

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa 26, Nebraska 20

KIRK FERENTZ: First and foremost, really thrilled to get the victory today. Really hard-fought game. Conference game. You're talking about a rivalry game, too, with the trophy on the line. This is three straight years now where it's really gone down to the last play, last minute.

Both teams really played at a high level. Proud of our guys. I thought they played resilient. Had some ups and downs during the course of the game. Wasn't 100% perfect obviously. But that's what you expect in conference play.

I think the biggest, most significant thing is just the way we finished the game. They came out and scored on that opening drive in the second half. After that, we settled in. I think we won 13-0 from that point on. Close to being 16. Come up with that last field goal, I think we all breathe a little bit easier. Wasn't meant to be.

Great effort, but hit the bar. We got to go play defense. Defense really rose to the occasion. Thrilled to get the victory. Thrilled to see our guys with the trophy. Even better, we get a day off tomorrow. It's a pretty good day for us, just really pleased.

Q. You're always stressing complementary football. How important was that in the third quarter after you went behind for the first time to not only get the scoring drive but then the three-and-out?

KIRK FERENTZ: Those are all big. You could feel the momentum swing right there. We've had three games in a row now where we've had some ups and downs certainly, but not that tight of a situation. It was good to see our guys responded. They came back and responded. We didn't take control, but at least we gained momentum back, responded in a positive way.

The kicking game played a big factor today. We anticipated that might be something. Thought we might have an edge in the punt game, punt return game. That



proved to be true.

The turnover battle, it's always a big factor and it was again today.

Q. This makes it six straight against Nebraska. What does that mean for you and this program right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: We don't tend to really look at things in the big picture. It's week-to-week, then year-to-year. Happy, just happy. It's not easy. Any conference opponent... It's hard to win conference games just in a nutshell.

If you can get a streak going, that's great. That wasn't first and foremost on our thoughts today. We knew we had a big challenge on our hands. Just glad we were able to get the job done today.

Q. On the first offensive series of the third quarter, you ran the ball nine times. It seemed like there wasn't a lot of consistency in the first half in that regard. How important was it to establish the run at that point, going forward on fourth-and-two on that drive, whereas you ran chip shot field goal range?

KIRK FERENTZ: On that point, I'm not sure if I was thinking rationally at that point. We decided, hey, let's keep pushing it. We were moving the ball, had a little momentum there.

Your point about the running game is spot on. We wanted to run the ball in the first half. We had a hard time. Give our opponents credit there. They threw a couple wrinkles at us that we were not playing very cohesively.

As a result, I don't know how many yards we had at halftime rushing, but it wasn't very impressive. Even in the second half, it wasn't always pretty, wasn't always smooth.

I thought the staff made some good adjustments, made some good tweaks. We went out and played a little bit more effectively and ran the ball a little bit more efficiently in that second half for sure.

Q. You alluded to this, but your defense shut them out for the final 27 minutes of the game. What did you see in terms of the adjustments your defense had to make

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to get that done?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know how big the adjustment part was. We knew coming into the game, regardless of what quarterback was in there, contain. The quarterback runs are a huge part of what they do. We faced that last week, too. We anticipated playing two quarterbacks a week ago.

This game, in my opinion, it didn't really matter which one was in there. They're both really dangerous, especially in the run part. Could be a designed run. They had those.

The improvisations, those are really difficult. If you don't keep containment against a guy who is pretty nimble, you're just asking for trouble. We had a few of those today, too.

I think we played a little bit better fundamentally in the second half, especially after the first possession. Even then, you're just kind of holding your breath. Back to '13, Ohio State had Braxton Miller, Hyde, some good receivers. They just stretch you thin. When the quarterback can really run and throw it, it puts a lot of pressure on you defensively.

Q. Does the 2014 Nebraska loss still bug you? Special teams played a big part in that game, but also played a big part in your favor today.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, no question. Funny you bring that up. I just mentioned it to a couple other coaches.

