

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Michigan 27, Iowa 14

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm never discouraged by our players. I thought the effort was there. I thought we had a good week of preparation and practice. I thought the guys were wired in, and we knew what we were up against, what we had to do today to be successful.

Credit our opponent; they did a good job of setting the tone and made it difficult for us in offensive and defensive phases, special teams maybe not as much, but they did a good job there.

As crazy as it may sound, from where I stood, I thought our guys played hard and I saw some growth in our football team.

Time will tell. We'll go from there. We'll look at the tape tomorrow. We'll go back and lick our wounds a little bit, hopefully learn and grow. We'll move forward on Monday, and that's our plan right now.

We have a bye week coming up after this, and we've known that, and our request to our players is be focused on these six weeks, the six-week block, and we'll figure things out afterward, and that's our plan, and I'll open it up for questions.

Q. What challenges did Michigan's rushing attack, especially Blake Corum, pose for you guys?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's an outstanding back, first and foremost. Really good football player. That didn't surprise us. You look at film, you can see that. And then they're good up front. Those guys last year and this year are really blocking well. They have good tight ends that block well.

The other part of the equation is they threaten you outside. They have really good receivers and a quarterback that can get it out to them.

You have to choose your poison a little bit defensively, and

if you load up too much in one area, you're going to be vulnerable in another spot.

Q. How encouraging is Luke Lachey's emergence?

KIRK FERENTZ: Really good. I can't say we're surprised. We've been watching him grow and develop.

I don't know what his age was actual age was when we recruited him, but he looked like he was 16, like a young-looking guy. But a tremendous guy with a great work ethic and good ability. It's been fun to watch him grow. He's playing really well.

Right now we have a chance to have a pretty good tandem with him and Sam out there. But to make those big plays today gave us a spark, and it was great to see. That'll help him and help our football team moving forward.

Q. You called a time-out on that clipping penalty. Did you get a valid explanation?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, you always get a valid explanation. Flash back to 1994 or '95, we were playing in Kansas City and it got distracting, and it didn't help our cause at all. So I try not to get distracted by things.

But today to say it didn't impact the game a little bit, the way things went, I think that would probably be naïve. The two things we've been pretty good at -- even if we don't have a real good team -- we're usually pretty good at ball security and takeaway margin typically we do a good job, '09 being an exception there.

Typically we're in the upper third penalty-wise, and I think we're somewhere in that neighborhood right now.

To have six major penalties, that's kind of uncharacteristic. Maybe we were overwhelmed talent-wise or maybe our guys are that sloppy. It didn't feel that way from the sideline.

It is what it is. But it impacted the game, and we weren't good enough to overcome that.

But I've had a problem with college football's interpretation of cut blocking for probably a decade now, and I don't see that getting any better. The good news is they'll probably

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eliminate it from football next year, so we won't have to worry about it.

Q. If an offensive lineman has his helmet across the far side knee?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's an illegal block.

Q. It is an illegal block?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's what you saw. I'm cosigning, I'm not saying it.

Q. As far as Logan Jones' blocking too long, too hard during the play --

KIRK FERENTZ: You can't be too aggressive out there on that field. You can't do that, with a play that's still going on. You all have seen Linderbaum do that a lot on the other side of the line of scrimmage. This happened to be where the defender was, and he's finishing the play, and that's something we really emphasize and teach.

I'm a little perplexed by that one, and I don't know when you're supposed to know when to stop if your opponent is still going. It's a little confusing.

Q. If you look at the offense, the passing game especially, third quarter into the fourth quarter seemed to get some rhythm and some movement. Maybe for the first time this year it looked like it was really in concert for multiple possessions. Are you encouraged by that or do you feel like that's something you guys can build on?

KIRK FERENTZ: I am. For a couple things, reasons. I talked about Sam and Luke. I think we have a chance now to have a pretty good tight end combination.

Looks like Nico is back pretty close to full speed, which is helpful to have a veteran player out there. Arland is doing some good things, and we'll keep moving him along, and hopefully Brody is benefitting from every rep he gets, so I am -- and then the other component, I thought up until that I guess it was last possession, next-to-last possession, we pass blocked better today, against a group that's pretty good. They have some guys.

To me that's encouraging. We had a meltdown on that last series -- I think we were two scores down, and I've been there before as a line coach. It's not that much fun. So it's not like that's the first time I've seen that. We'll grow through that and work through that.

I saw a lot of things I thought that were better, but that's not

going to get it done for us unless we really keep pushing this thing forward and squeezing some things down.

Q. The guys have talked about they see the improvement, it's just not quickly enough. Would you agree with that, and how do you speed that up?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, when you come up short -- but again, we knew what we were up against today, what we had to do. Really we couldn't force -- only one bad play I think on their part, the quarterback's part. He had that one down to the right of our bench, which we were hoping maybe we could get a little bit more going there. But to his credit, he played a really good game.

Yeah, I think we're growing. I do think that. Campbell has been playing at a pretty good level. He, by the way, got tackled it looked like to me. You guys probably saw that one, right? Looked like he was in a hole and some outside hands snatched him down. But he played through that.

I think we're not -- I'm not discouraged, but I am disappointed.

Q. That Campbell play, why do you think that wasn't a flag?

KIRK FERENTZ: Why wasn't it? They didn't call it. It's real easy.

It was only at the point of attack, but other than that -- and pretty obvious. It looked pretty flagrant.

