

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Coach Kirk Ferentz Postgame Press Conference



COACH FERENTZ: Needless to say I am really pleased with the effort of our entire football team today. It was a good team win for us. Starts with the effort, focus and effort, and a week ago I wasn't so sure where we were, but the guys had a really good week. They came in Monday morning, focused and ready to roll and put a good week in on working on Indiana.

In a nutshell, two things that stand out in my mind: A combination of our older guys doing what we needed them to do; they really played good football and led our football team.

The other aspect, pleased with the young guys, between No. 3 and the youth of our guys up front, inexperience, those things were keeping me up at night a little bit, so anxious to see the film, see how they looked technically, but from the sideline looked like we held our own on both sides and gave us a chance to play good football.

I can't say enough about the big plays, Riley Moss, couple of interceptions, Belton with an interception in front of our bench, really well done, Tyler Goodson popping that run. That was outstanding. So all that was good. Last but not least, great to be back in Kinnick and to have fans. I tell you, we were all feeling it down there.

Just coming in today, night and day different from last year. It was probably the weirdest thing, like a science fiction movie going into West Lafayette and not to see people out there. To see people just out moving around and enjoying life a little bit and having them in the stadium was fantastic. So appreciative of that, and I'll open it up.

Q. Coach, what you can you say about your defense today holding Indiana to its lowest point total since 2013?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't want to say I'm surprised, but just really pleased, a lot of respect for them, their football team, all three phases. They're a big-play outfit, and they made some big plays, explosive plays between the quarterback and No. 3, those guys are really dynamic.

For us to do that, to play that way against them and our DBs really looked quick to the football and good anticipation. We're veteran back there, so I'm not going to say we expected that, but that really helps us if our veterans play like that. But a big part of it, too, is the guys up front getting pressure. It's not always about sacks, but if you can keep the quarterback uncomfortable, that factors in, too. Seemed like we were playing cohesively.

Q. They seemed to fit what you guys want to do defensively. They're a big-play outfit, not a high-percentage passing team, but still to do this effort against a team like this, what did you think of the way Phil called the game, called his defense and put them in position and Riley and everybody else being able to execute.

COACH FERENTZ: I love to complain about that flag in front of their bench right there, I think it was the first half, and then three somewhere in the third quarter, whatever it was, those two plays. Those are the things you worry about, giving up those chunk plays, and they're good at that hitting those. If you go back and look at them last year, they had a lot of luck with that.

So for us to play good defense, we're always trying to minimize, make people work, drive the ball and work it a little bit, but that doesn't work either if we're not playing good run defense and also getting a little pressure on the quarterback.

Q. What went into the game plan defensively to eliminate this offense?

COACH FERENTZ: Good team defense, and I know that sounds mundane, but it really is. That's how we play. If we can get a spark play, and picks are a spark play, obviously, but you're not banking on that, but when you get those that's super. Getting a sack is great, but it's not always about that, but playing with tempo and making the other team uneasy. I think our guys did that.

Phil and the defensive staff did a good job. They do a really good job, and the combination of all those things gives you a chance, and not giving up easy, big plays because they're demoralizing.



Q. You started like last year's home opener against Northwestern, you guys got up a couple scores early, and then the game starts to normalize a little bit, and this time you guys be continued to shut them down. Spencer was saying at halftime you talked about, we know what can happen. We saw Indiana lose to Ohio State last year. How do you feel like this team has evolved in that way from last season?

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, about Indiana, they were really impressive last season, there was no question about that. They're good in all areas; they're well coached. But the thing that stood out to me, the two games they lost they were down against Ohio State and they pulled it right back to a score, and the same thing in the bowl game, it was 20-20 after being down 20-6, I believe, so that tells you about a team's personality. Then you factor in, we haven't always been the fastest starting outfit in the third quarter. So we reminded the guys that this thing is far from over, and you factor in their big play capability. It's hard to relax. It's hard to relax on Saturdays.

Q. You said a week ago you felt a little unsure? What happened there? What did you see this week?

COACH FERENTZ: It was hot last week, really hot and humid, and we had a bug going around in the building, I think the whole campus. That was affecting some guys and just, you know, when your numbers go down a little bit and probably couldn't practice as hard or as much as we wanted to at the end of the last week. So, what do we do, we find ways to worry about things and there was plenty of am mow right there.

