

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

Saturday, September 13, 2025

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa - 47, UMass - 7

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, I really appreciate Beth's words. I'll circle back to that in a second here.

First and foremost, our thoughts are with TJ Magee, the player who was injured tonight. Football is a tough sport. It's a physical sport. It would be a great game if nobody ever got hurt. Any time a game gets stopped like that, I think everybody is kind of holding their hearts and their hands on that one.

It sounds like there's some positive feedback from across the street. Things are looking very encouraging. So I certainly hope that's the case and TJ's back up on his feet here real shortly.

Overall, really pleased with the effort of our team. I was pleased with the week. I thought our guys got back on their feet starting last Sunday. I thought the effort was good during the week, as far as our preparation, that type of thing. Guys showed up tonight, and I thought they were ready to go.

We made improvement, no question about that. I saw a lot of good things out there, still things we can get better at. Offensively had a little better flow. Mark looked more comfortable. He had a good week at practice, and you see him climbing the ladder each and every week. I'm not surprised by that. He's a tremendous young person and a strong leader for us.

The defense did a good job of limiting the big play, and there were still some things we have to get better at the quarterback, let him outside too often. In the words of Norm Parker, it's about keeping the ball in front and keeping it inside, and we violated that a few times. So still some things to work on.

Then special teams a little bit of a mix. Certainly some things to think oh well, and Drew didn't have the best night of his career, but he'll bounce back. I'm not worried about him.

Kaden Wetjen did a fantastic job. I thought last week he pressed a little too much, was trying to do too much. Just encouraged him to try to relax and be who he is, and when he does that, he's pretty good because obviously he's got great ability. He's fearless back there, and when he gets the ball, he's trying to do something with it, which is really, really special.

Overall, I thought we played clean football tonight. No turnovers in the game. Almost got out without a penalty. Had a young guy jump offsides late. Our general tempo was overall pretty good.

Eager now to flip the page. We'll go back to work tomorrow morning, got a short week. It's going to be great to start Big Ten football. It's always special. Any time you're in a conference, that always means a lot. We're looking forward to a big challenge here going to Rutgers on a short week and playing a good football team. They're very well coached, and it will be a big challenge for us.

Then to follow up on Beth's comments, I'm thrilled and can't believe quite frankly my name's next to that distinction. I want to start by saying it's a real testament to the university and to the program here. I can't help but go back to when I got here in 1981. Nobody would have ever dreamt any of this was possible. We hadn't had a winning season in 19 years at that point.

You think about how far the program's come, Coach Fry's leadership and what he did to improve the program and position things. So an awful lot of things have to go into it to have success. Certainly takes a lot of people. There's no team sport like football. There's so many people involved. I've been fortunate to work with so many outstanding coaches through the years.

Think about the group that I joined in the '80s, just really special people. Coach Fry is the only person who even looked at me at that point, and I'll never forget that, and I'm appreciative of that fact.

You think about a guy like Phil Parker -- I typically don't single people out but I will tonight. Think about Phil being here this entire time, and the great job he's done and the growth he's shown. He's always a great secondary coach. He's become a tremendous coordinator.



Support staff, so critical in our sport, again, because of the numbers. When I got here, I think Rita started working when she was maybe 12 or 8, I can't remember, but she's been here for three head coaches. I've never seen her have a bad day at work. I bring that up in that I think it makes Iowa special. There's a lot of those cases across our campus. For them it's not just a job, they're part of the team. They hurt when we lose and enjoy it when we win. So we've been fortunate to have great support staff.

Then Beth mentioned over a thousand players. I certainly haven't counted, but there's been a lot of players through here, but then you pile on nine years when I was here in the '80s, the common denominator is they've been great people to work with.

We've had a lot of good players, a lot of great players, but they're great people to work with, and they do it for the right reasons. It's just been fun to watch them play in the program and see them become adults. Whether you go back to the '80s, guys here the last 27 years, guys in the locker room, Dallas in there, Toren Young being back here as an honorary captain, that's really what makes it special.

I want to pay tribute to all those players that have made this possible. Our fans have been great. I'm appreciative of that.

Then the last couple things, I've been fortunate to have great mentors during my time. Some were intentional, and others probably didn't even know they were teaching me things, but just had a lot of great mentors growing up. Started with my parents, and then the family aspect here too, and that's been special to us.

My wife Mary and I started our family here in '83, had our first child. Four of our kids were born across the street, and it's been a big part of our existence, if you will. Great to have two of the kids here tonight to be present for it. Three of the boys played in the program. All this stuff goes back to my wife. We started dating in '73. I'd known her for four years prior to that, and why I asked her out in May of 1973, I still can't explain it. We've been partners ever since really.

