



THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Strategic Communications

Iowa 22, Rutgers 0

Player Quotes

Kinnick Stadium | Nov. 11, 2023

Jay Higgins

Linebacker

On defense improving week by week:

“I would say what our head coach preaches is always get better. Obviously, with Coach Parker and Coach Wallace – I am very high on them – they let us know how to stop these guys. We come here every Saturday and are so confident in the gameplan so its easy to go out there and play hard. We know if we go out there and play hard and do our job, everything should be good.”

On adjustments made in the second half:

“Their game plan switched because of the first half success. Their situations were different. Rutgers knew they had to get points on the board. We knew what was going to happen, we knew what to expect. With their quarterback being dual threat, you have to make sure that you contain him properly and not just play coverage. We did a great job making sure our eyes and feet were disciplined.”

On Kinnick Stadium atmosphere:

“It helps us playing in Kinnick, obviously with the fan support. It especially helps in a third and short situation, where the third and two turns into a third and seven. That completely changes the playcall. That completely changes the percentages of them converting and getting that first down. Our job is to get off the field on third down. I love playing at Kinnick. That is one of the things you love about playing home games.”

On mental toughness and resilience of the team:

“We’ve been playing some really good teams and these guys had their ways of hurting our defense, but just what this locker room has done, we’ve done a great job staying together. That is what you’re going to get out of an Iowa team. As a player, it is our job to follow our leader and with Coach Ferentz being the leader that he is, I don’t think there is any surprise when it comes to us being as close as we are.”



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Nick Jackson
Linebacker

On holding Rutgers to 127 total yards:

“I think it starts with the defensive line, a lot. Those guys playing the blocks and just really being physical in the run game, trying to get them out of the things that they really like to do. That was a heck of a football team to just play against. We knew going in that they had a great quarterback and running back, but I think we did a really great job.”

On expectations and outcomes:

“I could not be happier. Anytime you go into the transfer portal, you take a risk, and you just never know what you’re really getting into with the whole recruiting process. Hats off to Coach Wallace. He has preached everything that he told me, and I’m really thankful to be a Hawkeye. I can’t even put it into words.”

On the buy-in from the defense:

“Everyone bought into the culture.... I’m really thankful for the defensive line-- it is a great secondary line-- and the coaches that have helped me be a better person. The coaches have put us in the right spot. I am really thankful for this defense.”



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Kaleb Brown
Wide Receiver

On his touchdown reception:

“I just saw a guy pretty much more to my inside, and I knew I could beat him with speed. So, I did that. It felt great to be in the end zone again.”

On increased role and impact over the last two games:

“It has been great for me, honestly. I really can’t put into words what it’s like. The experience has been crazy, but it has been easy for me. Just go out and be with the guys that I am always with and just have confidence in them. So, it has been great.”

On why the offense was more productive statistically this week:

“I would say just executing when it counted. That was all. It was just a matter of time.”

On emotions after a breakout performance:

“A lot of emotions, I would say. Just coming back to the sidelines and realizing what is actually going on, because down on the field it is kind of like a laser focus. You are not really focused on anything else but the opportunity and your job. It was just crazy to think about, like, I worked for this for so long. For it to finally pour out, I would just say is really emotional.”

On getting a confidence boost:

“It definitely boosts it a whole lot. Just putting out what I can do. Obviously, I have done it in practice many times, but to actually be able to go back and look at what I have done on film in a real game situation brings a whole lot of confidence knowing that I can put it on the field when I need to.”



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Deacon Hill
Quarterback

On maturing over the course of the season...

"I thought I took a good step forward today. The biggest thing is just continuing to take a step forward next week and the following after that. It's about how I carry myself, just maturing as a player and as a person, and there is a lot that comes with being the starting quarterback at Iowa. Having Spencer and Cade to do that with me has been really nice, and so that is the biggest thing I've seen in myself: just maturing and handling myself better."

On his performance in the second half...

"It's just a rhythm that you get into. I just black out, and it's like, okay, I know what I'm doing. Trust your fundamentals, trust your base and build rhythm. I trusted myself in what I was seeing and trusted what the coaches were telling me."

On the offensive line...

"I think it's how close knit they are. They travel everywhere together. When we get a hotel, they have a huge table for all them to sit together. Like, they're playing games, you walk into one of their hotel rooms and it's just the entire offensive line sitting on the beds and the ground playing games together. It's just a testament to them. They hold each other really well. They've done a great job of being super tight knit and holding each other accountable."

