

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa 34, Albany 7

KIRK FERENTZ: To start out, just obviously good to get the win. Happy to get that done. I thought the players' effort was good, and good to see them get rewarded for that.

I thought the team had a really good camp, preseason camp, and I think some of the good things we saw tonight are probably the result of that, and then the flipside, too, is there's always work to do, and I think certainly tonight we'll have a lot of good teaching examples tomorrow to go off of and just some situations that we're going to have to do a better job with.

Happy about that. It's always good when you can get a win and do a lot of good things but also have a lot of things that are going to have to get corrected and try to get cleaned up a little bit.

On a positive front, came out with two penalties, and I thought that was a pretty good start there. Almost got out of the game without a turnover and couldn't quite get that done, so that was unfortunate, but for the most part clean, and certainly some highlights. You look at Drew with that great job with the field goal, and that thing still had some room to go. Rhys really did a nice job punting. Only had two punts but really -- those were both impressive as well.

Then on the other front, a lot of young guys played that haven't played much football, and start with Xavier, the most obvious one. He went in there and played like a veteran guy, which was good to see. Didn't look out of place at all and did a good job.

Terrell is not a new guy but didn't play running back very much for us last year, and I think he looked really comfortable back there.

Jaz looked like Jaz and stepped in, did a great job. Positionally a lot of guys that really haven't played much football that got their feet wet. Got three senior linebackers but none of them ever started.

Just a lot of that stuff across the board, and happy about that.

The bottom line, just good to be 1-0 right now. Going to enjoy tonight, I told the guys to do that, and then tomorrow we'll go back to work. Sunday is all about taking a look at the tape and trying to take something out of it, and I think it's every bit as important after a win as a loss.

Certainly a lot of things that we can get better at, and that's going to be the focus as we move forward here this week. That's kind of our plan right now.

Just a quick shout-out to Lou Crist, I understand 43 years as the band announcer, which is pretty good, and also understand he played in the Rose Bowl back in the late '50s. My wife always said nobody has more fun than the people in the band. I don't know how she knows that, but anyway, that's just an observation, I think. But salute to Lou. That's quite a career.

I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Kirk, when it comes to -- how would you evaluate Mark's performance? He came in here, said he was pretty disappointed in how he played but there were a lot of good things he saw. From your vantage point how would you evaluate him?

KIRK FERENTZ: One thing you did see is he can run the football, which is good. That makes us a little bit more diverse attack-wise. The obvious takeaway, our passing game wasn't what it needed to be tonight. A lot of factors involved.

I think part of it is him probably pressing too hard. I'm certainly no quarterback expert, but I've sat in a lot of offensive rooms over the years, and one thing I've noticed is it's hard to get a quarterback just to relax a little bit and take what's there sometimes, mainly because they want to do well and they want to push it and they want to maybe do more than they need to sometimes. Amazingly, if you just kind of are patient, good things will eventually come your way.

So I think it was part of that. I think it's really directly tied to the cramping that he was experiencing. You're trying so

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hard, your wound up, you have your motor running pretty high level, and he's an unbelievably conscientious guy.

This will be good for him to get through this and move forward. I am confident he'll be fine.

Q. Along those same lines, it seemed like whether it was fundamentals, his footwork and even kind of almost pulling the string on some passes, does that kind of go hand in hand with maybe pregame anxiety and then pressing and then you start aiming the ball instead of throwing the ball, and did you get a sense that he was feeling like that when you talked to him on the sideline?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think I may have mentioned it Tuesday, I can't remember, but that's always one of my fears with a newer player, a veteran player, and quarterback especially, I'm going back to Drew Tate now where he was out of gas halftime of whatever game it was. He hit the wall hard because his mind runs hard, and Drew was a competitive guy that wanted to do things perfectly, too.

I think that's part of it. Sometimes you've got to play through that and experience it. I think this will benefit him moving forward because he's a good player and a good quarterback.

Then the other thing, it wasn't perfect all around. Their protection looked pretty good, but we ran some routes short because of new guys, and that's the age-old story, too. Just like quarterbacks don't want to take the drop-off sometimes, receivers, they'll be quick but don't hurry, and they get hurried and shortened routes, too.

We had a little bit of that. It was a group effort.

