

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

Saturday, September 15, 2018

### Kirk Ferentz



Iowa- 38

UNI - 14

KIRK FERENTZ: We're really happy and pleased to get the win. It was our goal coming into tonight and happy about that. Happy about the outcome. Guys played hard.

First of all, just want to thank our fans again. Another great crowd in Kinnick. It was just exceptional down there. Night games are really special and sellout crowd, so that was fantastic.

Also special thanks to Pat Green for being with us tonight. I think that was really just a nice touch. I didn't get to, obviously, see the performance. I know he was excited about it and we're thrilled that he was here with us.

So just regarding the game, I thought our guys did a good job overall, saw a lot of positives out there. I thought we came in that first half ready to go. Set good tempo offensively. Defense continued to play well, that was certainly a positive. Made some progress there. You look at the month of September, and I think I've said this pretty routinely, it's all about growth and development for our football team in September. I think we're seeing that, and saw it during the week. Thought we had a better week of practice this week, particularly on the offensive side. So that's a positive.

But then all that being said, we still have a lot of ground to cover and tonight. We had way too many penalties, too many turnovers, turned it over twice, a couple sacks. So plenty of things to clean up and just some little mental discipline things that cost us a little bit tonight and will continue to cost us as we move into conference play. So we've still got plenty to work on. And basically we talked to our team before this season about a four-game block, a four-week block here in September. And so we have to close it out, we got basically seven days to stay focused and try to keep improving and then we'll see where we're at when next week's over. So, again, just really happy for the team and happy they got the victory.

**Q. This was brought up, was Easley dinged maybe early in the year and maybe not at full speed and**

**how much does it help to have him back?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, a little bit but nothing major. Just, it's kind of funny how things get going or don't get going and our passing attack, in general, it was just kind of sporadic. So at least tonight we looked a little bit more representative of what we're trying to be. And Nick's a good football player. So to me it was just a matter of time, before he starts showing some good things and good to see him running around out there. So, yeah, positive there.

**Q. Noah had five catches, 99 yards first half, you guys went to him a lot. Was that by design or was that just what was there?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's part of what we do but not necessarily, it wasn't like we saw something, it's part of our package, I guess. And if he's open, hopefully Nate's going to get him the ball and he did a good job of that today. So it was good, some good throws and good catches and Noah did a good job with the ball once he had it in his hands too, which was positive.

**Q. Coming into the season, you had a lot of inexperience at linebacker. That was kind of a concern of your team coming into the season. So far it seems to me they're playing lights out. Maybe touch on that a little bit.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Seeing a lot of really positives out there. And our defense just in general, especially the front seven, linebackers and then the guys up front, I think we're developing some depth. So I don't know how much we were counting on that or expecting that, but the linebacker group, both Djimon and Welch playing good at the wolf position. Amani got back in there and worked a little bit at Mike tonight. And Nick's been pretty much running solo for the most part. But I think Barrington's a guy that has really improved from a year ago. So a position we didn't know about, right now it looks like we might have five or six guys that can play in the game and play well. That is certainly pleasing. Same thing with the backup guys up front. It's hard to tell the difference at times between them and that's a real positive, too, because it allows us to keep guys fresh and I think that makes everybody better.

**Q. Nick Niemann, who was from a football family and a lot of football going on there, is that, in some ways is he more better prepared, at least mentally,**

**to play the game?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, he's pretty smart guy and he played well in special teams last year. I just said on the radio, wish there was another brother coming then we could have the Stoops, they have been pretty much played the decade of the '80s, they all wore the same number, that's one difference. But Nick has just kind of jumped in there and Ben played that position really well for quite awhile. It doesn't seem like we're dropping off at all, which is really great. Nick's just kind of a steady player, to your point, he is very smart and I think that football instinct probably started a long time ago with him and it's just really good to see. That's a position, as you know the stats don't pop out at you, but if we're not playing well out there, that pops out and it shows in production.

**Q. There was some talk about this being a trap game where it fell on your schedule. Was that ever a concern with you?**

KIRK FERENTZ: No, I never use that word. I have used it in the past, but not today. We have always had great respect for UNI and their program and what that whole program's done, but Coach Farley has done a great job there for a long, long time. They will have a good football team. Last year they started early and then they played really well down the last two thirds of the season. Just like I talk about development for us, I'm sure they're going through it. But, yeah, we have had way too many tough games with them and I think the way college football is right now if you don't understand you better show up every Saturday, you could be in for a bad surprise and then you got trouble with your team and, yeah, we're hardly a perfect team right now but our guys have been focused, they have had a good attitude and when I say that, part of that attitude is they understand that we have to get better and we have to show up and compete or else we're going to be in trouble. At least so far we have played hard three straight weeks now.

