

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

Saturday, October 21, 2023

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Kirk Ferentz

Postgame Press Conference



Minnesota 12, Iowa 10

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll start off by saying whatever I do say, hopefully if the Big Ten deems it necessary to fine me hopefully they will find it in their hearts to send it to a good cause -- like the children's hospital would be a good place to start.

It was a peculiar game in the fact that we had six replays today. I can't remember a game maybe where we had that many. It's interesting, the last play is a little bit tough.

We had the targeting on the kickoff. That's a first for me. I'm not saying -- making any judgment on that but the last one, it's hard to take that one on a couple levels.

First of all, I don't know how to coach our guys because we cover that in pregame with the officials each and every game about fair catch procedure, above the head, wave and we also cover point to the ground for an errant kick which there were several of those today. That's something we've covered with every player that comes through. It's pretty standard procedure, I would imagine.

It was interesting, the final analysis of that play and probably the most peculiar part to me, as I understand it, the initial replay, to find out if he was in or out of bounds, if Cooper stepped out of bounds, which clearly he didn't.

I appreciate the replay on that. That's fine, do their homework and make sure they are correct on that. But then somehow we went from there to a whole series of topics. It's really hard to accept the explanation that we got.

I guess I'm still not -- fuzzy, maybe I slept through the meeting when they covered that. I'm still not sure who makes the final decision. I know we go to Pittsburgh for analysis, and my theory there is the more people get involved, probably the more screwed up things are.

If it was up to me, if you want my opinion, it ought to go back to the official who is on the field, talking to the

coaches. He should have the final say. That might clean things up. It might not make it right but it might make it easier to understand. Whoever the wizard is behind the curtain, it is what it is.

Credit to our opponent. Their effort was good. I thought our guys played hard, and you know, just tough to find the right words to say to our team after something like that.

We'll work on that and see if we can come up with a good answer for them tomorrow.

Q. What exact explanation did they give you?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, again I thought it started was the in bounds, out of bounds, and we went from there to pointing, which is illegal, because you know, errant punt. Then I was told that he was waving, and what they tell us in pregame is the wave is up here above the head.

Most people when they run, their arms do wave. If you look at the video, it looked like he was naturally running to the football and he just made a great play, one of the best ones I've ever seen.

That part is the hardest part. An unbelievable effort gets taken off the board.

Q. What do you say to Cooper after something like that?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's something -- that's the question, what do you want me to say? There's nothing to say. There really isn't.

Q. You've been coaching for a long time. Have you seen anything --

KIRK FERENTZ: That bad? No.

Q. How frustrating is it --

KIRK FERENTZ: It's bad because what gets worse is the explanations you get. I thought we were talking about in bounds, out of bounds. I thought we started there. So you know, how it -- I guess we are in a whole new world. Whole new world. Very interesting.

Q. Was it in the middle of the conversation? I thought at first they were reviewing out of bounds --

KIRK FERENTZ: That's what we all thought.

Q. And then all of a sudden they said he made a fair catch.

KIRK FERENTZ: How we got from Point A to Point B I have no idea. I don't know what that path was. I've heard the explanation, recording of it. It's hard to make it make sense.

Again, to make it consistent with the conversations we have with the officials before every game regarding that topic. It's something you always cover in case it does happen; we are all on the same page.

Q. They claim it was a circular motion not above his shoulders.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah.

Q. Has that ever been covered before, because I never heard personally --

KIRK FERENTZ: Two things. I would object to that -- that description of what I saw on the video. Just looking at the video, which they showed several times.

And secondly, I'll go back to the point about pregame. It's above the head waving the signal. So, and where this gets hard, it gets hard on the officials. I think they know the rules. I'm pretty sure they do. They know them more than we do.

But then how do we get from here to here on that interpretation, and the bigger question is where does that come from. We cover it in pregame, how we went from there to here. It is what it is

Q. You mentioned that there were six reviews, and especially with TV playing such a big part in college football, changing the time, do you feel like referees go to it too often?

KIRK FERENTZ: A lot of that is generated from the replay booth. If it's a close play, bang-bang, they will do that, and I think that's probably a good thing.

Today, it just was unusual. Unusual. You know, last one was extremely costly to us.

Q. When you look at the offense, 12 yards in the second half, how much would you attribute to the

Gophers on defense versus your inability to move the football?

KIRK FERENTZ: They did a really nice job, but we have to find answers. We're going to have to find answers moving forward. They clearly made Deacon uncomfortable and that led to some bad things for us. We have to find a way to protect him a little bit better and get the ball out of his hands a little quicker, and he's got some ownership in that, too.

