

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, just a tremendous win for our entire football team. To get our sixth straight, fourth trophy game, although this year we're just holding one of them. I am really happy for everybody, especially our seniors. Those guys have done a great job. Now they can finish their careers here, not only seeing the ball but us having it in possession. Really happy about that.

Really happy for the seniors to have a great memory as they leave Kinnick. That's really a special thing for each and every one of them, something we've talked about. I know they'll all look back on this game really fondly. Just happy for everybody on our football team, but especially our seniors.

Going into the game we knew it was going to be a tough defensive battle. I think everybody understood that. You get in games like this, everything that you do is contested, every yard is a fight. That certainly was the case today.

Also in games like this it's all about trying to capitalize if opportunities appear. Wisconsin did a good job of that, at least on one of them. We were able to do the same thing today. Just really happy about that.

Some guys that did a great job, Keith Duncan broke a record, which is great, for long field goals. Happy for him. Certainly both of our senior receivers gave us a spark. Ihmir and Brandon came up big for us. That's what you really have to do.

I really thought just standing on the sidelines, I have to pay compliments to Chauncey Golston. Did some really good things. Pass-rush, one tackle he had on a third-and-one was really exceptional. Not only did he tackle the guy, but pulled him backwards. The officials, there was no lack of clarity on that one. That was certainly good.

Again, I think just overall coming off an 0-2 start, can't say enough about the way our football team just kept their focus where it should be. They worked hard obviously. They gave great effort, showed a lot of grit over the last six weeks. Just really pleased for them. Really happy for



each and every guy on our football team.

The last thing, I just want to thank the parents, our senior parents being here. Unfortunately they couldn't have a normal Senior Day, but hopefully this will work for them.

Also the people that got the field ready to go. It was dicey weather coming in, overnight and this morning certainly. They got us in good shape. The field conditions were great. Gave us a chance to play a good game today.

With that being said, I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Some of the players said you were pretty emotional in the locker room. Was that everything that you guys have gone through this year with COVID, the racial stuff during the summer, was it kind of the culmination of all that, getting six straight wins?

KIRK FERENTZ: Those guys found a way to pry it out of me actually. They're pretty good at that.

My focus has really been more so once we got going here on September 30th, I say September 30th, I think that was the first day we could put pads on, start practicing football. Our focus has been on this season, solely this zone.

To that point, really feel fortunate we've been able to play because it sure didn't look like it a month before that, even building up to that. That was a real breakthrough.

The other thing, I can't tell you how appreciative I am personally, I think all of us are, that we woke up today, took our tests, found out in the 10 o'clock area we were going to be able to play today without any setbacks that way. It's really kind of the way it's been the last however many weeks. It's day-to-day. You're hoping everything works out in a way where we can keep doing what we like doing. Throw in an 0-2 start on top of that, that certainly is significant.

It just says a lot about our kids. The guys we get to work with. I've been saying that for quite a while, I'll say it over and over, for 30 plus years being at Iowa, the one common denominator is the quality of the guys we get to work with. Whether you talk about the '80s, can't speak to the '90s that much, but since I've been back, we have high-caliber guys and they show a lot of character.



Q. I believe after the regular season last year you announced a couple scholarships. Any more players you've made decisions to give scholarships to or not?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I normally don't make a big deal of that. We gave out three this week. Charlie Jones, Joe Evans, and Monte Pottebaum. We had three available.

All three of those guys have done a great job. Really proud of the way they've worked. Last year we did it at the end of the season. Just kind of dawned on me a week ago that we're not at the end of the season, but we're in December. We told them during the week.

Q. What did Chauncey Golston do for his future in the sport after this season, especially after a game like today?

KIRK FERENTZ: Chauncey kind of illustrates our typical player. A.J. was a great player a year ago. I've said that many times before. A.J., when he walked in the door, was a little further ahead than most guys that we get. Quite frankly, Cedrick Lattimore was the more targeted recruit out of that school. Chauncey attracted our attention. Cedrick, thought the world of him, rightfully so.

I can't say enough of the job Chauncey has done since he's been here. He works hard. Wasn't the biggest guy. Tall, but not the biggest guy physically. Worked extremely hard there. Done a great job in the classroom. He's just a really good young person to be around on a daily basis.

The fact that he's playing so well, he gets the credit for that. He's worked really hard. Our defensive guys, all of our coaches, do a good job with their players. It starts with the player, the player having that desire, more importantly the focus and discipline to do all the things you have to do over the course of five years to become a really good college player.

Q. What does this mean for you to kind of have the culmination of another trophy, you have all of them in your possession? This one seems to be the most difficult to get. Everybody buckled up and here you are, one of the best teams in the country. What does this mean for you personally to be where you are today?

KIRK FERENTZ: The last however many months have all been about learning. I don't have a lot of regrets. I don't have a lot of regrets 20 plus years. You always have a couple. I'll share those with you whenever I finish.

The bottom line is trying to handle every day as well as you

can. I'm not going to say this period is no different than any other. It's like anything: you have a bad season, you go back and just try to talk to a lot of people, get some viewpoints, feedback, et cetera. That's what we've tried to do very methodically.

It's about taking information and then trying to do the right things moving forward. The good thing is, and I shared this with our staff back on June 6, we have good people in the building, our staff, support staff, most importantly our players. We'll work through it.

Basically that's what we've tried to do on a daily basis. Starting 0-2 wasn't much fun. Same thing: make sure you stick to your beliefs, try to do what you think is best. If you're working with the right people, you have a chance for success. That's been the football part of it. Bigger window, same thing.

We're hardly done. Hopefully we're going to keep playing football. Sounds like we have a chance for two more games. Sounds great. We still have a lot of work to go there.