I think she's only flinched once. That was in Pittsburgh in 1980. Almost screwed that one up. Other than that, she's never flinched. She's allowed me to go out and play every day. So, really appreciative of that, and it's been a partnership all the way.

Anyway, I feel pretty fortunate, and we'll enjoy it here for the next hour and probably go to bed, and get back here tomorrow.

Q. This record means so much to your players. I've seen it for a long time, but your players don't just -- aren't just blowing smoke when they talk about you. They really like you. How do you get to them to feel that way?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if I can answer it. Most of them like me better after they leave here, I think, at least I hope. Usually it's about five years later.

In all seriousness, you just treat people right. We've been so fortunate because I think we're transparent about who we are, what we are, and what we're trying to do. So hopefully the right people come here that want to be coached and want to be worked with. I think we're fairly demanding, but I also think they understand what we're trying to do. We're trying to build guys that are going to be good competitors and good football players, but it goes well beyond that too.

A big part of the fulfillment is that I've been able to enjoy is just watching guys become adults and that's a fun part about all this stuff. Anthony Herron's down on the field, met with him yesterday with the broadcast crew. How cool is it a guy who played here 27 years ago just so happens to be working this game tonight.

A lot of guys that played are just around on our staff, support staff, and it's fun to see them grow into young people, young adults, and doing some really neat things in their lives.

We're just all who we are, I guess. That's it. Have the right people get together, and good things happen.

Q. Kind of a two-part question. What was kind of the emotions when the team and the coaches kind of threw you in front of the swarm? Have you ever done that before? Secondly, you've kind of talked about the people when it comes to Iowa and why it's worked so well, just the pairing. Did you ever have a moment or a year where you thought, okay, this is going to be the spot I'm going to spend, whether it be the majority or the rest of your career at?

KIRK FERENTZ: Full disclosure, when I interviewed out here, I didn't know exactly where I was. I was here when I was a little kid, but I didn't know it. So I didn't know where it was, and the second question was, well, what would you do if you lived in Iowa? My wife and I found out. The original plan was to get a resume started and get back east, but we just fell in love with it right from the start, everything about it.



For us, it was about a professional opportunity but also the comfort of living and being around great people. My 27 plus nine years, 36 years, that's been the common denominator. Then obviously things have changed as we've started raising a family.

You just never know where life is going to take you. That's a great life lesson. It's the last thing I thought would happen, and here we are. I never thought I'd be a head coach either. That just kind of happened by chance as well. But I've always enjoyed what I did. It's worked out okay.

Q. Mary's in the tunnel. Daughters are there. Grandkids are there. What was that moment like for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, you've got no chance of getting her (Mary) on the field. That would have been an upset. That would have been huge. That was pretty good too. That was a pleasant surprise, and it meant a lot. Just wish the three boys could have been here too, but they're all working like I am.

It's great. It's just special. It's great to be able to share with some pretty special people and a couple grandkids on top of it. Not bad.

Q. Wanted to ask how awesome it was to get this done in Iowa City? I know it would have been nice to get it done last week, but how cool was it to do it on the gold out tonight?

KIRK FERENTZ: It would have been nice five years ago actually, but we always remember those losses too as coaches. That was the one benefit. It would have been great last week, but the one benefit was I think the last time I got interviewed on the field would have been '04, after we clinched the Big Ten Championship, after we beat Wisconsin. That was a pretty special moment too.

That was just fantastic. To be in Kinnick, it means a lot to me. I skipped over the swarm part, the swarm means a lot to me too. As long as I'm here, we'll be doing the swarm. I may do something differently, but that was a Coach Fry deal. What it stands for, I think, is a big part of the program. It means a lot to any of us that have been involved.

I've never been in the swarm. I made history for myself tonight, personal history. So that was pretty cool.

Q. To have Anthony come down from the broadcast booth, meet you there to do a postgame interview that wasn't on just Big Ten Network, but for players and

fans to stand behind you doing that, you mentioned how important it is to have good relationships with players, what kind of a testament does that moment show to both you and just kind of the legacy you've built as a head coach?

KIRK FERENTZ: My wife threw one out there 15 years ago or 10 years ago about head coaches should probably move every eight to 10 years because of fan fatigue, all this stuff that comes with being somewhere in a while. She's probably right. She's right about most stuff.