Saturday, it's kind of like that but it's hard to enjoy time off, which we all took. Like I said, when they came in Monday, they were -- they practiced really well this week and prepared well and did their work away from the building, so pleased and happy with what the guys did.

Q. Talk about the play that Spencer ran where --

COACH FERENTZ: It's one of those plays if you get the right coverage, then you have a chance to execute it. Then you've got to execute it, too, and to his credit, he's not renowned as being a runner, college football runner, a running quarterback, but he showed good poise. He didn't rush it and let it develop and the guys did a good job blocking.

Q. You and your coaches have a similar rule. With what you are facing next week, you go right into it tonight?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't, me, personally, no, and I don't

recommend it. To that point, last week we walked out of here, most of the coaches of were out 1 or 2, and we were off last Sunday, and the guys were in and out doing what they've got to do to be ready Monday. One thing I've learned is you've got to rest hard and work hard, and wins are hard to come by, so I encouraged our guys to enjoy today, smartly, but enjoy it, and we will look at film tomorrow and then move on.

And the morning schedule has forced us to move a little quicker. Used to be we would start out Tuesday afternoons 3:00, prior to 15 -- so you talk about the 24-hour rule, but we didn't put it into affect. But tomorrow we will have plenty of time to get on the next game and start to work on it and see what we can do. We've got a lot of work to do in terms of the opponent and also us getting better at some things. These games are hard to win, so you want to enjoy it.

Q. I think you said earlier this week that was a night and day difference for Spencer Petras going into the game now that you have some film and there are some in-season reps to look at. How did you feel like he performed as opposed to last year?

COACH FERENTZ: I thought he did a good job protecting the football, and it starts there. We had two fumbles today, and that's not good but, you know, Ivory has been out for a while so I think that's part of it, and we're careful about tackling experienced guys in practice during scrimmages. We don't tackle a lot live anyway. We had two in our last year's opener, too. I think Spencer just has more confidence, and he's played. You can't hand that to anybody, or give it to them, they've got to earn that. He's played through the highs and lows and he will have more ahead.

He has a tough job, and he plays a tough position. You see the growth and you can feel it. I think all of us have confidence in him. One thing I was pleased with, too, was the penalty situation. We had two today, and that's in stark contrast to the opener a year ago.

One of them, I can't find fault in that one at all, it was just and aggressive play, and it was a bang-bang play, and I understand why the official had to call it but hard to get mad on that one for sure.

Q. Coaches are notorious worriers, and you're probably at the top of the list for that. And you look at your offensive line situation, moving guys in and around and then Indiana the way that they move guys in and out. How did you feel they protected and did it meet your expectation?

COACH FERENTZ: We had that sack I think it was before the half, down on our end, where the guy came off late. Like I say, you've got to see the film to know the intricacies, but it didn't look like we were on the retreat or anything like that. I thought the guys seemed unaffected, and that's one of the things I worry about, all of us worry about, especially the young guys.

Overall from the sidelines -- these guys do some things -- our opponent does, do some things that are really tough to handle, so some of the dead plays were just good calls on their part, and they got us and sometimes you get them.

I thought it seemed like they -- nobody seemed like they were out of place. They just seemed like they were doing okay and then flipping it around, just got off the radio saying one of my "Kodak moments" etched in my mind was a Yahya Black at Penn State last year. He was in the fourth quarter, and he was rushing a left tackle, and he looked like one of those cartoon characters, and his feet were going, and the guy basically had one hand on him, like, you know, get away. And I told him the next day, it's okay to be aggressive. Don't be reverent, try to be aggressive, but I didn't see that out there today, especially with our defensive guys, and a lot of those guys haven't played much. We have our veteran group and then the next wave hasn't had a lot of experience.

Q. Holding Indiana to 6 points for an entire 60 minutes and the way they played.

COACH FERENTZ: We can't complain about that. We got a chance in every game if -- we would really have to screw it up, right, if we can't win with 6 points, although it has been done. That's a good starting point, if you can keep people out of the end zone. Even the one time they got down there we forced them to kick the field goal, and that's part of good defense, too. They had us on the run, a little momentum, but we dug in and forced them to kick a field goal. Those are things we'll point out in tape, like, you know these are things that are going to help us this season if we just understand how important those situations are.

