

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

Saturday, October 18, 2025

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Kirk Ferentz

### Postgame Press Conference



Iowa 25, Penn State 24

KIRK FERENTZ: Very proud of our team, proud of the effort they gave out there, the way they competed. Certainly had to earn this win. They did an amazing job.

Consistently played hard all game. There were ups and downs like any game between two really good teams. They played through those ups and downs. Certainly fought and competed. Never gave up on each other either. I thought that was critical in a game where you have these swings. That's just part of football.

Something I told our players in the locker room, this is a feeling you can't buy. You just can't buy it. You have to earn it. You have to go out and fight and compete. They certainly did that.

Just really proud of them. They did it against a team we knew was extremely talented. They came in here ready to go. Played an excellent game as well. Only variable I could see from across this aisle was going to be the quarterback. Thought he did a great job. They were creative how they used their quarterback. Nothing easy about that thing.

Bottom line is it was a 60-minute game. You expect that certainly in conference play. Play a good team, that's the way it's going to be.

Proud of our defense. They dug in, did some good things, came up with some big plays, picks, fourth down stops.

The offense complemented with what they did. I thought our special teams, outside of my poor decision to go for a field goal before halftime, a lot of good things on special teams, too.

That's one I own. That was a bad decision. We're not looking back right now, but...

Last thing I want to say, what a great environment. You kind of expect that in Kinnick. Tell our players all the time,

it's our job to make sure they are into it. I think our guys did that. Boy, the fans have just been fantastic. Night games in Kinnick are really special. Appreciate everybody being in there.

Actually had a couple defensive recruits here. Told them, one thing about our fans, they understand defense, they understand the value and importance of it, too. Hopefully that will help some a little bit.

Bigger picture is all about our players. Really pleased with them. Staff did a great job, too, getting the guys ready.

**Q. Mark, with that 67-yard run, a 13-yard run. 130 rushing yards.**

KIRK FERENTZ: I always joke about it, he's our biggest back (smiling). He said he would have scored if his knee was 100 percent. He's not quite there yet.

Says a lot about him. First of all, he's a really good football player, an unbelievable human being. Then to come back off that injury. He's not quite 100%, but he's looking better each day.

What he did out there tonight, I'm sure he wasn't thinking about it, he was thinking about helping the team, moving the team. It's been great having him on our football team. You ask any coach other player in our building, they're all going to say the same thing about him.

**Q. For the last several years you've talked about complementary football. You go down 21-10. Mark goes down there, makes the big runs. Defense gets a stop. Did it feel like you took a big step forward in terms of complementary football?**

KIRK FERENTZ: No question. Again, you got to fight through discouragement, disappointment. We all felt it during the game. There were times where it's like, Man... It's hard because you invest and you care.

The thing I'm most pleased about is the way our guys care about each other. It's just how they are. They get discouraged like all of us. They just keep playing. We try to encourage them to keep their eyes going forward, keep your eyes up, keep them looking that way. Easier said than done.

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The proof's in the pudding. They did a great job of that. A couple things that were really disappointing tonight. I just mentioned my bad decision. But the guys don't let it bother them. We were in a game similar to this a couple weeks ago and didn't come out on the right end. To win a game like this is really important for a football team as it develops. You learn a lot about yourself. At some point you have to have success in something like this, too. Really happy for the guys that way.

**Q. In reference to Mark, going into that last drive, where is your mind at? What are you thinking when the ball is handed to Mark?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Anytime you believe in your quarterback, that's a good thing. I don't mean this in a diminishing way towards anybody, but it's more circumstance and conditions than individuals.

We went through some challenges up front. We went through some challenges at the quarterback position. Things didn't work out the way they planned. You see it in the NFL. You lose a guy who is a Peyton Manning, makes a big difference.

But you don't dwell on that stuff. You just play through it, kind of do what you do. We're at the point now where we have second year in a row where we have a line that looks a little bit like represents what we envisioned a line hoping to look like.

Mark is a guy who is a proven winner. I think that classification stuff is highly overrated. He's a proven winner. He's a guy that just finds a way to get things done. He's extremely conscientious.

We didn't know exactly how that series or possession was going to pan out. We were trying to find a way to get it down there. Had to get it in the end zone to be successful. Didn't think it was going to happen in two plays, full disclosure (smiling). On the ground. That's kind of crazy.

**Q. Kamari Moulton, what are your thoughts on him today?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't want to ordain or anoint anybody yet as our guy.

Last year, Kaleb, just emerged. It became pretty apparent. But I just compliment that whole room. They've done a good job. Maybe we'll get Jaz back next week, too. They work together. They complement each other.

Kamari is sneaky good to your point. He runs really well.

He's got great vision. Tougher and stronger than you would think. So it's fun. He's still a young player, too. He's gaining confidence, doing things better.

But it's great. He's done a really good job. He played really well tonight. We'll just keep playing those guys. It's been fun to watch him grow and develop.

**Q. Defensive backs have to have the short-term memory. What can you say about Deshaun and his growth?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I know he didn't start last week. We played a 40 defense, so we had four DBs in there. We consider all five of those guys starters. Just got done saying on the radio, you wouldn't have known one week from the other. He has a great attitude, great work ethic. I think he's representative of a lot of guys on our team.