The flip side is you think about what you miss, and that's been the benefit. Having been here during the '80s, there's so many people who come here in our building, I know from that decade. It's nice to have those relationships, now being back, and two head coaches in 47 years. All the players who have been in the program since the late '70s feel comfortable coming in the building.

If you do feel comfortable moving around -- there's a lot of guys that move around. I'm not judging anybody -- but there are things you miss out on, a lot of things you miss out on. So I'm just so appreciative of that part of it, too.

Believe me, the season is what it's all about, but once you get past the football, there's a lot more to it. If you move around, you miss out on those opportunities. It's just not the same. Last week I go out in the field, come out of that tunnel, end zone, whatever, where we come out, and standing on my left is Bob Kratch, who I coached here in the late '80s and went on and had a beautiful career in the NFL.

Lives in Minnesota now, and his son is the linebacker coach at Iowa State. How cool is that to catch up? I haven't seen Bob in 25 years. My wife actually bought furniture from him 25 years ago. Small world. That was a trip too just to watch Bob Kratch talking about furniture and textures. Are you kidding me?

No, it was special. That's special. Those are the things that are really good in this life.

Q. About the game, where do you feel like -- do you feel like you could tell that the offense took some steps this week and in what ways? Also, I saw Xavier Williams had his arm in a sling. Any update on him? In conjunction, any chance Kamari could play next week?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think there's a chance with Kamari. He's really made progress pretty steadily. The trainer seemed optimistic at the end of last week, just where he's heading. Hopefully he'll be ready to go. I'll know Tuesday.



Should know Tuesday.

Xavier, unfortunately, I don't think there's anything broken, but he's sore. So we'll have to take that a day at a time.

What was the question before that? Oh, just the offense, yeah. I think they've made progress. Nobody wants to hear this, but it just takes time. I heard Brian Hoyer on the radio Thursday morning coming into work. Just talking about -- Brian played on, I don't know how many teams, probably five, six teams in the NFL. I really like listening to him on the radio. He makes a lot of sense.

Anyway, he talked about when he was in New England, he probably spent more time in New England than anywhere else. He always thought it took four to six weeks before they knew who they were. Mind you, they had Brady as a quarterback, so they knew who he was. But you think about their teams and how they evolved up here.

That's how I feel about football. I don't think you can rush to judgments about things. If we're doing it right, we'll be a better team after four weeks than we were after two weeks, but that's the thing. I thought we improved in practice this week.

It's not the guys haven't been trying, it's just timing and rhythm and tempo. Hopefully we'll keep taking steps each and every week, and that's what we've got to do.

Q. Brian Hoyer, I know you coached against him at Michigan State many moons ago. I wanted to ask you about meeting with Lisa Bluder in the tunnel. I believe you were there for her when she set the Big Ten coaching record previously. I know you guys, I think it was at an I-Club where she had just retired, and it was a very emotional moment. What was your relationship like with Lisa? Do you guys feel kind of a kinship because you've been here for a long time and also had so much success?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, last April -- when did she resign, was it April? End of April. She called Sunday just to let me know it was going to be announced on Monday, which I really appreciated. That was Sunday night we talked on the phone. It was a Tuesday or Wednesday we saw each other in Des Moines at the I-Club. My first question is why are you here if you're not working anymore? That's stupid. Secondly, I looked at her and said, you already look 20 years younger than you did on Sunday when you were working.

Yeah, so she got here, I started in -- I guess technically it was New Year's Day. But I got through a season, and then Lisa got started. We got here around the same time, but

the only difference is she was pregnant and I wasn't. She was pregnant with Hannah at that time, just to put it in perspective.

Yeah, we've always gotten along really well. I think all the coaches do. There's a real, mutual respect in the department. Always has been, there was in the '80s as well.

I've always admired Lisa in the way she coaches, the way she conducts herself, and Dave is a great guy. I think it's been a two-way go. We each think what we do is okay. It was pretty special to see her. It was great.

Q. How do you take this all in?

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably the song Glory Days, it was that one. I was actually listening to it the other day when I was walking. When it's all time. There's a time to do all that stuff. Typically, yeah, I don't know, we'll figure it out. Maybe my wife and I will go out to dinner during the bye week or something like that.

Right now it will just be good to get back in the season. That's been one thing. Not to minimize this, but you don't want to take away from this team and this year. You get one chance at every season with every team that you coach. I'm looking forward to getting the focus back on that.

I appreciate the way the guys were tonight. That was special. But we've still got work to do in front of us and really looking forward to that opportunity.

Yeah, at some point we'll take some time to think about this stuff, but it's still pretty surreal quite frankly.

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