Q. Seemed like a big deal you started a freshman left tackle and seemed you rode him most of the game, might have been a few snaps he didn't play, but what led you to Mason Richman being your starting left tackle?

COACH FERENTZ: Pretty much how he practices, and it's been good competition with all three guys right now playing the tackle slot, and Colby would be the next guy, all three of them have improved a lot, spring ball and this period here. Mason is a guy who is coachable, and it's one thing to hear what a guy is being coached to do, but he goes out

and really tries to execute it.

The other thing that impressed me during camp for sure was if he had a rough day and VanValkenburg gave him fits, he would come the next day and take the challenge. He wouldn't go into retreat. You never know what's going to happen, but that is a positive step, and he's got to feel better about himself right now.

Q. Talk about Riley Moss.

COACH FERENTZ: Riley? You know, he's kind of been that way. It's funny, when we recruited him, it wasn't like we were on him as a sophomore or freshman. It was later in the process.

But he kept impressing us, and then since he's been here he's done nothing but impress us. If you get his personality, he's loose and light and all that kind of stuff. He's a light-hearted guy that way. But he competes hard out there and he's got some good skills and ability and he competes hard and he's got a lot of pride in what he does.

I think he's grown a lot, and so has Matt Hankins, Matt, on the other side, and that's good. And Terry Roberts, I'm not going to say he is closing that gap, but he's gaining ground, so we've got guys that have taken steps forward.

Q. What did you think of Shudak's performance today, specifically the field goal right before halftime. They had the three timeouts. He's got to sit through that?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not sure how that affected him. He got a couple of practice shots in, I guess that would be good, from my vantage point. But he does such a good job on kickoffs. You almost take that for granted. I've said, we considered him to be the starter. We have a lot of confidence in him. Like Mason Richman, he's an older guy who just practices so well. The facts are sometimes you've got two guys that are really good, and Keith Duncan was really good. It wasn't like he was beaten out by somebody, just had somebody maybe a little bit better, but it gave us total confidence when he got his chance. Even last year if he would have been called up, he would have answered it. First-class guy, smart guy, serious at it and works at it.

When you see guys doing that day after day that you feel -- you can never predict but you feel like when they get out there they're going to do well with their opportunity, and all of us feel that way about Caleb. He's earned that.

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Indiana vs. Iowa
Sept. 4, 2021
Kinnick Stadium
Iowa Player Quotes

QB Spencer Petras

On playing in front of fans again at Kinnick Stadium

“Really fun. Those big plays, when the crowd is into it there’s not a better atmosphere in the country than Kinnick Stadium. It was a ton of fun.”

On his touchdown run

“That was a call we liked all week, just based on the defense and how they played. Once we got to the redzone, it was a really great play call by [Coach Brian Ferentz]. I was a little nervous for Lindy [center Tyler Linderbaum] at first, but there’s no tougher guy in football than Tyler Linderbaum. I knew as soon as I saw him walking that he would be alright.”

On Goodson’s 54-yard touchdown run

“That was just an outside zone run play. I have to see it on tape to see everything, but if I had to bet, I would guess we blocked it really well up front, and then if you get Tyler Goodson in the second level good things are liable to happen. The credit there goes to [Coach Brian Ferentz} for a good call, the guys up front for executing it correctly, and then T-Good for being Tyler Goodson.”

On the importance of a hot start

“Super important. We preached that all week, about we need to start fast, because there have been some examples over the last few years of us coming out and playing fast and getting off to a great start. Those games usually end pretty well for us. There have been examples in the past, also, of us not playing great at first, getting off to a slow start. You always want to come out firing like we did. The beauty, I think, was that it was all three phases. Starting with the opening kickoff with Charlie Jones, I want to say it was a 30 or 35 yard return. Obviously, we scored pretty quickly and then a pick six. You can’t write a better start than that. I think we rode the momentum throughout the game, and that was just a great team win.”

On preparation that led to today’s win

“From January on, this team has been fully committed and fully invested in the process every step of the way. That’s really all you can do, take one step at a time. It starts back in January, when it is five degrees out and we are doing workouts every morning. Then you transition to spring ball, and the summer, and then fall camp. This team has run the race well to this point. One game is not a full season. If we want to achieve our team goals, we have to play like this every week. I am really proud of our team and how we have run the race to this point.