As far as the program goes, you're never done there. Hopefully we'll be making good decisions as we move forward.

Q. On Ihmir's touchdown, flipping into the end zone, your thoughts on that? Did you talk to him after he banged up his ankle? To get a win like this with the seniors celebrating on the field, what was it like to see them celebrating, some guys who never made snow angels on the field?

KIRK FERENTZ: We don't get many chances for that. Amazingly, we haven't been in many snow games over my 30 years here. I know Danan Hughes cornered the market, '90, '91. I missed it.

You're happy for all your seniors. Pertaining to Ihmir, that's a painful lesson, right? Youthful exuberance. Ihmir is a very spirited guy, very demonstrative guy. If he had nailed his landing, maybe it would have been a great move. That's a painful lesson for him. Hopefully he'll be able to bounce back.

A big game for him today. I was happy to see that. I know he had family here. That's special. He was a big part of the win today.

Q. Couple detail questions. What happened on the assistant coach penalty? Seemed like you were upset.

KIRK FERENTZ: They called the penalty. I'm a little

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

unclear what exactly the violation was, whether it was boundaries or something being said.

Really doesn't matter at this point other than we're going to have to mostly be more attentive to the boundaries. I'm not sure exactly where that line is. I'll find out. Apparently we were too far up the field.

Q. A bizarre game with the kicking, illegal kick. Probably haven't seen that in 22 years.

KIRK FERENTZ: Never seen it in my career in coaching or playing. Saw Tony Pruner, we were in the ninth grade, kick a punt. We lost two yards on it.

Never seen that play. A heck of a play by Tory, right? I guess that's what guys from Australia do, they see the ball in. We're trying to figure out how he got the ball that far downfield with all those bodies. Strange play, even a stranger enforcement of the penalty. That was painful.

Q. When Charlie Jones goes after the ball, any dark thoughts creep into your head?

KIRK FERENTZ: Certainly. In a game like this, there are dark clouds every 20 seconds. The score is so misleading. When you play Wisconsin, you have to earn it, you have to win it. Big goal today coming in is no turnovers. There's one right there.

What I said to Charlie was, Let's play on. Same thing I said to Tory. Let's worry about what's in front of us here, keep playing.

One of the reasons we won the first game after losing two is because of Charlie. I admire his attitude, his mental toughness out there, physical toughness. He's a competitive, good football player. That's one of the harder jobs on the field.

Those things are going to happen. You play forward. That's what he did.

Q. I know you like to look at the tape first, but when you take everything into account - the opponent, the weather, circumstances - do you think that was your most impressive offensive half of the season, 22 in the second half?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, nothing was going to come easy today. We knew that going in. Then there's a little bit of a period where you're trying to figure out what might go. I mean, there's a reason they're on top of the Big Ten. In fact, both these teams are on top of the Big Ten defensively.

They had some curve balls for us, things we thought we might know, we found out we didn't know. That's what good teams, good coaches do. They made us adjust, made us do some things.

But even then, nothing easy. Nothing easy. Part of it's kind of like Indiana's game last week against these guys. Somebody has to make a play, too. That's part of the equation. Fortunately we had some guys step up and do that.

There was nothing easy today. We knew that coming in. So, yeah, just really pleased. Mostly pleased the way the guys stuck with it. At times it looked pretty ugly. That's going to happen in these kinds of games. As much as you don't like it, it's going to happen.

Q. How important was the shift in energy in the second half? Seems like every single play on both sides of the ball had a lot more energy in the second half.

KIRK FERENTZ: Momentum is a really important thing in sports, certainly in football. But nobody's going to hand it to you, especially a team like Wisconsin. Somehow, some way you have to get it going.

Again, credit goes to our players. They didn't get deterred. They didn't duck their heads. They kept playing. You keep chipping away, hopefully something good happens. Our defense really played that way the entire game.

I'm not saying this is Pittsburgh-Baltimore in the NFL, but is that kind of game. Nobody is dodging, right? Two teams going at it. Hopefully at some point you get a little something to get you going. We were able to do that today.

Q. In some ways this felt like a finale. It's not a finale. You have a game coming up, you don't know who, where or, when I assume. If you do, tell me.

KIRK FERENTZ: Correct assumption. I have no idea.

I'll share one thing with you, too. I was in there, we were talking a little bit. I was reading the paper yesterday about Army-Navy. What are we talking about that for right now? It's December 13th.

Yeah, our sense of perception right now is so... Not complaining about it. Not complaining about not knowing who we're playing next week either. We'll figure that out tomorrow or whenever they tell us.

Q. This is a new deal for you.

KIRK FERENTZ: Except that everything this year has been new, right? It's one of those years, one more thing that you adjust to.

I can say this. This kind of situation is a lot easier now than it would have been one of the first three or four weeks of the season where your team really doesn't know how to practice, they don't know how to do things, you don't know who you're playing.

Our guys right now I think at least know how to operate. That makes the chances a little bit easier, kind of like a short week. It might be a short week, who knows. Except we do have finals. I know that, too.

Q. In listening to your players, it seemed like the camaraderie is at a high level. Do you sense that on the practice field getting ready for a game?

KIRK FERENTZ: I do. It's been a long time. I go back to the comment that we've had good players here for quite a while. I think these guys, yeah, they've been fun to work with. I'll say the same thing about last year's team or the team before.

So, yeah, it's a common ground. That's why coaching is fun. As agonizing as it can be sometimes, painful sometimes, it's a lot of fun. The most enjoyable part are the people you get to work with on a daily basis. That's your players and the staff. I think we all enjoy our support staff. Everybody in our building for the most part is going in the same direction. We're all shooting for the same thing. That's what makes it enjoyable.

Our players have been great. These guys, they've worked hard. They deserve what they got today. They deserved it.

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