

Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

Sam LaPorta

Press Conference

Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: It hurts. The team is -- we've been working for a moment like this since January, a lot of these guys, four, five, six years. So it hurts more than anything to work so hard and fall quite a ways short. Yeah, it hurts.

Q. You guys were (indiscernible) going down the field making plays. What did you see? What do you think worked for you especially since you had a couple catches?

SAM LAPORTA: There were a couple of explosives early, which it helps to move the ball down the field in big chunks as opposed to little chunks. The run game early, it was tough. We couldn't really get it going. A yard or two a pop, maybe. We weren't very great on third down early either which was really tough. It was a drive stopper at the end of the day. And I don't know, we just needed to be more efficient on third down get the run game going early.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: Well, I mean the red zone is as hard as it is because the field is so shrunk with so many people in a condensed area. A lot of the play calls, you can put those out the window. It's a much different playbook than the rest of the field.

But I don't know, it just seems like the last couple of weeks we couldn't really get much going in the red zone, which hurts. That four-point swings between field goals and touchdowns. And we came up short, missed a field go early, which hurt. We tried to bounce back, went back down and Shudy made the next one, he picked us up there. We weren't good enough today in the red zone. We



needed to put points up and we didn't do that.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: No, of course not. I think it comes down to running the ball. It's really like the gel to the offense. If you can run the ball effectively you can get those chunk plays -- five, six yards -- stay ahead of the chains. Third down conversions are a lot easier when you convert third and one and third and two as opposed to third and eight, third and ten-plus. That's always difficult. I feel that was a commonality between that Wisconsin game and tonight.

Q. Could you tell Spencer wasn't right in the second and third quarter?

SAM LAPORTA: I thought he was feeling fine. He took a big shot into, I think, the lower abdomen or something like that. I won't speak for him on that. But, yeah, I think he took a shot and I mean he wasn't right after that. We went to Alex, I guess.

Q. Couple weeks before you have to play -- (indiscernible) trying to take off. Where are you guys mentally? Do you still have pretty good morale, (indiscernible) take a few days off?

SAM LAPORTA: Of course, this one's going to hurt a couple days, especially since that bowl game. Once we get the bid we'll figure out how many weeks and how much time we have off. But, I mean, the guys are really proud of each other. We've been working for this since January.

And to fall short in one game, it doesn't describe who we are as people and as a team, I don't think, but it hurts.

Q. What were you most proud of?

SAM LAPORTA: I think coming off that two-game loss streak. We had that early last year. The morale in the locker room kind of like it is tonight; it hurts. It hurts a lot to fall short twice in a row after having a really good start. Number two in the country and all that. That's really cool.

But to bounce back and win four straight off that two-game



loss streak, win four in November and get this bid. I think that's probably what I'm most proud of.

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