This is a much better deal. You rank games and all that. It's probably within the top five of the worst losses we had here. 22 years, that's about as bad as it gets. You can't cover a kick, turn it over in the red zone, give up an easy one before halftime. Hard to think you're going to have a good team, a team that's going to win consistently. That one is kind of burnt into my memory bank unfortunately. Probably never shake that one.

Q. What does it mean to have a special teams player like Terry Roberts? A position that doesn't get a lot of recognition. He just seems to make a play in the game every time he's out there. It's a selfless position. What does he mean to you and your team playing at this level?

KIRK FERENTZ: As you know historically we've had a lot of those good stories of guys that cut their teeth, get their feet wet playing special teams. It's so, so important, especially when you have a guy who is a real high-energy player a guy that brings energy. It spreads to other guys. Monte is doing kind of the same thing for us.

Terry by far, he's been extraordinary this year. Then the rest of the story is we kind of knew it was coming because we see him in practice. He's doing a pretty good job as a player, too, as a cornerback.

Going back to pre-season, he was really humming on special teams. You could tell it was important to him. He was committed to it. Boy, he plays with a lot of energy and toughness out there. It elevates the whole group. I think we all really appreciate what he's doing. He takes a lot of pride in it.

My prediction is at some point it's going to show up with him being an every-down player as well. It's all the same. Got to learn a little bit more about playing corner. It's hard to give a player that kind of energy and determination. It's been fun to watch him grow and develop.

Pretty sure another guy we stole from Kent State. Jovon Johnson. I could go right down the list. We may start getting hate mail.

Q. Talk us through the decisions to go for it or kick the field goal. I think you had time to think about each one of those. Do you listen to different voices? How do you decide when to kick the field goal? Who makes that decision besides you?

KIRK FERENTZ: You have analytics. Everyone has an opinion, right? Probably a little bit like baseball. You go with the book. I shouldn't go down that path. Yanked that good pitcher. I haven't watched any baseball this year, but I understand a pretty good pitcher got taken out because he was on a pitch count.

A lot of it is how you feel. Going back to fourth-and-two, we had a little something going there. Gives you more confidence to go for it. When you're kind of sputtering, my mindset is a little bit more like we all want to go for it, we haven't played well the last seven snaps, all of a sudden we're going to convert a fourth-and-four. A lot of it is how you're feeling at that time.

But to the credit of the staff, they've been working on me for about six, seven years now. I'm starting to get worn down in that department. A little bit more open to risk taking, if you want to call it that.

Q. Reading some postgame comments from Nebraska. Sounds like they were frustrated you were clapping before the snap and bothering them.

KIRK FERENTZ: Please.

Q. Is that something that came up?



KIRK FERENTZ: The officials said something to me about that at halftime. I'm like, Okay. We told our sideline, the coaches, I don't know if players were clapping, told them no. The next thing I know, my headsets is off. You don't pay attention. All of a sudden I see Cody Ince, let's go guys. I caught myself doing it. Good job, let's go.

What the hell are we talking about? It's stupid, right? I have no idea. Plus I do know this. I saw across the field they had like a little clap routine for third downs or something.

This is something in 22 years, my 22nd year, I'm not even thinking about that with one exception, I'll give you a story since we got time.

Anyway, I told the officials we told our guys. It's football. So maybe they need to change their cadence if it was interference of cadence. I don't know.

Here is my story. You guys want a story? My son Steve used to be at Central Michigan as a GA. They had a film. Pretty good actually. Kind of like today. There were two guys down in the end zone to the right of Central Michigan's bench actually doing that, synchronizing it with their opponent. I can't tell you who they're playing. Funniest damn thing. Showed it to me on film. That was funny. Two college kids do it.

Going back to the original topic, I've never heard of that. Never heard of that. If a player was on the field doing it, I get that. But what are we talking about? The next thing you know we're going to be treating this like golf. I was going to say tennis, but they do that at tennis. At golf, nobody is able to say anything, right?

Sorry, no. Sorry.