They obviously didn't see it. I'm not questioning anybody's integrity. I'm not going down that road. The guys are working hard -- it's hard; they've got a really hard job, really hard job.

Q. Did it feel like you guys defensively couldn't get any traction early in the game? They went I think 11 plays, 13 plays, 13 plays. You guys couldn't get off the field.

KIRK FERENTZ: We couldn't get off the field, and if you can't stop the run, it's tough. It's easy to call plays when you can run the ball, and not minimizing what they were doing, but again, the pressure they put on you from my vantage point, you see both those receivers last week running by DBs, so if you match up on them one-on-one, you're living dangerously there with a guy who can throw it.

It's a lot of cat-and-mouse, and it's tough, but they did a really good job, and it looked like they were executing very well, too.

Q. How have you been seeing Diante and Keagan progress in terms of injury recoveries?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not fast enough, obviously, but Diante has got a broken bone, so that's what we're dealing with. I think there's a realistic chance he'll be back after the bye week.

The good news for him is he can run. He'll be in great shape because that's all he can do is run; he can't catch. But hopefully we'll get him back, and he was doing really well prior to his injury, so if we can get him back, you're talking about a guy that's been around here for a while, not just a first-year guy, and that would help. But we still don't know what it's going to look like once he gets cleared.

Q. We're still talking about seven points and 220 yards until the final possession. What can you do to get from that to a level that can give you a better chance to win?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of what I just described. It's everything kind of coming together. I think we're getting better up front. At least that's my assessment after today. I haven't seen the film.

I think we've got backs that are doing a pretty good job. I think we have two tight ends doing a pretty good job, and getting Nico back, all that stuff goes together. Not like I'm only just describing Michigan. Part of the secret to the run game is they've got guys outside that you really have to respect or it's like electrocution. It happens fast, those kinds of things.

You know, we're a work in progress. I'm not discouraged by our guys. In fact, I'm encouraged by some of the things I'm seeing. But we're going to have to keep moving and obviously have to get better. We're not going to win a game scoring seven points.

Q. How do you see dynamics change when you have a second tight end like Lachey really emerge as a capable person that defensive opponents have to keep an eye out for?

KIRK FERENTZ: Every year it's what you have and try to play towards those strengths. We're talking about Michigan; they've got a couple really good tight ends. One wasn't here, I don't think, but they've got a couple, three that are really good, good receivers and good backs. They've got a pretty veteran group there, at least a really capable group.

We're going to try to play to our strengths, and I think Luke is coming on, so that's good.

Q. Was there any discussion -- I think it was a drive down to the 5 where it ended. On the Sam LaPorta catch, it was marked for no gain, but it kind of appeared he caught it at the 6, and then they marked it at the 8. Was there any discussion in your headset by your guys about maybe looking at that play or asking them how they looked at it?

KIRK FERENTZ: I work under the assumption they're reviewing everything. That is one difference between our conference and the conference that officiated earlier in the season, like they didn't review. I don't know if it was a good play or not, but they didn't stop, where the Big Ten you can count on that. Even their touchdown down to our left looked like a bang-bang play and was tempted to burn one there, but I know it's getting reviewed, so at least you know that.

Q. What was the offensive game plan today? You look up in the third quarter, zero points and 98 yards, and it's almost fourth quarter.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I guess I look at it differently. I'm thinking about a run that we hit off left tackle on -- was that the first holding penalty where it looked like a pretty clean play and we gained 20, 25 yards.

So you go from moving the ball down the field 20 yards, let's say it was 20, and now you're back -- you guys were at the game. It changes the complexion of everything you do.

We don't have a lot of good calls for 3rd and 20s. It's just really tough to come up with something that's going to be good. Yeah, those little negative yardage plays impact whether it's lost yardage plays, sacks or certainly -- not only penalties but 10 yards or 15-yard penalties. It's hard to overcome that offensively. So I'm just telling you what I saw. I thought we grew and we did some things better today. Time will tell. I may be totally crazy.

Q. Because of the penalties, Kaleb Johnson's stats might not be as good as they could have been. What did you see out of him?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I think he's a good young player who's playing pretty well. You're exactly right. That's just kind of what I'm trying to articulate is that when yards are taken off the board or negative yardage plays are thrown on, it kind of skews things a little bit.

We had a total meltdown on that last possession with the ball, so that's a negative yardage play, too.

You factor it in, but again, I've been through that,

unfortunately. It's not much fun when you're in that situation. It's not much fun for the five linemen trying to protect, and we weren't good enough to rise to that challenge today. But maybe that will help us down the road, too, because we'll be there again at some point, and hopefully we'll grow from that.

Q. When you try to get traction offensively, there was a play where Nico caught the ball down at the 2 and then you got called back for a penalty. You end up scoring, you overcome that and score, is that a growth moment there?

KIRK FERENTZ: Absolutely. Two things there. I thought our guys played hard today and competed hard, and that's where everything starts, and then we overcame some really tough situations, and I think that's just reflective of the kind of guys we're working with.

That gives me hope and optimism that things will get better because they work hard. I'm seeing them every day show up in the building, good attitude, and all those kinds of things. It's never fast enough. It's never fast enough. That's just how it is.

But they're working at it, and it'll come. It's going to come, barring some crazy thing; you know what I mean? Who knows. But no, we're going to be all right.

Okay, thank you.

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