TE Sam LaPorta

On blocking for Goodson’s touchdown run

“That was our slant concept. I was directly out on the corner, the corner fell inside, and that’s how he coasted around the edge... It was huge for us. It really got the crowd into it. Of course we swarm out, I don’t think there was a person sitting in the stadium. That was unbelievable, and it really set the tempo for us. Then the defense came out and I think that was Riley Moss’ first pick six after that. We were humming after that, offensively, defense, special teams. Set the tone.”

On what was working between him and Petras

“Spencer [Petras] was our field general today. He saw the field really well and delivered some great balls. It starts with the offensive line, they did a good job today, they executed at a high level. I reaped the benefit of a lot of my teammates, so that was really cool today to get some yards.”

On facing the vaunted Indiana secondary

“I went against our defense which has a great secondary as well for eight months, so I saw that every single day. So, I came out here and it’s the same look. They had a bunch of great guys that we had to account for, as well. Of course going forward we are going to evaluate the tape, 24 hours as you said before, and see what we can do better at.”

Defensive End: John Waggoner

Question: *Both teams were ranked, and to play the way you played, and not only that but to win how was that?*

Answer: We had a solid week and a half of preparation. It was good to go out and execute that game plan, our coaches gave us a great game plan. It felt great to go out in front of the fans and get that win.

Question: How long have you guys been thinking about this game? You know it's been a while since fans, since COVID and having a Big Ten Opener.

Answer: It's been in the back of our heads since January, and it's been 9 months of hard work in the off season. We rally focused on improving each day. It felt good after waiting so long with COVID and getting the fans back.

Question: Three guys from last year on this defensive line did well today, what was working for you as a unit, and what do you think you brought to the table and will bring to the table?

Answer: We were able to be in the right spots, and even though they did throw some side stuff we weren't expecting our coaches were good with adjustments and on the fly. It felt great to be out there with the guys.

Question: A lot of Indiana's game was throwing the ball behind the line of scrimmage. Was that something you all keyed on going into this game?

Answer: Yeah, on the D-line we focused on stopping the run, and so we wanted to take the run out and transition into stopping the pass game, and I think we did a solid job of stopping the run today, and we can keep improving on it.

Question: A lot of guys are in this rotation, it's hard to figure out who is going to be in there sometimes, is that kind of how it works this year? Throw a lot of guys in the defensive line?

Answer: It's good to have some depth and be able to rotate in there some guys to stay fresh. I think we have a lot of confidence in a lot of guys, so I think that's a positive thing.

Question: Riley Moss has been a pretty good performer throughout, how do you guys view him as an athlete and a performer?

Answer: I've always seen Riley as a playmaker. He goes hard, and he shows up everyday to work. He is a competitor, so in my mind he is going to go make plays, and you obviously saw that today.

Question: Do you think the defensive line improved some today?

Answer: We had a lot of guys today playing, and we wanted to go out there and do our job. I think it was a good first step, but we have a lot to improve on.

CB Riley Moss

Is it a jolt of confidence, does it get the defense going when you get a turnover like that?

"It definitely boosts our confidence, especially because last year we played with this same group in the back end. It was cool to see us grow from last year and be able to show that off today."

Can you talk about seeing the crowd and the electricity?

"It was crazy, we kind of forgot about it. It felt like my first game in Kinnick again because it was loud and rowdy, and it was absolutely amazing. The one thing I'll never forget in my life is running out of that tunnel, especially today. That was top-3 loudest crowds in Kinnick so far for me."

Can you talk about that first one after you guys had just scored, can you talk about that play?

"We were cover-2 and they ran the quick out and I had someone behind me. They were trying to run a smash concept to the boundary, so I was sitting there. He threw the ball, I was ready to break on it and tackle him, and then I see the ball pop up and I got super excited. I was foaming from the mouth, caught the ball and took off quick. It happened quick and I didn't realize I scored a touchdown until I was on the bench and I was like 'holy cow that just happened'."

Geometrically you guys are positioned like no other defense so how did that help against a team that lived by that big play last year?

"Our game plan coming in was to stop the big plays, stay on to, so that's what we did. We made them work for their yards and for their points. It was praised to stay on top, do your job, read your keys, knowing your responsibilities, and I think everyone throughout the defense did that well."