

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz



Northwestern - 14

Northwestern - 10

KIRK FERENTZ: So obviously it was a tough loss against a team that's really been playing very well and they outplayed us tonight, especially in that second half. I told our players last week that we write our own history and that really hasn't changed. It gets decided out on the field. So tonight we came up short against a team that's been playing very, very well since their bye week. They outplayed us tonight. Nobody's more disappointed right now than the 115, 116 guys on our football team. They have worked hard, they have invested, and I thought they competed hard tonight. But it wasn't good enough. So moving forward the biggest challenge for us tomorrow is getting ourselves back up on our feet. We'll go back to work, got to stay together. And then I think the guys have worked hard, but what we need to do now is show more improvement. Hopefully that will translate out there on the game field next week. So with that I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Noah Fant was in the game for about eight plays in the second half including none of which when you guys went to 11 personnel one of the last drives. Is there a reason why he's not playing as much?

KIRK FERENTZ: If you've got 11 personnel, you can only have one tight end out there and we got two pretty good tight ends, so TJ would have been the guy of choice at that point.

Q. He played in the slot quite a bit.

KIRK FERENTZ: That would be 12 personnel and I think we had that out there in the second half.

Q. You did on your touchdowns, but was there a reason why Noah Fant wasn't out there in the second half?

KIRK FERENTZ: 12 personnel or for 11?

Q. Well, for any play.

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, I think we try to feature our guys that are doing the best, whether it's TJ, Noah, our receivers. No, I mean we're calling the game as we call the game and practice the situations we're practicing.

Q. But the guy has 18 touchdowns and is probably an All-American, yet he's not on the field in some of the most critical plays on a game where you got 300 hundred yards or less of offense?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. I think it was 330. 333. But anyway. So, yeah, we're playing the guys out there that we feel are best in the situations that's given to them.

Q. Along those lines, is the key the lack of targets or something they did today?

KIRK FERENTZ: No. I think overall they did a good job defensively. And to me the biggest story of the game was we couldn't run the ball effectively in the second half and they did. They made it tough on us in every segment. I know we out gained them yardage-wise, but we never really got in a rhythm outside of the one big play to Smith-Marsette. We never really got in a rhythm. Offensively we didn't hit many big plays. That's one of the games where I think our inefficiency on third down and their ability to run the ball was probably the biggest thing.

Q. The Smith-Marsette kickoff returns and then the catches he made was the highlight for your offense maybe?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. He's doing a great job on kick returns, and the whole unit is. Those guys, it's like anything else, when a guy's doing that it gives everybody else, I think, a little incentive to hold those block. But he's doing a lot of good things on his own too. So that part of our game's really been pleasing and consistent and he's come along as a receiver too. Made a good play on the touchdown.

Q. Northwestern was 0-6 on third down in the first half and they improved on that in the second half. What do you think was the difference between the two halves?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's how football works sometimes, you know. Just because something happens for 30 minutes it can flip. But, again, I go back, I think the biggest thing is they ran the ball with some success. They did a really good job that way and we weren't able to respond. And then conversely we didn't run the ball very well or consistently. So that is a big part of it.

Q. Finishing games obviously has been kind of the

story of the season. What characteristic maybe is missing or what can you point to for this team that they haven't been able to do that?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if I can pinpoint anything. It just gets down to you got to find a way to get things done and tonight we missed some opportunities. We had some, didn't have field position in the first half, second half we had some opportunities and really only capitalized one time. So that's a big part of it. We could have punted the ball a little bit better a couple times. If you do have an opportunity, you have to cash in on it and that's, especially in college football, that's really emblematic of how well your season is going to go is how you handle those close games.

Q. How was Northwestern able to open up the middle against your defense?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll have to see the film, but they did. We had a couple gaps on cover a couple times and their guy ran, the kid ran the ball really hard, guys up front did a good job. And they stretch it out a little bit, so you got to make some choices on how you want to fill those gaps. But when we did leave one open they hit it pretty well.

Q. Is some youth and some of the inexperience maybe at linebacker and secondary kind of catching up with you guys a little bit?

KIRK FERENTZ: Maybe. We'll see. They had some young guys playing too. The running back is a young guy and he played really well. So we just have to find a way to play a little better. We have played better and now we have to play better. It's a little bit like this game compared to last week, it's almost a flip, and so you get in games like this where it's hard to make yards, hard to drive the ball consistently, hard to score points, but the opportunities you have catch up to you in a game like this and really the same last week but it was just a different kind of game. It was taking advantage of the little things that are going to be make a difference ultimately.

Q. Was Julius Brents out?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, he's playing. He didn't start today but he's playing.

Q. I didn't see him on the field so I didn't know.

KIRK FERENTZ: He was out there. Number 20? Yeah.

Q. Where do go from here, three losses?

KIRK FERENTZ: Back to work. Same place we went last week. There's no panacea, there's no magic formula, it's a matter of we have to stay together, keep working hard and we have to find a way to improve and improve quicker, that's the next thing.

Q. Did the team peak at some point?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think that you judge the season when the season's over. So we still have two games and then a bowl game after that and we'll assess everything after that. But certainly we're not happy with the outcome of the last three weeks, I can tell you that, and all three have been a little bit different, but they all feel the same. It's just really disappointing. Everybody's invested and worked hard since January and I know how our fans feel and family members and all that, but the players are the ones that are invested, they're the ones that are really living this every day. So the challenge now is to get back up off the mat and come back and play well next week and that's our job right now. And that's, again, I think we're getting really good leadership on our football team, that's what makes this a little bit tougher but we just got to find a way to get it going.

Q. How much more challenging is it when there's different styles of games every week that you keep coming on the short end of?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well it's football and college football for sure. So you deal with it. There's no magic formula. Again, it's just you deal with whatever comes your way. Teams that deal with things the best tend to be successful and I think that's where you really got to tip the hat to Northwestern. Look at what they did in September, and then since their bye week what they have done and that's why they're on top of the West right now. And it's a credit to them. They played really good solid football. They have cleaned some things up that weren't good in September and our plan, they make you beat them, they make you beat them. And we couldn't do that tonight. So we'll go back to work tomorrow see what we can do to get better and hopefully play a better game on Saturday.

Q. Brandon Smith, is he able to come back next week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think he's got a good shot at being back, yeah. He couldn't make it based on Friday, and I think he should be back. So we'll keep you posted on Tuesday.

Q. Is that from the helmet to helmet?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, exactly.

Q. The rushing production seems to have taken a dip this year. What's been the biggest thing that you think has been kind of missing ingredient to making that go?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if I can put it in one thing, it's just we're not consistent right now, consistent enough. And certainly tonight it factored in. So we're going to have to give them some credit on that but we're going to have to find a way to be a little bit more

effective running the football to be successful.