after today's ballgame, everything is up on the board. Everything is open again to discussion. But that's something for us as coaches. We're going to have to find something to get

our guys on track a little faster, a little quicker, and that's a coach's thing. That's also a player's thing. We've all got to work together, and we will. We'll work together to get this fixed.

Q. Would you say you lost a little bit of momentum on your first drive of the third quarter when you had to settle for a field goal?

KIRK FERENTZ: There were instances in the game and during the season, to me good team football is when you get an opportunity you've really got to capitalize on it, and we've done a fair job of it this year. Three points is better than nothing, but yeah, certainly having great field position, and you've got some momentum, it's an exciting play, you'd like to take it and go with it. That's where we're not hitting on all cylinders right now. Good example of it.

Q. As a coach what do you have to do to not let this team (indiscernible)?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, that's a challenge every week, and it's like winning, too, you've got to get your focus back on the next opponent. Big picture wise, we have three games until our bye week and then another four, so we've still got seven football games, and there's a lot of football ahead. But what's really important is what we do, and what we do to correct problems and issues. You're going to have them after wins and losses. We're going to have to do it faster, work on it faster and get there faster because we're going to play another good football team next week.

To me the focus right now is on the next six days, how much improvement, how well can we get better, better prepared to play a better game.

Q. When you're losing one-on-one battles in the pass, pass protection, is there anything in the discussion to fix that?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, there's all kinds of things you can consider and look at. Historically we haven't done a lot of that, and I haven't seen the film yet, I'm not convinced that's the answer. It's probably not something you want to hear, but to me when teams are playing well they get into a rhythm. They tend to protect a little bit better. But some of the instances today, it looked like we were kind of stuck in sand there a little bit, and I've been through that. It's not much fun to watch it. It just feels -- but my experiences tell me where it's not quite as bad as it seemed. It felt pretty bad there; certainly when you get sacked it always feels bad. But we can do some things to help that.

Chipping may be part of that, but there's some other things, too, so hopefully we can just get in a little better rhythm here and better tempo and be a little bit more efficient moving the ball.