

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa 40, Washington 16

KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon. Certainly it's just a great feeling. Night and day from losing. There's nothing harder than that. I am happy for our team. Really proud of the guys.

The biggest thing this week was getting back on our feet and going back to work because the schedule is not going to go away. Really pleased with the way the guys prepared, the way they kept focused on things that were important. Certainly today it showed, and they competed the full 60. It wasn't perfect, but it was a great effort by everybody.

To that point, I thought we played good complementary football today. When we do that, it gives us a chance to have good outcomes. Whether it be the kicking game, which we thought we had some opportunities there. Rhys punted really well. That first punt was a big thing for us.

Obviously the field goals. Drew did a great job there. I think the return game was a big factor in the game too. We were hopeful that we would have some opportunity.

Wetjen has done a good job returning kicks, and we thought with the hang time that their kickoff guy and punter had that we might have some chances. The guys did a great job. They were on top of it.

A huge play in the game in my mind was Jermari's interception. They're driving the ball to about the 25, something like that, and he came up with that pick. Then we come back and get a field goal off that.

So just a lot of good complementary football, guys feeding off each other a little bit. Just proud of the way the guys responded and have responded this way.

Good second half for us and feels good to get the win. Feels great to be in Kinnick and get the win here and just want to compliment our fans. I thought they were really a big part of the game. They were really into it, loud, and



appreciate that. Great deal.

Q. It's just kind of feels like it's getting to a point where, oh, Kaleb Johnson did it again. Is that how it feels to you because it was a great start to the season, and now it's consistency?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I have said this a couple of times, but it just ties in with the theme. Year three tends to be a year in general terms where guys really start to get traction, and he's done some good things over the last couple of years, but the consistency right now in not only what you see on the game field, but the way he prepares, the way he practices, he's doing a great job.

Just maturity I think and really having a bettered grip on where maybe to be looking and what to be focused on instead of wasting time on some other stuff. He's really done a great job there. Really setting up blocks, being patient. He's running tough, and that's a big part too. He's starting to learn to use what he has, and that's a good thing for everybody.

Q. 200 career wins. Pretty small group of coaches who get to that point. What does this mean to you?

KIRK FERENTZ: Two things: The honest answer is I was more focused on us getting four. I didn't want to think about being at 3-3 right now, and that's just how it works in season. Everything is week-to-week.

One thing in any league and certainly in the NFL and certainly in college football, if you lose back-to-back, that just makes things hard. That's kind of just a staple. It's all about getting back on your feet and getting back in the fight, and our guys did a great job of that.

Then as far as the 200 part, you have to be lucky. You have to be in the right place, first of all. You have to be with a lot of good people, and that's coaching staff and support staff. A lot of people are involved in this. I've worked with nothing but great coaches my entire career. I've been lucky wherever I've been.

Then, most importantly, the players. I was great to have the '04 team here today. You have Jonathan Babineaux. Jonathan almost epitomizes what it is because he had three really good years here. He had two where he



couldn't play. '01 he missed an entire year with a broken leg from spring ball, and then in '03 couldn't finish the year out.

Then goes on and plays 12 years in the NFL, raising a family. Just what a great awesome guy. Plus, he's a golfer, which we have two D-linemen, him and Clayborn. I'm off on a tangent here.

Anyway, that's what the game is about. The guys you get to work with and having all those guys out there today because that team, boy, it was all about response that year. That was fun. We were 2-2. I think there was some negativity back then too.

Anyway, it was week-to-week, and that's what it's going to be the rest of the way for us this season as well.

Q. 200 wins means a lot to you, but also to your players, past and present. What have you taken away from them? How have they helped you get to this spot, not just by winning, but by -- as you said, the 2004 team really struggled through adversity. This team struggled through adversity last week. What you did in '20, '16, and on. How much have they influenced you to help you get to this position?

KIRK FERENTZ: Let's be clear, if we didn't win, I wouldn't be here right now. That's just how it works, and it always has.

Coaches are supposed to be in front, and they're supposed to be the ones setting the tone, all that stuff, but a lot of times we feed off of our players too. Losing doesn't seem to get any easier. It's distasteful. It affects everything you do in life.

I don't start feeling any better at least until we get on the field and then you're around the guys, we're doing what we like to do. So that's like the start of it, but it lingers, and it really does until you get back on the field and compete.

The best part about coaching always has been working with players. Again, I've been so fortunate where the guys I've worked with on a daily basis have been really good folks. We learn from our players all the time, and parents learn from their kids too. Sometimes some of those things are interesting.

Yeah, so you do, and all the stories. A guy like Jonathan Babineaux, how do you stay so positive? He just did. He kept coming back and sticking with it.

Pat Angerer went through a lot of stuff during his career, and that's real life, but that's what the game teaches you.

Q. With the season that Kaleb Johnson is having, do you feel like it's a valid conversation to put him in the category with what Shonn Greene did in 2008? I know we're halfway through here, but he's over 900 yards now and halfway through?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll tell you exactly what I told him a couple of weeks ago because -- somebody gave me some article about him being in the Heisman race or whatever. This was three weeks into the season.

I said, It's awesome what you are doing. So proud of you, and all of us are because, again, he's not just playing good. He's practicing well. He's just been so wired in. I pointed out to him, Shonn Greene did it week after week after week 12 times. The only guy in the country to do it that year.

As much as everybody likes to talk about things... and, believe me, I'm so pleased with the way he's playing, but it's all about running the race, the whole race. That's why we have 12 games on the schedule.

Our team will get evaluated the same way. I know we like to come to conclusions every now and then, good or bad, but it's really about how the whole thing goes.

