

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa 33, Illinois 23

KIRK FERENTZ: Really proud of our players, their effort. Happy for them to get the victory today. Couldn't have gotten off to a much worse start. Illinois took the ball right down the field on us, got a touchdown. Then we drove it near midfield. And then that punt. Obviously, Tory didn't play baseball in Australia. And, it would be great if the snap was a little bit better too. So it was kind of a sinking feeling over there. Defense came in and got a stop there, but we were down 10-0. That's hardly the way anybody wants to start a football game. And then a huge spark by Charlie after that. It was something LeVar Woods thought we might be able to execute. I think they'd only given up four returns or had four returns against them this year because that kicker is so good. So a real credit to LeVar and Charlie with his execution. And the guys did a good job blocking. So that got us back in the game.

In a nutshell, we knew they'd come in here ready to go. Last two times on the road, they've beaten good teams in their stadiums. They've been playing good football in general and good defense in the Big Ten.

So a lot of respect for them. And then certainly just playing November football wasn't going to be easy. That's exactly the way it played out.

This was a good way for our seniors to finish out their career here in Kinnick Stadium. That was special for them to get the victory. Hate to have it go any other way.

It seemed like it was a game of missed opportunities in a lot of ways. A lot of things that we left out there. We weren't clean enough. The example I gave you right there is certainly part of that.

And the passing game, we dropped what seemed like at least three balls. I don't know if they were perfect throws. But when you don't make those catches and keep the chains going, everything just felt kind of herky-jerky there.

The good news is we ran the ball more a little bit more

effectively. I felt like our line gained ground in the last three weeks, both in practice and in the three games. That's helped us move forward as a football team get off the mat after those two losses as well.

And then certainly the special teams. We missed some opportunities, like I mentioned. Had a chance for a plus 50 punt there in the second half down in there and couldn't do it. But then, conversely, a lot of really good things out there too. All three specialists overall did a good job. Charlie that's pretty obvious. Caleb has just been fantastic and today was no exception there. And then Tory did a good job with the punt game.

Obviously, thrilled to be 9 and 2 right now. Still one big game left here in November. It's a short week. So like the last three games, going to be a tough challenge. But we'll turn our sights to that tomorrow morning but enjoy the victory right now, most importantly.

Q. Now is Alex officially your starter now that he started when Spencer was healthy?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, officially, today he was, yeah. That's why he was the guy out there. We assessed it during the course of the week. It makes common sense. We'll talk about tomorrow and then keep pushing for it. But I feel like two weeks ago, we have two guys we can win with now we have confidence in. So we'll take a look at it and go from there.

Q. You're 9 and 2. 6 and 2 in the Big Ten. Offensive numbers would indicate not good things. How have you done this?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's not as easy as you're saying. It's similar to '04. But it is similar to '04. I said a couple weeks ago, dream season is you get is to mesh the offense of '02 and the defense of '04 together.

But the real common bond there is we find a way to win. And that's still what the game is about. You can talk about style points, and that's important at some point maybe. But to me, it's about trying to find a way to be successful whatever the given situations are. And in football, it's hard to predict what that's going to be.

I think most of our challenges have been fairly predictable.



I don't know if that's the right word. But at least when I look at it and analyze it, I can see where our issues were going to be and what our challenges would be. And we're growing. And start again just with not having Schott and Ince full speed at the start of the season. You kind of do the math on that whole thing. But seen growth during the course of the year. Seen a lot of growth with a lot of guys. And hopefully we'll just keep pushing it forward.

But the bottom line is try to find a way to be successful each and every week. And that's easier said than done.

Kicking games, special teams, those things all factor in. As I mentioned, start with the first three specialists. Talk about Charlie, Caleb, and Tory. That's a pretty good start for us, no question.

Q. What's the status of Matt and Jack?

KIRK FERENTZ: So you all saw Matt come out for the introduction. It looks like he has a ways to go.

And Jack tried to go. He practiced yesterday. Limped around a little bit and tried to go today but just couldn't. So hopefully we'll get him back next week.

Matt, we're probably looking at a little time on that one.

Q. Terry be back next week?

KIRK FERENTZ: Hopefully Terry. It's a bone bruise. And the one thing I've learned is they're hard to put a, you know, temperature gauge on. So I think he's close. He seemed encouraged yesterday. But it would help to get him back. That would be a good thing for us.

Q. You joked on Tuesday that the kickoff turn you'd probably be taking a week off. But were you surprised when the ball was at the line and Charlie Jones --

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. Really surprised. Because what I said is true. It's four returns that they've had to defend. So, yeah, we kind of practiced this week, but it was practice. And thank goodness we practiced it because that first one wasn't much, but it kind of gave us a look at the way they were covering. They covered the way we thought.

And then the next challenge is can we execute the return out to the field. The guys did a great job. So those are the little things that help you be successful when you can get a play like that. Boy, it sure helps.

Q. You seemed to have a lot of success with your inside zone today and a lot of that, at least from my

eyes, seemed to be your center helped with that. Am I seeing the right thing?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, you are.

Q. How instrumental is 65 and Matt and all the others?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of interesting because you have a game plan and you got a couple runs in there. But just never know what it's going to look like until you get out there on the field and go. But, no question. Tyler had a critical role today. The way they play defense, he's covered basically almost every play. They started shifting around a little bit the end of the game, once we found some things that were working maybe.

