

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa 7, South Dakota State 3

KIRK FERENTZ: Just to start out, the first thing I reminded the team is that we're 1-0. Good to get the win certainly. Certainly didn't come easy. But just happy to get the win.

I saw a lot of good things out there. Clearly a lot of things we have to get better at and work on, and we'll turn our attention to that tomorrow.

Some really good efforts, I think some good play, and at the end of the day we've all got to get better. That's usually the task in Week 2.

I know you talked to some of the players that really performed well. Obviously a really unusual scoring line where you've got 3-2-2. I've never been around a game like that, but we'll take it today, and kudos to Tory did a great job. I don't know if I've ever seen a punter be so involved in a game, either, so it's a little unique.

Q. At halftime a lot of people were maybe not so pleased with Petras' performance. What made you decide to keep your faith in him?

KIRK FERENTZ: It would probably be the same category as a lot of stuff I saw last year. I just think it's more multiple than one player. Spencer has practiced well. I thought he was doing a good job out there, but we didn't support him enough. We weren't clean enough, and that's something we're going to have to be better at next week.

Q. Do you think there would have been more mistakes made perhaps if there was another quarterback in there, where other than his interception, it wasn't a great performance but at least he didn't put you into any adverse situations?

KIRK FERENTZ: Those guys are playing hard, and they threw some stuff at us, so you never know. We'll never know until somebody else gets in there.

Again, I evaluate what you see, and there's a lot of things

that were going on today that we're going to have to get better at and get better at fast.

Q. How much confidence do you have in Spencer moving forward?

KIRK FERENTZ: I still have a lot of confidence in him. I think the noise on the outside is probably a lot louder than it is inside. I have total confidence. He practices well. He's a great young guy. We'll be better next week.

Q. Having the two wide receivers out, how did that affect the game do you think?

KIRK FERENTZ: It doesn't help. It makes it a little bit tougher for us. We had a hard time protecting consistently enough around the ball, consistently enough today.

A lot of it seemed like it was just kind of a rotation of issues, different breakdowns or different things that happened, and those are the things that you've got to really focus on and get cleaned up certainly this week.

I think there's some reasons for it. We have some young guys playing and some guys that have missed significant time in practice, so you're never quite sure what it's going to look like on the game field. But we have to do a better job collectively, and we'll have a better chance to evaluate what's going on.

Q. Is there any update on Jestin Jacobs' injury?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I assume this is good news. It wasn't a joint. It sure looked like it on the field. So it's soft tissue, and those can drag out, too, as we know, but at least it wasn't a joint. That would have been bad.

Q. How important was the defensive performance as a whole to maybe allow the offense to have some room for error in that sense?

KIRK FERENTZ: It was critical today, between that and the kicking game. They took the field in really good field position a lot and did their job. They did what they had to do, kept them pinned up, and had them play a long field.

So that in combination with the kicking game was really a positive today, and a lot of really good efforts individually

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by a lot of people in both those areas, so that was good to see.

Then conversely, the disappointing thing, obviously two turnovers offensively, start there, but the other thing is not taking advantage of good field position and we had that several times and just didn't make it work for us.

Q. A lot of young faces, new faces on the offensive line. What went into the decision to rotate so many players and what did you see from them overall?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's based on what we see in practice. I think we have seven or eight guys right now that we're going to play this year.

I mentioned we've had some guys behind the scenes that have missed time, so we're just trying to learn more about them and get them a little bit more cohesive. This will be a big learning day for them when they see the film. It'll be good for them.

Q. In your estimation, how big of a factor is it that Nico and Keagan were not available? It seemed to me you were extremely limited in that area.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, you know, you can't put a percentage on it. Certainly we're better with everybody healthy. We've never been deep enough really on either side of the ball, and I hate to have anybody out.

The reality is that if guys aren't there and if you don't think they're going to be there, then you just have to find another way to get the job done, if you will. Just I'm thinking one throw there, deep in route, third quarter, I guess, or fourth quarter maybe where we just had a bad ball. But Alec Wick was open and had an opportunity to convert right there. More than that, sometimes it's protection. We've just got a lot to clean up right now offensively.

Q. On that note, Keagan and Gavin were two iffy guys that didn't play. Do you expect them back next week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I hope so. Every day is an adventure, but I thought Gavin had a realistic chance for this game. I'm not sure about Keagan at this point, but we'll evaluate again tomorrow and Monday and just kind of see where they're going, but hopefully we'll get them back at some juncture.

Q. Talk about the play of Quinn Schulte in his first start? Two big breakups at the end --

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, really nice plays. Quinn is just steady, kind of quietly steady. Not a flashy player but two

really good plays right out there in the open.

He has practiced well. He's played well on special teams, and now he took the next step.

We forget sometimes that this guy hasn't started a game. I felt the same way about Logan Jones; hasn't started a game, yet they practice well and you feel pretty good about it. So this will be a good experience for him.

Q. You referenced Taylor earlier, but how do you detail the effect he had in this game?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, today was huge just because the way he placed the ball, basically, and I think he missed one or two, and then the last one is on us. They went for the block. That was on us to have him go put it in the end zone.

But I've got on my card, and I don't know how many times we put them inside the 10, them inside the 15, and that's huge. It's just really huge. It makes it a tough hill to climb if you're on offense.

Q. Kind of in that same vein, when you're looking at a box score and you see triple the amount of punting yards as total offense, what's your reaction to that? You don't see that very often.

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, it's good on the punting end. It's kind of the way the score broke down. I've never seen that before. But it's good from the punting end, and clearly we have to get better offensively.

