

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Hawkeyes 38, Trojans 21

KIRK FERENTZ: Good to see everybody. Just start off by saying it feels really good to get a win. You guys were all there. It was really hard-fought. Credit to Troy. They came in here to win, certain about that. They have a good staff, a good group of players that played really hard. So give them a lot of credit.

We played hard. Not the biggest story, we played a lot better in the second half. Left the door open a lot in the first half. That was a little bit of a challenge.

The positives of note, we played good football, no penalties, no turnovers. Did have the one loose ball on that one punt return. Overall, it's a good sign. It was good to get the win.

I thought the team responded in the second half, had a little better focus in that second half. We're going to enjoy this one, but obviously there's a lot to work to do.

I've talked to the team about this. I heard it on the radio Tuesday or Wednesday coming in, a couple people were bandying back and forth on the NFL Network, critiquing a lot of teams in the league, trying to give a prognostication for the season. Got out of the car, I'm thinking to myself, These guys have played one game, right? I know that's a national pastime.

I know this, for us it's a path of development. There's going to be ups and downs. Certainly you like to get out of your downs without getting scathed too bad. Anyway, it's just going to be a week-to-week process for us.

Saw a lot of good things out there today, some things really encouraging. There's some things that we're really going to learn from tomorrow when we look at this tape, hopefully do a better job as we move forward.

Q. You get down to the goal line, you decide to throw Brendan Sullivan in. Is that something you've been working on going back to fall camp? Was it

implemented this week? Was Brendan provided as a different look?

KIRK FERENTZ: During camp, both guys get reps for the most part pretty much with everything. Brendan is a really good athlete, worked hard.

This week when we were talking about those situations, we just thought maybe it would be good to have that in our pocket. How much we utilize it or not utilize it, we'll figure that out as we go.

He did a good job during the week. That was part of our plan coming in, if the situation arose. If it's going to help us in games, we're going to do it.

Thought he did a nice job. Guess he got his first completion on that little flip-out there, too. He's 1-1. Can't beat that (smiling).

Q. It seems through three games the highs have been really high and the lows have been very low.

KIRK FERENTZ: Tell me about it (laughter).

Q. Do you feel that's a good thing at this point in the season because there's so much left to grow?

KIRK FERENTZ: It would be better if we were 3-0 and we had those highs and lows. But some of those lows have cost us.

Listen, we're going to have to learn a little bit better. Maybe you I can quiz you guys, but have you ever been to a game where three touchdowns got scored, and I don't think anybody got a finger on the guy? Same guy, right? I've never seen that before.

We don't want to try that formula. We're known for not giving up big plays. We're known for not doing that on special teams. All you can believe is what you see. We're going to have to get that addressed real quickly because it's going to be hard to win games moving forward doing that.

But there's other things. I am not just singling out those. It was a weird game that way. Credit to them. We had no contain on the punter coverage. Those are the things



we're going to have to get straightened out real quickly here.

Q. With big plays, what do you attribute that to, especially considering you had one last week, two of them this week? What can you do to address that?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'd say four last week, me personally. All four of those were involved in their scoring drives. We had to find a big play. Phil doesn't want to give up an inch. You can live, like, getting dunked. Outside of the Michigan State game in '15, that's really hard to do.

When a team does it, you tip your hat and say, Congratulations. That's part of the deal. It's tough when you give up big plays. Part of it's mental. Sometimes it's physical.

I would argue today one was a lack of communication, the other one was just a young guy maybe getting a little bit lax-ed, not realizing he might get picked on. These guys, not the first time they've called plays. Those are the kind of things any return player, offensive player, if you don't contain the ball, you're going to be in trouble on that. We didn't do that. It wasn't a great punt either.

Kind of expect that. Rhys, I'm not excusing him, but it's the first year he's played. You're going to have a little bit of a roller coaster there. That doesn't tell you why nobody was containing.

Q. Gennings Dunker left the game early. Is that just a rotation or health thing? Is this the offensive line that you really expected them to play? They had a pretty monster game.

KIRK FERENTZ: As far as the injury, we had a couple guys cramping up today. I think that was his issue. Really haven't had much humidity this year in practice, anytime. I think that was a factor.

Yeah, we're gaining ground. We're not there yet. I think, yeah, to answer your question, it's more what we're hoping to be, but we're not there yet, which is good because we can still get a lot better, a lot sharper. You get to watch the replay, there's things you hope are going to be a little bit cleaner moving forward. If we do that, it's going to help us.

I can't say enough, there are some guys I am really pleased with. Stating the obvious Kaleb Johnson is playing his best football right now. Obviously he's getting yards, but the way he's running right now is really encouraging.