Those are some of the things I think we saw maybe back in August and I thought he moved passed it, and there was a little bit revert on it. We have to get him back on his feet and get him playing a little bit more decisively, and we have find a way to get the running game going because that's obviously going to take some pressure off of him.

Q. Deacon was six for 21 a few weeks ago; now 10 of 28. You've shown a reluctance to go to Joe --

KIRK FERENTZ: So on that topic, I'll say this. For 25 years, we watch guys in practice and we evaluate what they do in practice and moving forward, certainly game performance is a big part of it. But you know, if it's close, neck-and-neck, that type of thing, then you rotate guys in and take a look at them.

I don't think we're insane. You go with what you see in practice, and you know, try to make the best decisions at all positions, not just quarterback. Obviously quarterback is the one that attracts the attention.

But I'm standing here right now, we'll see what next week brings, but I'm trying to think of the history since I've been here how many -- you know, we had it in '08 back and forth with two guys, C.J. and Jake, went back-and-forth a little bit. But typically there's a clear one and clear two. I'm not saying that in a demeaning way to the guy that's two. But that's what it is and you kind of go from there.

Q. Eight weeks in, is there any level of concern in regards to points per game objective right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: We are just trying to win games. That's all we're trying to do. We have been doing a pretty good job up until today. That's what we are trying to do. You know, if we had gotten a little different interpretation on that last one, the call, we would have won today.

Q. Is there a demarcation that you can point to that you can evaluate as much as making a change at quarterback?

KIRK FERENTZ: We evaluate everything in practice. We



evaluate what happens in the games and we are going to play the guy that we think is going to give us the best chance and we've done that at all positions and we've done that for 25 years. No two situations are the same. No two players are the game, and you just do what you think is best for the team. That's my No. 1 obligation are all the players on our team. They are the guys out there laying it out there.

So it's pretty easy from that standpoint. But there's gray area in everything, when you talk about evaluating people and performance, there's always gray area, and anybody thinks they are always going to be right, they are a fool. That's impossible. We do what we think is best for the team. My personal obligation is to all of our players, give them the best chance to go out there and have a chance to compete.

You have a bad day, which we certainly did today, you've got to get back up on your feet and go to work because if you surrender, it's definitely over. And that's not one player and that's everybody. We all have to do that and find a way tomorrow to go back to work.

Q. Even after the callback, you had 46.

KIRK FERENTZ: Absolutely. Yeah, so that's the rest of the story. The game wasn't over, despite that interesting call.

So that probably wasn't soft enough, was it. I'll still get fined. Screw it. You know, just to the kids' hospital, please, any kids' hospital.

To that point, as disappointing as that was, we still had an opportunity to win that football game, and I was confident we would. I just was hoping we could piece it together, to answer your question directly, probably needed about 25 yards, maybe 37, 38 stretching it but preferably get it inside the 30.

You know, so it was still a winnable game for us. Many things went wrong, and it's still a winnable game. We weren't good enough to get that done, and that part's disappointing.

Q. I was going to ask you about the strategy, because you were fourth down, before that you decided to punt and you got it back.

KIRK FERENTZ: That was the strategy. Hopefully, you know, get a stop and then get the ball back in better -- I couldn't predict Cooper's return. Like nobody could do that.

The idea was to get the ball back and they even helped out, they had an incomplete pass in there so we still had a timeout when we got the ball back. You would like to think in that situation, you could still find a way to win. That's a winnable situation, and we weren't up to that challenge.

Of all of the things today, that's as disappointing as any, and maybe we had a little residue from the call, and everything that happened.

You have to be above that. You have to focus on what's in front of you, so hopefully it's a chance to learn. Hopefully that situation next time we'll be able to nail it but couldn't do it today unfortunately.

Q. You talk about giving your players the best chance to win. Is that being done for the defensive players and special teams players?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm not sure I understand your question.

Q. To hold an opponent without a touchdown, you don't lose too often doing that.

KIRK FERENTZ: If we had not turned it over today, as I mentioned earlier, I don't think we lose today quite frankly, but we did. We have ownership in that. That's the starting point. Clearly we want more points and more yards. I'm not sitting here saying whatever we had was enough. It's not enough. We need to do better.

But to answer the question, if we had protected the ball today, which is the first step in winning, playing winning football, we would have been victorious. If the call had gone a little differently, we would have been victorious.