**Q. Did the game plan tonight leave room to bring the passing game up to speed or to let it be, let it perform?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I mean we have been trying for three weeks to throw the ball with some success and it looked a lot better tonight. It was good to see some things, but as I was alluding to a minute ago I think we were seeing it in practice too. Wednesday in particular I thought we looked like we were starting to maybe get where we want to get or at least moving in the right direction, we're hardly there yet, but that was encouraging I thought. I thought we just looked better in general as an offense on Wednesday and that carried over to yesterday too. But it's a process, you just keep hopefully practicing well and building some equity and then hope it shows up on the game film.

**Q. It didn't seem like there was any, with the pass game, there was any sort of players-only meeting or anything like that, it just seemed like it was business as usual to get going.**

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm not real big on those players-only, there might be a coup in the making. Dave Triplett used to say any time there's more than two people talking in there there's a potential coup. That's a pretty good saying. I think we're all together -- the guys have been working hard it just hasn't been showing up.

**Q. Any program in your own division it's hard to go 3-0 in the non-conference. Maybe just give a sense of getting through this stage.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Believe me, I have never taken that for granted and I never take beating anybody for granted, it's just too tough and too challenging and it sounds like there are a lot of games today that would fit that description. So the best thing in, as long as I've done this now, the thing I have learned is let's just focus on what's going on this week and more importantly today. That's our best plan. Sounds pretty basic and mundane but that's really the trick in this whole thing. That's where I'll compliment our players, I think they have been pretty good on just staying focused on the moment and what we're trying to do right now and realizing that we got a lot of work to do and a lot of improvement to make, but at least if they're thinking right they're not wasting time, they're hopefully moving forward.

**Q. What did you think about your running back combo, talk about each of those and how they were able to hit the line today?**

KIRK FERENTZ: That was certainly a positive for us and then when Henry got in there, it's like the opposite right now. He's a young guy who is learning how to run he doesn't know how to run yet but he will, he'll learn. But I think Toren and Mekhi especially are really starting to warm up a little bit and we're going to need both those guys hopefully we'll get Ivory back here at some point, sooner than later, but I thought both of them ran tough and ran hard. And Mekhi, I've kind of been saying over the last couple weeks that we have seen him during camp really start to get warmed up, now it's good to see that go to Kinnick. But I thought he really played well tonight and he's a really tough, he's kind of a deceptive guy, he's a little tougher than you might give him credit for. He breaks tackles and if you don't get him down, he'll keep going.

**Q. He's only been here three months.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, three months and not a lot of football. Whatever that is. We're four plus three right, so seven weeks of football. But we took awhile the first week or two, doing okay, and then whenever it was, I

think it was our last scrimmage he really looked good. Now you're starting to see it on the field at Kinnick, which is where it counts, obviously. But he's just, I can't say enough about him. Every time you talk to him, first of all, he's a great young guy, he's just got a really humble approach, he's got a real appreciation for being here, and he's a good football player on top of it. He's an outstanding teammate, I think he's got a chance to be a really good player here before he leaves here and, boy, that's exciting for us.

**Q. Any up date on Cole and Ihmir if they will be available?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think they got a chance, but we'll probably know more when I see you on Tuesday, have a chance to see what they can do Monday. They're not ruled out right now and I don't know how close they are. I don't think they're that far away.

**Q. How is your offensive line, where do you think your offensive line, how do you grade them out right now?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We're doing okay. We still got some ground to cover. It was disappointing tonight, we gave up two sacks, I thought their guy was going harder than our guy, I'll be candid on that. Although one of them there was a little technique issue there too. Second one I couldn't see as well. And that makes a difference. But we have to get better. We have to get better and we will. But they're working hard, I think we have improved. We get into conference play it's going to be another notch up here, so we got to get better.

**Q. How much did pushing the tempo, how much do you think that helped the offense get in a rhythm early?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's hard to quantify, but we thought it might help us a little about bit and it seemed to be effective at least but it's hard to quantify, quite frankly. Hopefully it was good.