Jaz jumped in there today and looked like we were hoping Jaz would. Both those guys are going in their third year

now. That's when you really just in general terms hope a player, at least in our program, when they got to start really kind of seeing the big picture a little bit better. I think both those guys are doing it.

Jaz hasn't been out there. I don't know if he's had a carry this year. But he looked good today. It's really encouraging.

Q. Talk a little bit more about Brendan getting the goal line packages. I don't know how to phrase this, is there a way of trying to wean him into getting more snaps in the middle of the field?

KIRK FERENTZ: Do you want me to take the hook on that one (smiling)? Seriously?

No, I get it. You have to ask that stuff. I get it.

I mean, there's no big conspiracy theory or purpose. He has practiced well. He's a really good athlete. We thought if he could give us or provide one more dimension, one more thing to the defenses to have to worry about, might have some benefit.

There's no big picture right now, but we are going to try to utilize any one of our guys any way we can if they can help us. That's a good thing.

Q. Historically you downplay halftime speeches, rah-rah. A minute left, you had a chance to try for points. You decided not to. Was that your decision to regroup at that point?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's totally my decision, yeah. You can blame that one on me. I know the fans weren't happy.

The way we were playing, why make a bad situation worse? I'm not saying it would have happened. It's like the two-point thing last week. We talked about that Sunday and Thursday. I'm still not sure where these charts come from. A lot of it's just how the game feels to you at some point. We're sitting there at that point one minute away, 70 yards away. Whatever it might have be, 75. Doesn't matter.

But let's just minimize the damage and see if we can regroup and play a good second half. We're going to get the ball. There's nothing in my mind right now that was instilling confidence in me we could go down the field and score.

Q. One of the positives on the defensive side was that your defensive line, Brian Allen and Hurkett and Max Llewellyn, talk about their development. How

important that's been.

KIRK FERENTZ: Got off the radio with those guys talking about the same thing.

Start Ethan. He had a couple injuries earlier when he got here. The day he walked into our building, he just works hard. He's a really focused, intelligent guy. Man, he works hard. Great work ethic. He's fought through the injuries and all that kind of stuff. He's kind of like Joe Evans that he keeps coming at you.

There's a lot to be said for that if you're a defensive player - any player - but there's a lot to be said for going hard and being tough-minded. It's good to see him enjoying some benefits out there.

Both Brian and Max are young guys that have flashed and all that. They had good August practice periods there, that four weeks. I think they both grew. They're earning our trust because defense is so much about being where you got to be and understanding. But they're also capable of making some plays, making it tough on whoever's going to block them.

It was encouraging, some of the better stuff that happened from where I was standing today. Seeing three guys, Ethan not as much, the other two guys who haven't played.

I will flip it to the other side seeing Buie make the nice catch on the third-and-long, then a conversion from Brown third-and-nine, whatever it might have been. Things we haven't seen. We haven't seen Jaz, right? There's some really positive things, too.

What we got to do is to pull this stuff together and play a little tighter. I don't mean tight, but tighter, more detailed.

Q. If there's been one theme over the first few games, one half looks great and the other half doesn't look so great. What does it take to string four quarters together? Was there a little bit of a hangover from the Iowa State game last week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know. I thought we practiced OK and prepared OK this week. I'm not a big pregame guy either. I was a bit underwhelmed with our pregame today. I don't mind telling you that. Sometimes, again, it's how you feel. It's the feeling you get. I don't know. I can't explain it.

But I do know this, we have 12 opportunities that are guaranteed. Austin Blythe said this a week ago last Friday, he did the math, 1,700 hours I think he said he practiced. These are things linemen think of because they don't do

anything else (smiling) and he played in 176 games.

I talk about that all the time with our guys. The football, you prepare a lot more than you play. We don't play 162 games a year. If you can't get yourself in the right mental frame of mind to play... We know well in advance that's our job to get ready. Quite frankly, if you need a pep talk, you're playing the wrong sport. That's how I feel about it.

We'll learn and we'll get better,

Q. One stat that really jumped out at me today that I was really impressed with, your rushing defense was awesome. Allowed 24 yards rushing today. Did you pay special attention to that this week?

KIRK FERENTZ: We try to be like that in every game. That's where defense starts in our minds, defending the run. It's tough. If the other team can run, it will on you. But then it backfired because they chose to throw a couple down there on us that we're going to have to get better at.

I mean, over the long haul, if we can defend the run, at least that gives us a chance to build a defensive football team, gives us a decent chance to be successful. It's been that way for 25 years. We've always believed in that.

Conversely, hopefully we can run the ball effectively. But today was a good effort that way. We just got to do something about the big play.

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