But run or pass, he was covered. I kind of said you're going to be bored this week because you're going to be blocking the same guy every play. But Tyler did a really good job. That's just who he is. He's a really good player. My only moment of concern with him was he and somebody else got into it a little bit after one of those plays right in front of our bench. And not interested in making a one-for-one trade with him being one of the guys involved. So that was probably the most drama that had with him today.

Q. Honestly, where would you honestly be without him this year given everything that's happened?

KIRK FERENTZ: It would be really interesting. Yeah, really interesting. Not only is he playing well, but he's also setting the bar for everybody else in the room. And the group is a really good group. These guys are all working hard.

And I'm just glad to see some growth now because it's frustrating when you're working hard and you don't see that. Get to experience some success.

The numbers aren't dramatic, but I think we're gaining ground right now. There's just a feel to it also, like maybe we can start doing some things here. So I'm optimistic. Still got football in front of us. So push them forward.

Q. How helpful is it to having Caleb hitting all those field goals?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's a luxury. The same way with Tory. You got two guys there. And then Charlie. And with Charlie, you live the roller coaster a little bit because he may end up doing some things it's like, oh, okay, here we go. But it's like a baseball guy or whatever. Sometimes you got to live with some other stuff too.

But Caleb has just been so steady and so reliable. It was probably stupid to try that last field goal before half but I figured, you know, who knows. Maybe he'd hit it. But the dumb part was we gave them the ball Back. Our defense shut the door on that one. But, yeah, he's been so good. Just really a good player.

Q. Against the run, what did you see differently today than last week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if it's any one thing but just, you know, outside of that first drive, we kind of clamped down a little bit and started playing better and competed a little bit more. So it was really, really good.

I think we only really had one really disappointing play. They were coming off the south end zone and hit one in front of our bench, the deep ball. That was kind of tough. But otherwise, I didn't see us giving up anything until the bomb squad got in there, and that was a little different. Exciting.

Q. What did you see from Quinn in his first game playing significant snaps?

KIRK FERENTZ: Really proud of him. Not surprised because he really, as you imagine, is really a serious guy, former high school quarterback. He's worked hard. So, you know, he stepped in and allowed us to keep doing the things we want to do. And so it was either Dane and Kaevon back there or if Dane was down, Quinn was in there. He played a lot of snaps today. Did a good job. I'm glad they pulled that targeting penalty off because you don't want to lose a guy next week.

Q. Was it chippier than normal out there? Did you have to say something to the guys maybe at half time or something, say, hey, be careful?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. Just reminded our guys to -- you don't want to get a foul. First of all, you don't want to get a foul and you certainly don't want to get ejected. So just play football. It's a hotly contested game, all that stuff. So it's going to happen sometimes.

Q. Coming in, if you would have said you guys would have been 20 -- allowed them 25 rushes for 64 yards, you would have felt probably pretty good?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, no question.

Q. But does it kind of surprise you in some ways that they still put up 23, I mean, in a game like this?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know. I'm glad we got the 63

yards, that part. I said it the other day, I think their running back is a really good player and their line blocks well. That was good, certainly a big change from last week. And I think overall, the guys really did a good job defensively.

The 23, take that last seven -- I know they all count. I'm not discounting that. But it's like the seven -- I tell you, when we put the bomb squad in, look out. I don't know which drive was faster, the Minnesota game last year or this one, but look out. It's going to be a teaching tape on that one.

Q. Was there something schematically that you saw to stop the run as well as you did, especially after last week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't think so. It's a little different attack the way they do things. But, no, we played better. Starts up front. Played a little bit better leverage and attacking the line a little bit better. And then closing down on the back a little quicker too. So I thought the guys from where I was standing, they did a pretty good job.

Q. What was going through your mind during that Jack Campbell pick six?

KIRK FERENTZ: That was the funniest play of the game only because you guys could see how torn he was, right? He didn't know go down, go score. You know, believe me, he's apologized in the locker room. And it's kind of like, Jack, it's okay.

And I was cheering for him to score actually, even though it may not be the smart play. It was just funny. What he does never surprises me. He's a really good football player and a better young man.

Q. When you look at the receivers, I think there were six drops today.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah.

Q. I guess how do you address that? And how can you ensure that it gets cut by five?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of like one of those games where you have 10 penalties or 12 penalties. There's no penalty drill or a turnover drill. It really gets down to concentration and fundamentals usually. And I'm not sure why today. But, it's just concentration. And hopefully we get that corrected.

It hasn't really been a problem, so hopefully we get that corrected. But that will help us have better flow and tempo. It's hard to have tempo when you're making those kinds of

errors, convertible first down and then you're punting the ball next thing.

Q. I know that your mind is on the Nebraska game this week. And how do you keep your guys focused on this short week?

KIRK FERENTZ: We have to worry about a tough opponent Friday. That's as simple as that.

I know this, Nebraska must have played a heck of a game today because Wisconsin is playing well. They're a tough out and we've had nothing but tough games with them.

All we can worry about is trying to win Saturday -- or Friday, excuse me, and then watching everybody else work on Saturday. Right now, we're going to enjoy this one, and then we're moving on to that next game.

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