On staying mentally positive...

"I think the biggest thing is just seeing that growth is what gives me confidence, and talking to Spencer and Cade. Talking to them and talking through everything. Then trusting you're here for a reason. So, you trust that, and I think it's just the biggest thing is a stress on myself. And yeah, sometimes it can be tough, you know? Especially before Michigan State, I hadn't played real meaningful snaps of football since high school. I was trying to get back into that rhythm and trying to understand what I want to do. Also, what the team is going to do. Just getting back on the field into that flow I think can be tough at times, but staying level throughout all of it is the biggest thing."



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Nico Ragaini
Wide Receiver

On offensive performance against Rutgers defense:

“This whole year we’ve been working hard. The beginning of the year didn’t go how we wanted it to with the offense. Coach Ferentz and everyone on our team knows that it’s just going to take us getting into rhythm. Today, I think we found that rhythm in our offense and we now we just have to keep going. Can we stack this on to next week? Can we stack it on at practice and continue to work hard every day? Can we get better every single day? We just have to keep focusing on the little things and it’ll take care of itself.”

On the locker room message at halftime:

“I feel like the drive right before half gave us life. We drove the ball down the field. A bunch of guys were making plays to get us down the field. I felt something on that drive; almost like we turned a page even with the mistake at the end. It was something we could build confidence on and that is what we all saw in the second half.”

On the growth of quarterback Deacon Hill:

“When he first got here, I asked him how old he was. He was 19 or 20 at that point. You have to remember these guys are young. He has definitely grown in the past few weeks. I am proud of him and how he played today. That was definitely our best game as a unit and like I said, keep building off of it today.”

On wide receiver Kaleb Brown and his development:

“With Desmond King being our honorary captain today, if you guys don’t know when he played, somebody got hurt, Desmond got thrown out there and never came out again. But that is one thing Coach Ferentz hammers on all the time. For Kaleb to step in when Vines is down, it’s just another Iowa story that happens. I am proud of Kaleb. He works hard every single day. He was locked in the whole week and it was no surprise to me that he made some plays.”

On Coach Ferentz and the team’s perseverance through adversity:

“It definitely has been a crazier year than most for sure. Coach Ferentz has us locked in like he always does. All the guys know that. It’s not always going to be a straight path. It’s going to be a rocky road sometimes. But you have to keep pushing it through. When the ball comes your way, make the play. This is the same Coach Ferentz I’ve known for the past six years. I’ve been hearing the same things over and over. In the beginning of my career, it used to go in one ear out the other ear, but now being older, I realized that when he speaks, it’s like listening to the smartest guy you’re ever going to listen to. He’s always got us ready. He gets emotional all the time, which is cool. That is one thing I will miss for sure as I come to a close in my career.”



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Mason Richman
Offensive Line

On the performance of the offensive line:

“Appreciate all the guys who've been working everyone on the offensive line. Everyone has skill. It was a complete team game. The defense played their tails off. Special teams set us up. I think it was like five plays there where Coop fair caught it at the 50. So, you know, a great team like that is what it's all about. We have just been working all week at it and finally it came through at the end, but we have got more work to do.”

On quarterback Deacon Hill's performance:

“I know going into halftime the coaches weren't very pleased with him with that last play, but he's been working. He's kept his head down. I'm really proud of him. He just keeps working. He's the same guy every day. Ton of personality from that guy. I mean, he's screaming before we go out there on the field and as we get off he's screaming. He's really exciting and a fun guy to work with. We really appreciate him, because he's been put in a position this year that I'm not sure if he knew he'd be put in. For him to step up and work every day, I understand it's a process and no one expected him to be at a McNamara's level when he first came here. He's a great player, and he's a great worker. So, over time he's getting a lot better and you guys are starting to see it, so we just have to keep that going with him.”

On the offensive line overcoming injuries:

“A lot of guys play hurt. All those snap streaks, start streaks, everything like that. There's stuff that guys have to play through. There's tons of guys on our team. We don't even know sometimes what some guys are going through. For us, it's just about staying together. Coach Barnett did a great job all week, and it was just getting some guys back in the fold. Logan [Jones] finished the game, but he's itching to get back in there, too. I know he's gonna work his tail off because he did all week. He was in the training room all day, and Rusty [Feth] obviously stepped up for us in a big way. So, it's a revolving door, but everyone's gonna be ready to go. I'm just really excited to get back to work with our guys.”