Sometimes that's what you have to do. You just do what you have to do to find a way to win and that's been our goal. It's just unfortunate it didn't go our way.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

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Strategic Communications

Iowa 10, Minnesota 12

Player Quotes

Kinnick Stadium | Oct. 21, 2023

Cooper DeJean
Defensive Back

On having a late punt-return touchdown overturned:

“I am still kind of in shock of what all happened. It is frustrating for this team. We kept fighting through the end of the game. Seems like it was all taken away in that one play.”

On whether he considered the possibility of a review:

“No. I assumed they would blow the whistle if it was a fair catch. I didn’t hear a whistle, though, so I just kept going.”

On not making any appeal to the officials:

“There is nothing I could do about it. They had already made their decision.”

On the importance of a quick defensive stop prior to the punt return:

“That is what was going through everybody’s mind. We had three timeouts. We figured we could get a stop there and get the ball back with good field position.”

On losing the Floyd of Rosedale trophy:

“It is tough. Don’t have much to say. Just have to move on get better over this bye week and get ready for our next game... It is really tough, especially the way it happened, but we have got to move on. We have to finish out the season as best we can.”

On whether he is coached to avoid accidental fair catches similar to tonight’s play:

“No. I have never had a problem with that before. I didn’t think I got my arm above my head, at least. I widened myself to turn and get the ball. It is tough.”

Associate Athletics Director, Communications: Matt Weitzel **Associate Director:** James Allan

Assistant Directors: Sam Basler, Leandra Jew, Hannah Ossman, Bailey Turner, Traci Wagner

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Joe Evans
Defensive Line

On the team's effort:

"We gave tremendous effort out there. There are plenty of things we can fix on the tape. I am proud of every single one of the guys on the team for the effort that they gave today."

On emotions after the defeat:

"It is definitely very tough. It stings a lot. Just how the game ended. You are riding this rollercoaster; you're up, then you're down. To end up not winning the game is tough. This is a team I have never lost to before, and it's a trophy game. Obviously, that makes it that much more tough. It is going to be on us as individuals. I am a leader of this team. There are a lot of leaders in that locker room. We are going to have to come to practice next week, on the bye week, ready to go and fight through this."

On leadership after a difficult loss:

"We are going to have to go in and watch the tape. That is going to sting and it should. Everyone on the team has put in so much time and so much effort into being a winning football team. It is going to sting, but this next week is definitely for improvement. We just need to go into practice everyday and work on fine tuning the fundamentals and everything."

On taking longer to move forward due to the bye week:

"In my perspective, it definitely will. It is going to take mental days, at least from my standpoint. I think it will for some guys on the team. Just because it is a bye week and you are not then looking forward to the next game. That is something that has to be on the leaders of the team to keep everyone pushing forward."

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Quinn Schulte
Defensive Back

On feelings after DeJean's apparent punt-return touchdown:

"Obviously we were very excited. As a defense, we were trying to lock back in to go out there and get another stop. Then, it was unfortunate that they called it back, and we were just trying to move on from there."

On moving forward:

"We have to put this game behind us and obviously go back to the drawing board and do some self scouting next week. Especially with the time and hopefully get ready for our next game against Northwestern."

On whether this loss felt different than others:

"I think anytime you lose it's the same feeling, no matter how you lose. We don't enjoy the loss and were hoping to get the win at the end of the day. We are going to have to regroup and see where we can go from there."

On defense during the fourth quarter:

"I don't think we ran out of gas. I just think we didn't execute. I think we are all in very good condition, and we work on that in practice, but again, the defense didn't do its job in the second half. We gave up too many points and we need to be better."

On effort and competing:

"We just didn't execute as well as we could, and we weren't as strong on the back end as we usually are. They made a good play, and they had a good throw, and it was just unfortunate for us."

On game plan in the final minutes:

"I think the defensive line was trying to do a good job of getting pressure on them. We were trying to mix things up on the backend and just trying to throw them off a little bit."

On what is next for the team:

"I think the most important thing for us is to remember we have so much ahead of us. Knowing that we haven't reached our full potential, we haven't played our best game of football, and the skies the limit for us."

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Deacon Hill
Quarterback

On today's performance and execution during the second half:

"This was not the way we wanted things to go, not the way I wanted things to go. This really stings, and we have to move forward. I don't think they changed much; we just didn't execute. I didn't execute. Simple as that. They outnumbered us in the box (against the run), they brought their safeties down in the run fit. We knew that coming into the game. Hats off to them."

On the message to the team in the locker room:

"Coach Ferentz said there was nothing he could say to make us feel better. We still have a four-week season after the bye week, so we have to get ready for that. Back to the drawing board next week."

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