That's part of him understanding, seeing the big picture. Doesn't mean he's going to stay on the tracks, but he has been great, and he was great again today. I'm not surprised because I see him act that way every day. He's focused on the right things, which gives him a chance.

He has a legitimate chance. What did you say, he has 900? We're halfway right now. That's pretty impressive. I think that's about as good as we've had, right, I'm guessing? I'm not a big stat guy, but that's pretty good.

Q. Blocked kick in the first quarter by Yahya Black. Two turnovers by the defense. Three fourth down stops. How big of an affect does it have on the rest of your team when your defense is coming up with big play after big play?

KIRK FERENTZ: Those are all good things and really pertinent in the fact that we didn't start out well. They drove it the first two times, drove it right down the field. That was a little disconcerting when you see them possess the ball like that. They're not just possessing the ball, but they're moving it.

So you get a little concerned there, but again, coming off of the plays when you need them and the field goal, we thought there might be a chance on that as well. Not to say that Coach Woods called the shot, but he saw some

things that maybe we would have a chance if things panned out right, and they have to.

Then, you know, just keep working. You keep working, but those things are all good things. Getting the stops on downs. The score got away a little bit, so they had to do that. Once we got to where we were pretty sure they're going to have to throw the ball, it made it a little easier for us to play, but they did a great job. They've been doing it all year. They have moved the ball on everybody this year.

Q. Kirk, do you have a favorite kind of win? I mean, I would assume that bouncing back after a loss like last week's would be that kind of win, but how would you describe it?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it ties in with what I said. Losing... it seems like the older you get, the more distasteful it is. Mary said that, like, 40 years ago. She said to me one day, It seems pretty simple: If you guys win, everything is good, and if you lose, everything sucks.

It really hasn't changed. I know fans get upset when we lose. I get that. Everybody is looking for reasons, but it's all about trying to move forward and get better, see what we can do to fix things and get better. If you don't have the right kind of guys around you, it's tough.

Just proud of our guys. They go to work and just keep pushing things.

Q. I wanted to ask you about injuries. I saw Stephens in a boot. Any other injuries after this one besides that?

KIRK FERENTZ: He has an ankle, and then Hayden Large tried to go in pregame, and he couldn't go. He has an ankle, too. I don't think anything significant, but hopefully get him back here next week.

Q. Game one to game six, where are the biggest areas you feel like this team has grown? Where are the areas you feel like there's still room for more?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think in a lot of areas, and that's good news. I think offensively we're gaining ground. Not where we want to be yet, but we're getting there and did some good things.

I think Cade continues to look more and more comfortable with what he's doing, making good decisions. He made a good one in the run game today that went down to our right to Kaleb. So it was an either/or type of situation. He saw that beautifully.

Yeah, I think a lot of areas. Our backup defensive linemen are starting to come on and get some traction. They're getting a lot of work out there, and that's been good. Today our special teams were good.

In every area we need to be more consistent. That's probably the biggest thing here as we go forward.

Q. This is the fifth time in six games you rushed for 200-plus yards. You said earlier in the year that you can't obviously microwave the offensive line; maybe put it on the grill and now it has a good flavor to it. Where do you think things stand with the offensive line and particularly in the running game, and how much do they complement Kaleb and vice versa?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's mutual. It's everybody. Receivers get involved too and the tight ends. It's everybody being involved and doing a good job.

I said this back in August. Pretty confident we're a better line up front now. We're more confident. We're more mature physically. Outside of Beau, we've been healthier, which is a good thing too. Tyler Elsbury jumped in there and did a really nice job, so that was good to see that.

Yeah, it's complementary, and I thought our protection for the most part was better today too. Not that we threw a lot, but they hit us on that one blitz I think it was. It looked like somebody came off underneath. Not the blitz guy, but the other guy. Yeah, overall we're making strides.

We still have room to go, and that's the best part about it right now. We're still at the halfway mark, and I think our whole team can get better if we keep our eyes where we need to be.

Q. Dayton Howard gets his first career reception. It's a touchdown. What have you seen from him over these last two years?

KIRK FERENTZ: Young guy with potential. He felt bad about the penalty, too, and he should because I just pointed out to him, you know, we're kicking it now from over here instead of over there. Today it didn't matter, but if the score is tighter, that would be consequential.

It's been good to have him out there. We think he is a good prospect, and I think that's reflective of our whole group with the receivers right now. Reece has done a good job. You've got Dayton out there, Jarriett. Two young guys that aren't playing a ton, but they're doing a good job and improving in practice. We've just been better certainly, and Gill has been doing a good job, too.

I think we have room for improvement here, and that's an area that we should continue to improve over the next six weeks if we practice well.

Q. Coach, was there any confusion on Washington's field goal before halftime? You decided to challenge it even though it wasn't reviewable. Can you talk about your thoughts on that?

KIRK FERENTZ: The only reason I pursued it a little bit, Jay Higgins swore it was not any good, and he had a better seat than I did certainly. You can't see anything from the sideline.

Anyway, yeah, it was worth a shot, to no avail, like a lot of replays. Anyway, yeah. I think we actually got a replay, though. Wasn't it on a fourth down or something, third down.

BETH GOETZ: I'm going to take the third question. Is that all right?

On behalf of the university I want to congratulate and thank you for the 200 wins. I know this milestone -- you know, Coach isn't big on the record books, and you heard him give credit to everybody, but it means a lot to all of us. How big of an impact when you think about those moments, 200 moments for all those student-athletes and all of us fans that have lived those with you.

I'm grateful I've gotten to get a few with you, and I know you have more to go. Congratulations.

KIRK FERENTZ: Appreciate it. Thank you.

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