Q. Can you talk about how the crowd affected the game, kind of like the Penn State game last year?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it was, and that is tough down there. It is different. I'll sign on for that one. I know a lot of people feel that way. But that north end zone can get pretty raucous down there, so it factored in, definitely factored in. It affected their team. Good crowd in a good environment like that certainly factors in. Glad we were home today.

Q. Do you anticipate Spencer being the starter next week or is this going to be an evaluation over the next few days?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't anticipate any changes at this point, no. Our job collectively right now is to get better. He's got some ownership. We all have ownership, every coach, every player, and that's our job to get better week to week.

Q. Two players who were kind of in different spots were Connor Colby at right tackle and Nick DeJong at guard. What did you see from those two?

KIRK FERENTZ: Nick has played some there, and we've been working him more that way since Connor moved out. Anxious to see the film. It wasn't perfect, but anxious to see the film and we'll coach off that.

Q. Tyler Elsbury, was he just not able to go?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's been working, but we evaluate off what's going on in practice, and we felt like that was our best starting lineup for today. He's fine. He's good to go.

Q. What about Jack Campbell's performance? He's kind of been a guy who's tipped the field last year. He just teams to stand tall out there.

KIRK FERENTZ: He just does a great job of getting to the football. You use the word "instinct," but instinct is study and film and all that. He's got an ability to really close fast.

There was one play in front of our bench where he was moving, just really closed it fast on the guy who had the ball. He just never seems to get tired. He just likes playing. He's a great leader in his kind of quiet way, if you will, but boy, he goes hard.

Q. Leshon got his first start, and you said earlier this week that a true freshman might play at running back and that was Kaleb Johnson today. How do you feel about both of those two?

KIRK FERENTZ: I thought Leshon had some really good plays and good runs. Obviously ball security on that one, but it looked on the tape or the board, like that was just a great play by the linebacker. The guy did a nice job.

But nonetheless, we've got to bring the ball back. We've got to secure that. But Leshon has really practiced well. He's really grown over the last two years, and I think he's going to be a really good football player for us. Good for Kaleb to get his feet wet today, too. We're going to need all of them at some point.

Q. Can you assess Cooper starting out at corner, and when he's bouncing between, what's the challenge there for him?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of like moving guys around the offensive line. Some guys can handle it and some can't.

I won't say he does things with ease, but he moves around, is pretty flexible in his play. He's a smart guy out there, but

he's just pretty fluid and pretty flexible that way, so gives us a little bit of versatility there.

I thought Terry played a good game today, too. That's the best we've seen him in a while. He's fought through some injuries and what have you, both in the kicking game and then also he played a lot at corner today. Good in coverage but also played physical, came up and made some good tackles. Good to see all three of those guys perform well, Riley included.

Q. It would be pretty easy for Spencer to press at quarterback with the offensive production the last three games. Going into Iowa State next week, how do you keep his confidence high going through the week of preparation knowing the challenges ahead next weekend?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, this is a totally new year, so we're just focused on this game. But we've all got to get better. That's the bottom line. He'll get better as we get better as a team. That's really where our focus will be. It is every time. You go to week 2, hopefully you make a big jump.

Q. How much are your fingers in the offense, or do you just kind of let them go? Do you ask what's going on?

KIRK FERENTZ: If I see something I think I can be helpful with. Everybody on the staff does that. We're all trying to talk about this might be a good thing, this might be a good thing.

One thing I've learned through time, somebody has got to call the plays, and you get too many people giving advice or feedback -- we do that between series, but somebody has got to call the plays, and quite frankly if we're not executing well, it's tough to find things that are going to work.

Q. Arland probably had the highest workload of his career; how did you feel about his ability to be a wide receiver?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, Arland is a really good football player, too. We just talked about Cooper, both of them young guys. Just does things, I don't want to say with ease, but he's really very fluid in his play. He can do a lot of things and do them well.

He practices the same way, is very multiple, and it was good for him. The first time he's returned to -- same thing with Riley, on the kicking game, for those guys to get some live work there, because we don't do that live ever in practice. I thought both those guys, all those guys showed

good judgment out there on the ball.

Q. Were there any reservations putting him out there with the injuries at wide receiver?

KIRK FERENTZ: Oh, yeah, but we're a little thin on guys, so somebody has got to do it. We had total faith and trust in him, and I thought he did a really nice job, but yeah, you've got to worry about that a little bit.

Q. How do you think the depth on the offensive line impacted the game, especially in the fourth quarter?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's one thing that we're in an unusual situation. We're thin in some spots on our team right now, and that's not uncharacteristic of any year we do it, but this is probably about as deep as I can recall us up front on defense, and I'd include the linebackers, that front seven group.

We've got pretty good depth there, got a lot of guys that we're comfortable playing.

I talked about the linebackers with the starters out last spring, the faith and confidence we've got as coaches watching some of the guys step up. Jay Higgins really comes to mind there.

It's kind of the same thing on the defensive line. You've got arguably maybe eight, nine guys, 10 guys that when they're in there, they're going to play pretty well.

Sometimes that just happens. It's kind of uncommon, but it's a good thing for us, so hopefully we play to that strength, keep the guys fresh.

Q. At kicker do you still expect it to stay as Blom kicking field goals, Stevens doing kickoffs, or is that not set in stone yet?

KIRK FERENTZ: We'll evaluate it each week just like we do every position, but it was good to see Aaron come back and hit that one because those things can weigh on you. It's not exactly like he's a veteran, either. First one didn't go the way he wanted, but he rebounded and came back and did a good job, and that was really pleasing to see.

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