

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

Sunday, September 18, 2022

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Kirk Ferentz

### Postgame Press Conference



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KIRK FERENTZ: We got off the mat and got back in the fight and did a good job in unusual circumstances tonight. So to stay focused, that was good to see.

Just really pleased. We showed some progress in certain areas. Happy about that. Obviously, it was good to get Nico back and Keagan back and then Brody was able to get involved a little bit too at the receiver position. So gave us a few more guys to throw to.

All in all, the team effort was good. Again, you go 60 minutes broken down over seven hours, not easy to do.

Defensively, you all saw the game, those guys played a good game. They were aggressive and very tough to run against and they made the passing yardage tough as well. I thought especially in the first half. It was a little disjointed once we got back in the second half. But in the first half I thought we had a little rhythm offensively.

The run game wasn't perfect, but we did some better things so that was encouraging.

And then the kicking game overall was really good. Drew Stevens did a nice job. Good to see him get a field goal. Tory once again was really good and the coverage was good too on those plus-50 punts so happy about that.

On a sad note, just to share with you, Leshon (Williams) was not here today with us and hasn't been since last Saturday. His dad passed away. Today was the service. Our thoughts are certainly with his entire family and look forward to getting him back hopefully next couple days here. That's tough.

But just pushing forward, alter our schedule a little bit today and figure out how to manage that a little bit. But our focus will be on improvement. Very happy for our players and for the team. To win the game tonight was important to us. There's still plenty of things that we can clean up and we'll go back to work on that tomorrow.

### **Q. How do you keep your team focused during all those breaks?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if we did. It dawned on me, now I know what a baseball clubhouse feels like maybe. They play 162 games in the major leagues and they're familiar with rain delays, we really aren't in our sport. So it was interesting. Somebody brought cards. I'm sure they had them in the hotel from last night. So a couple card games were going on. Guys were doing all kind of things. It was kind of interesting.

I did have that thought. I said, Boy, if I ever shift over to baseball, get used to it. Kind of unusual in a football locker room, that's for sure.

### **Q. What were the conversations like of, Okay, do we keep on delaying, do we cancel I'm sure you would rather not take a no contest in a 17-0 game.**

KIRK FERENTZ: It wasn't only that, but there wasn't a lot of conversation. Pretty much it was dictated by the weather and mechanics of the layout. So it's a flat 30-minute delay. The one where we were out there and right back, that's the only one that was a little tough. It is what it is and you deal with it. At least we got some practice back in '19 in that regard didn't have to make a two-hour bus ride afterward so that's good.

### **Q. When did you decide to go with Drew Stevens this week? Was there a time?**

KIRK FERENTZ: LeVar let him know yesterday morning. Only because we weren't sure. The guys have been going back and forth and I've been saying all along we're probably going to ride the roller coaster a little bit. But pleased that both guys. Aaron, you haven't seen the last of him. He's done a good job. We have two good kickers right now. Hopefully they can get comfortable.

### **Q. You were able to use your full offense, your full arsenal, having wide receivers out there you go could go with 11 personnel, you could do different things. How satisfying was it as an offense just to be able to throw everything out there?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It felt a little bit more like the kind of



football you want to play. Spencer, I thought, made some beautiful throws tonight and some real near misses. Hopefully in time those will be completions. Whether it's throw a little off or maybe the receiver a little bit off, that type of deal. It was encouraging because it looked like we were going to go somewhere there with it. If we can combine that with a good run game hopefully we can be able to do the things we want to do. It was encouraging. It's always good to get guys back that you think are going to be in the mix for you.

**Q. Looked like the receivers made some good plays. They also looked very rusty at times. The way they were running. Was it just a matter of you're going to have to ride that wave and they're just going to have to work their way out of it?**

KIRK FERENTZ: The three guys I mentioned, Keagan (Johnson) hasn't really played since last December. Nico (Ragaini) -- let me hold off on Nico. Brody (Brecht) really hasn't played -- a little bit last December and last three weeks. It was good to get him on the field. He'll get better. He'll keep improving.

Probably the biggest gain for us was Nico, because he's a veteran. He has a veteran presence in a very young room. He's a good player, he's nifty and he knows how to play, he really does. That was good. I want to compliment Arland (Bruce), too. Arland had a heck of a game, not only on offense, but special teams. He's really playing hard. We knew that. We need more help there and it was good to see.

**Q. You shut down Keagan after coming out after one of the rain delays. Was that just precautionary kind of thing?**

KIRK FERENTZ: No, he just didn't feel like he could get loose. Such unusual circumstances. Usually you go out once, play and, whatever it is 15 minutes, 20 minutes for us, right? It's always funny, they always talking about shortening these games, I don't know why they don't shorten the halftime. But that's a whole different chapter. So I think just the disruption probably affected him today.