Q. I don't know how to follow that up.

KIRK FERENTZ: We should just go home right now. What are we talking about? It's football, right? It's football. Are they okay with how I dressed today? Should I be changing my pants, different shirt? What are we talking about?

I'm sorry. I'm distracted right now, totally distracted.

Q. The pick, Spencer was adamant he knows it was a pretty bad play.

KIRK FERENTZ: I won't argue with that one.

Q. Did you have a chance to speak to him directly

after? How do you coach a guy in that situation when he knows that was a really bad play?

KIRK FERENTZ: Growth is painful. One thing about Spencer, he's wired in. He's in tune. He knows if he makes a bad play, he knows it probably as much as we do. Probably hurts him more than us, quite frankly, because we've had more experience watching those kinds of things.

That's part of the growth process. This guy prepares. He works hard. Couple times today... That was a bad decision, then a couple times where he's aiming the football. Just all part of that growth process.

But he's aware of what's going on out there. He's leading our team. Does a great job during the week. We're totally onboard with him. It's something you got to work your way through, that's all.

Q. Time spins by fast. Chauncey is almost done. How would you summarize his career with of course the focus on the big play he made late in the game?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, I can ask an answer from you. Is that four interceptions he had? It was ruled an interception, right?

Q. Officially it's a fumble.

KIRK FERENTZ: Fumble, okay. You get the point. It'll been like three or four, many them in his career.

The bigger picture for me is he really embodies to me what an Iowa football player is. He's under-recruited, undersized when he came out. He had the height, not the girth. He's done his work here. He's an absolute delight any time you're in the room with him. The guy just has a really positive energy. He works hard. He's done a good job off the field, does a nice job in the classroom. He's grown into a really good player, not just this year, but it's been a process.

Credit goes to him for working hard and just taking advantage of the opportunities. We're thrilled he's on our football team. He's been a captain every week. You've been watching that. It's no surprise. He's so highly respected. The same way last year. Our guys looked at him like one of the seniors. He's a really first-class young guy and a good player, really good player.

Q. I feel like we're in a time warp here talking about 2014, 'it's football'.

KIRK FERENTZ: Can I get a hall pass? It is football (laughter). I can't tell you why we stink sometimes. It's

football. Anyway...

I interrupted, I'm sorry.

Q. That's fine. Spencer had a really good first quarter, tailed off for the rest of the game. I know he hasn't had a lot in the off-season. You're about two-thirds through the season. Do you see the kind of growth you need to look at him that he's going to be your guy well into the future or is he just the best guy in the present?

KIRK FERENTZ: Everybody's got to compete. That's the name of the game for every player on our roster. They have to compete daily. If they're not deserving of that position, they're not going to be there.

We haven't had any discussions like that. We feel good about what he's doing. I think Alex (Padilla) has improved as well. Those are the two guys getting all the work basically in practice.

We don't have any plans or discussions to make any changes there. Just all about him taking every experience that he gains week-to-week, seeing what he can do to add to his play. Just about every guy we've had has had the ups and downs, at every position, but quarterback is obviously visible.

The other thing in the back of my mind, I factor that missed spring and missed summer. I think it's huge for a player at that position. You can't underestimate that. It's so valuable. We're good with him. He's doing fine.

Q. With all the banter that goes back and forth between these two programs, I know there's a trophy on the line, but is this a rivalry game in your mind between you and Nebraska?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, to me it seems like all of our border games are rivalry games. Every conference game is a rivalry game for me.

I am not sure what 'rivalry' means exactly. Football, they all count. That is what it really gets down to. This year especially because you only have an eight-game schedule. They all count.

I think over time it's just natural. They are in the Big Ten now, right? They weren't up until whatever it was '10 or '11. Probably should know that. I think it was '11. Is that their first year?

They were new to the league. Probably Penn State went through the same thing back in the '90s. Now we're all

together. Hopefully over time it really develops into that. It's an important game to us, I know that. For sure, it's important to us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

KIRK FERENTZ: Guys, enjoy the day off. Thank you.

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