Q. Injury-wise, Kamari went out. Do you have an update on him? Bryce George, I think, got hurt in pregame?

KIRK FERENTZ: Pregame. That's a new one.

Q. That's an interesting one.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it is. I'm pretty sure it's a first for me. As a line coach or just any coach, but yeah, it was a freak thing. He was obviously devastated. It hits hard. I think he'll be back. I don't know how soon, but anyway, he was just not counting on that, to your point.

Kamari, we'll see. I don't think it's the end of the world, but we'll know more tomorrow, probably tomorrow or Monday.

Q. Back to the quarterback, going on the road, do you

think that helps almost a veteran quarterback like that to maybe calm down a little bit, just in your experience, or does that make it worse?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think they'd rather play at home quite frankly. I think he just needed today to play and play at Iowa. He's played a lot of football, but first time he's played here in our uniform. You want to go out -- if you're a prideful person you want to go out and do well, and I think he was probably pushing a little too hard here. But I think he'll handle this beautifully and he'll be fine.

Q. Reece Vander Zee, how long are you expecting him to be out?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, shame on me for saying we're pretty healthy on Tuesday, which we were at that time, and then -- I mean, full detail is he was in the food line after practice and felt discomfort in his foot. I don't know how long he'll be out, but nobody saw it coming, including him.

I imagine a couple weeks here. We'll see. But again, anytime a player gets hurt -- Kamari seemed to be doing pretty good today, but Bryce, really, it's his last year, and Reece was really disappointed, too, because he's had a great camp and done a lot of good things. But he'll be back. He'll get back.

Q. I wanted to ask more about Xavier. I know you said some positive things about him before bowl prep last year, I think, and what we saw today, is that what you've seen over the last year that he's been here?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yes and no. I mean this sincerely. Maybe we're crazy, but we don't tackle in practice. Now, sometimes those defensive guys don't get the memo, and Preston Ries is the No. 1 culprit, but they're not supposed to tackle our guys, so that's the one variable with guys that haven't played. You just don't know what they're going to do. But he seemed perfectly fine out there, and McNeil was the same thing. It looked okay. I was a little worried about him getting in there. That is what we've seen. He's just steadily kept getting better the last year and week-to-week, and then certainly in bowl prep you really get a good dose of younger guys. And he had a great spring, and just with Kamari and T.J. missing some time in the middle of camp, it got him more work. The idea of being a good player is if you get an opportunity to step in there, do something with it. I think we were all confident he'd step in and play well, but he's still got to do it, so good start for him.

Q. Today I couldn't help but notice you ran a couple QB runs, designed QB runs for Mark Gronowski. Is that good to know that you have a quarterback that has a good dual threat ability with his toughness to



run through defenders and kind of scramble and make plays off the jump?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it is a good thing. I thought we knew their guy ran, but in the first half it did not look like we knew their guy could run. There were a couple, it was like, oh, boy, this is not good. Nobody was on him.

It gives you one more dimension and gives something for the opponent to have to worry about. You have to have a guy who can do it a little bit, too, and Mark, we were confident. He ran really hard at his last school. Our plans are not to run him that much, but it's nice to have that in your repertoire certainly.

Q. You mentioned earlier this week that Sam Phillips might have a couple opportunities to do kick and punt return and then he had that 46-yard return towards the end of the game. Did you expect him to be able to pull off that kind of return? Is that something that you look at and go, okay, maybe I'll look a little bit deeper into this?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's been playing really well at receiver, and then he's shown to be a really capable returner. That was a really nice return. We were teasing him (Wetjen), his job status might be up for jump ball right now. But it was a really nice play. But I'm not totally shocked, although it was a really good play. Yeah, you can't ever say a guy is going to do that. That was really impressive.

Q. I noticed as the game wore on, your pass rush and your defense in general played better and better and you had good pressure on Albany's quarterback. I assume you're pretty happy about that. They played pretty good I thought.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, no question. I think the first half, as I just mentioned, we gave up a couple quarterback runs where it just looked like we didn't know what we were doing and gave up a couple passes, too, that you'd like to see a little tighter coverage. That was disappointing. But the second half a lot more three-and-outs. I thought we played a lot sharper and crisper, and they caught us in that one man coverage where we had the pass interference. But good job on their part. Yeah, it was two different halves for sure, and happy to see that. That's the tempo we need to be going at.

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