**Q. Kaleb Johnson had a breakout game. Spencer said the first day of practice he was trying to run through people. I guess how would you describe the kind of journey for Kaleb, he had two big breakout runs today?**

KIRK FERENTZ: What Spencer described was a guy who just got here out of high school the first couple practices. He has a good attitude. He has a little energy to him that's fun. He's not -- naive is not the right word -- but it's all new

to him, so it's kind of fresh. He has been fun to work with and he has done things. He has been in the other games, but hasn't really looked great. It was good to see him run with confidence tonight and he got a little bit of daylight and knew what to do with that, that's for sure. Coincidentally, there's a run he made in camp that was very similar to a couple that he made tonight. That was good to see that transfer over to a game field. Hopefully that will be good for his confidence and it's going to help us. The more the merrier from that standpoint.

**Q. How important was it to get the shutout? The defense has played well all year, but just to push it through seven hours?**

KIRK FERENTZ: For us especially, we never seem to get shutouts. You start putting the reserves in, the ball seems to go down the field fast. It was good to see the backup guys play well for a change. It's not fair to these guys, but it has been a tradition here, our backups go in there.

That was good. It is gratifying. Any time you get a shutout that's great. It's representative of the kind of work that guys have been doing. They were aggressive tonight. They played well and did a lot of good things. They can always feel good about that.

**Q. You talked about getting your full offense back really for the first time all season. How much of a priority was it to let Spencer's arm loose?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We just thought we had a little better opportunity for it now. That's hopefully going to help us with the rest of the passing game too. You're not going to throw deep balls 80 percent of the time. But you got to throw 'em, otherwise they're going to be right in your back pocket the whole time. So I think that was good to see some balls going down the field.

Spencer did a nice job delivering. Our protection still can get better. Some negative yardage runs were a little displeasing, especially in that second half, or the last couple times out there. Just kind of put a damper on things.

**Q. After going through something like this collectively as a team what does it do for a team's confidence? Knowing you fought through something to accomplish it?**

KIRK FERENTZ: That remains to be seen. I think they can feel good about what they did tonight. The most important thing, any time you lose or have a tough outing you got to get back on your feet and go back to work. The guys did that starting Monday. They had a good attitude.

I've been saying that about this team since January.

You're always wondering what's going to happen, where we going, where we heading. But the guys pushed forward. They practiced well. I think we did make improvement this week. A couple things I'm excited about I think we have some strengths on our football team and I know we can get a lot better in some other areas. But to get a reward, it's important, it really is important. Hopefully we can build on this a little bit. Haven't seen much of our next opponent, but I'm sure it's going to be another challenge for us.

**Q. You never struck me as a night owl. When is the last time you were awake at 2:30 on a Sunday morning?**

KIRK FERENTZ: What do they call that prom duty? What's it called when you're the --

**Q. Chaperone?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, chaperone, the junior prom. I remember doing that one and we went and had breakfast afterwards. And I'm thinking, you know, when was the last time I was having breakfast without sleeping? So it's been awhile. You're right about that. Probably, yeah, don't worry about it. (Laughing.) I think I got one for you, but, yeah, I'll get you afterwards. Ended up in a Waffle House. How is that?

**Q. Was it the Outback Bowl?**

KIRK FERENTZ: In Atlanta. No, no. I wasn't playing or participating. I was a spectator.

**Q. Noah Shannon, what happened there?**

KIRK FERENTZ: He's had a nagging injury. He tried today and just didn't feel like he was real effective. So hopefully we'll have him full speed next week.

**Q. You've seen probably, in your however many years of coaching, a little bit of everything. Was this, with these circumstances, a new one for you?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Two years ago over at Iowa State similar but not the same. But 6:40 kickoff and then whatever time it is right now. Pushing on 2, I guess, right? So, yeah, it's unusual for sure. There's no way to prepare for it. Just tried to encourage our guys, whatever they were doing in the locker room, to the discussion earlier, as we looked like the clock was getting down to where we were getting ready to go out there, then let's try to refocus and see if we can't focus better than our opponents.

**Q. Seems like Tyler Elsbury got some extended run at guard today. Has he been surging in practice and what did you see from him?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We actually rotated about three guys at the right guard spot. Pretty much stable everywhere else. And then Tyler came in and played a little center at the end too. He's doing a good job. We're letting the guys compete and we'll see who can grab onto the job.

**Q. At what point would you like to have a sure fire, here's our starting five each week on the line?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Three weeks ago. But just hasn't worked that way. You play it out. I want to let the guys compete and see. We're talking about some guys that really haven't played very much either. You just got to see them in game action. Sometimes it's painful. But those mistakes will get cleaned up and they will get better and we'll try to figure out it. And practice is a big evaluation time for us too. So it's obviously pretty close right now or we wouldn't be doing that.

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