Last year the corner position was solid, but it was not a strength of our team or defense. TJ, we saw him in the spring just really elevate. He's playing fantastic football. Deshaun has kind of done the same thing.

But specifically he could have pouted last week afterwards or during the game. Never saw that. He came out Monday and practiced well. He's focused on the right stuff. It showed up tonight.

The interception, holy smokes, that's pretty good. You like seeing that. It's gratifying to see a guy who has a great attitude, great work ethic get rewarded for that.

I can't remember him, and our team is kind of like this, I don't know if I've ever seen Deshaun have a bad day. Every day he is just a positive, hard-working guy.

**Q. There were some plays probably your stomach was sinking a little bit, not just the field goal. Fourth down at the goal line, early in the game after the interception, player off-sides, chasing points. Yet resiliency and perseverance of your team. How do you feel this team is coalescing in that direction? Do you feel it's moving in the direction you want it to move?**

KIRK FERENTZ: One of our points we were going to be aggressive tonight. A point preceding that was we were going to be smart, too. Wasn't very smart when we called that field goal. That's dumb aggressive there.

That's part of what this is all about. We still have so much football in front of us right now. We have five games. We'll just worry about this week coming up here on Monday.

That's part of it. That was a tough loss a couple weeks



ago. How you going to handle that? What is your response going to be? When you get back in those situations, what are you going to do?

If you have the right guys, they take steps forward. I think that's what we saw tonight. There's no guarantee you're going to get rewarded for it. The sweetest part about this is the guys got rewarded for what you talked about, the resiliency, having things go not quite the way you hope, sometimes really in a bad direction.

But that's life and that's football. You better just keep looking at what's in front of you. After the game, you can go back and review that stuff. When you're playing the game, you got to be going forward.

**Q. You mentioned a couple times you made a bad decision on that field goal. What made you make that decision? Did you address it in the locker room immediately at halftime? This may be an oversimplification, did these players bail you out tonight?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yes. Yes. The first question would be that was probably, I don't know, five yards beyond what we said was stretching his zone a little bit. It was bad. It was an emotional decision, so...

Two risks on that. Risk of them running the thing back, Auburn-Alabama. The further you get away, the lower the ball is going to come out.

It was a bad decision. We should have just closed out the half and come back and played from there. The biggest part was just the momentum swing. Things were going okay. We were doing some good things, feeling a little bit better. Boom, now you drop an anvil right on the team.

Yeah, I owned it. First thing I told them (tearing up). Bad decision. You keep playing. You have 30 minutes. You keep playing. They did it, thank goodness.

So yeah, it was a good deal. I think they know I'm not trying to lose (laughter). I think they know that.

**Q. Xavier, I think he is still the highest-ranked recruit you've had. It's been a long journey for him since his last interception. Walk me through his story, what you're thinking about when you think about him tonight.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Same thing. There's so many times things aren't fair in this world. They're not going to change. I think it's so unfair. We had a player when I got here 27 years ago that, every club I went to, How is so-and-so

doing?

He's doing okay.

I figured out he had been really trouncing it before he gets here. So it's really unfair and hard on a guy because when you leave high school, no matter who you are, how good you are, when you get to college, that is really competitive thing we're doing. There's a lot of good players. You're playing against guys that are three years, four years older than you and more experienced.

I don't listen to it too much, but sometimes I feel like people don't always have a fair expectation. That's why I don't believe in stars, recruiting stars, or reviews. Sometimes they're right. It's still just such a huge transition, just like when guys go to the NFL. It's a big deal, a tough deal.

The bottom line is he's just done a great job. Haven't seen the film, but I would argue this probably was his best game. He played a great game. Just really happy for him. Would have been great if he scored that touchdown for a couple reasons.

Yeah, you like to see older guys really start to get into a position where they're enjoying success on the field. He's certainly worked hard for that.

**Q. With all the production you lost on defense, what is it about the way Phil teaches or he is that allows him to get guys prepared?**

KIRK FERENTZ: He's secondary coach 20-some years ago. Now he's evolved into a really outstanding coordinator, too.

We do have a system. It's been pretty consistent over the years. When our players get here, you're not changing every year.

Going back to the recruiting thing, look at some of the guys. Desmond (King) is out there on our sideline. Micah (Hyde) was here tonight. Who am I leaving out? Marcus Paschal was going to Hofstra. All of those guys were outstanding players for us, none were really heralded.

I think he we look at prospects a little bit different. Are they going to take to the coaching? Most importantly, are they going to work January through December? What is their level of commitment. The good players do that.

Phil is an excellent teacher. The whole staff does a great job. It's always been a priority. We started building this thing, special teams first, mainly because you can have a chance to get better fast on special teams. The second



building block was defense. Just kind of how I was raised. I think in any sport, if you have defense, you have a chance to at least be in the game. If you don't have defense, that's a wild ride.

A lot of good things have come together. Really fortunate. Yeah, there's nobody in America, a lot of things are unique about our place, but I can't imagine there's an assistant coach that has been at his place, Division I, 27 years. Can't imagine it.

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