

# Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Coach Kirk Ferentz

### Press Conference



Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

COACH FERENTZ: Start out congratulating Michigan. They played a great game. They've had an outstanding season. They're just a really talented football team and they performed extremely well. They've been consistent all season long. So hats off to them tonight, certainly.

We knew this game would be a big challenge coming into it. Got a lot of respect for what they've done this season. Knew we'd have to play our best and make some things go our way. And obviously that didn't materialize.

It's certainly disappointing tonight. And it certainly hurts. Everybody in the locker room is very disappointed. Not feeling so great. But the one thing I'll say about this football team, somehow this season they found a way to win 10 football games. They can be really proud of that. And we still have another game to go.

So, just told the guys in the locker room, on behalf of our entire staff, how proud we are of what they've done since January. And tonight certainly wasn't what we intended it to be. Didn't turn out the way we wanted it to. But we'll put this behind us after a couple of days, go back to work at the end of the week and try to be smart about the month and have an opportunity to play one more time as a team, as the 2021 team. Looking forward to that.

#### Q. Was there anything (indiscernible)?

COACH FERENTZ: No, I mean they hit us with that halfback pass. But it's just a good play on their part and bad execution on ours. Just to help to simplify things, you play a team like this, that's a really good football team and you don't want to give up big plays. And we did that twice right off the bat. We had a couple of trips to the red zone. We had three points to show for it.

You never know where it's going to go, what's going to happen. But in a game like this this is not the way you want to start out.

#### Q. (Indiscernible) health thing?

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, it's a health thing, Spencer -- I'm not sure what he has right now, something in his torso. He just couldn't perform.

#### Q. (Indiscernible) before the game or?

COACH FERENTZ: During the game, absolutely.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

COACH FERENTZ: Just one thing leads to another sometimes. And I've been in games like that, unfortunately, and they're not much fun. I'm not sure the score is totally representative of the two teams. It just is the way it went tonight. Go back to the early part of the game, for us to win this thing tonight we would have to not give up big plays, make them work at driving it. They did it a couple times in the first three quarters. But you give up a big play or two big plays it's tough to do that against a good opponent.

Again, we got the ball down in there a couple times -- you want to come out with a touchdown at least, if not a field goal. We just couldn't connect there. That's kind of representative of the game, I guess.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

COACH FERENTZ: We've had it in the playbook, and we've executed it pretty well. Looked like they got a little discombobulated, whether the throw was off for Monte, I'm not sure what happened. He just couldn't adjust on the ball, it was there. Couldn't execute it.

It was a shot play, just like the one they took. And theirs was 70-plus yards for a touchdown. Ours came up incomplete.



**Q. [Question about defense being uncharacteristic].  
What happened on the long run?**

COACH FERENTZ: We didn't do a good enough job of redirecting the football. We didn't tackle well. Looked like a couple guys might have had a shot. You don't want any clean runs to go through that, whatever it was, 70, 75 yards.

You don't want to give up 12-yard runs either but that's better than -- you can fight another day. But when you give up a big one like that, it flips you and puts you on your heels.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

COACH FERENTZ: We had the ball. We started out on offense. The idea was to go down and get a score and see what happens. And for us to win it it was going to be a close game. It was one of those shots. But it certainly got away from us in the second half.

**Q. [Question about the red zone].**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if there's any one thing. But tonight these guys played really good defense on us and got us in a lot of tough third-down situations. With their rush that's a concern because you don't want to give the game away just on a third down early, that type of deal. But we just couldn't knock it in there.

**Q. How do you put it in perspective for your guys?  
You still won (inaudible) got them the first time this year?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's what I told them after the game. We're extremely proud of them. And they can be very proud of themselves, walk out with their heads held high.

Tonight is disappointing, and when you compete sometimes it doesn't work out the way you want, and sometimes it works like this. And this wasn't much fun.

But it's one game out of, what, 13 and we've still got one to go. You can't take this thing out of the loss; that's impossible. We'll go back to work at the end of the week. And we'll try to be smart how we treat things mentally more so than even physically with our team as we move forward, and get ourselves ready to play our best in the last ball game here.

**Q. What went into the (indiscernible) punt 21-13?**

COACH FERENTZ: You go back and forth on that one.

You're playing for field position. We got field position a couple times there in that sequence there, just couldn't capitalize on it. You're thinking field position, maybe get right back, have a chance to score. And if you don't convert then you've got a chance to end up going the other way, which it didn't. But that was our thinking.

**Q. What about the runs on the second and third and long?**

COACH FERENTZ: On the second and long, you're trying to get it to third and medium or third and short. And a little scar tissue from just watching the Wisconsin game. It was a 10-point game in the fourth quarter, ten minutes left, something like that, then two separate plays in a row, all of a sudden they're down 10 more points because you're trying to minimize that rush and can't do a good job.

One was a strip sack and then they forced a bad pick. And so you don't want the game to get out of hand there. That was our thinking trying to be smart about it and give ourselves a chance keep pushing through it.

**Q. Seemed like your run game had made strides the previous four games. But tonight was just a matter of stepping up a class?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think they've got a veteran front, a pro-style defense in some ways, big bulky guys in the middle, very stout guys. 97 is a heck of a player run or pass. They sub and do good job with big bodies. They made it really tough to run the football tonight. We expected that. But we were hoping to run with success, too.

**Q. Can you tell us what they told you about the targeting review?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, in their judgment it wasn't -- I'm not sure what the exact quote was. But it wasn't, like, a vicious hit, I guess. And I'm not second-guessing anything tonight on that call. That's one more rule we've really made complicated. When it started to me it was for, when my sister who was sitting in row 30 says, boy, that was a bad play.

Now it's, like, it's way too technical, in my opinion. But that wasn't the deciding factor in the game by any means. That wasn't the play where Petras got injured either.

**Q. These games, where you play a team like Michigan or in the past won these games, do you bring them the way you want to play? And how much did those big plays early kind of take you out of your game that where you could have gotten into that --**

COACH FERENTZ: That's exactly what I was referencing. I think, for the record, we were 7-5 last 12 games against these guys. Not tonight obviously. To make that work you've got to make them drive it and earn everything they get. And when we have opportunity we've got to find a way to come up with points. And field goals aren't the end of the world but at some point you need some touchdowns, too.

And for us to win in a game like that, I think we gave ourselves a chance in the kicking game minus the field goal initially. And then we've got a punt block to add to it, and that's -- you wonder how the score gets out of hands -- those things really help flip it the other way.

But that was the script we were hoping to follow. And the games that we have won against them, that's typically how it goes. But we just weren't up for it tonight. And we'll get back to work this week.

**Q. Spencer obviously didn't have the numbers that you would like. How much was that just performance or how much of that was that torso injury?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think a lot of it was Michigan's defense. They're good. They've got a good defense. And give them credit. They played really well tonight. Didn't seem like, from where I was standing -- gotta look at the film -- didn't seem like we had a lot of guys wide open. We had a hard time getting open, and a good pass rush up front, guys not getting open. Only thing that really seemed to -- hit them on a couple boot legs, that type of deal and some of the quick passes to Goodson, hit him on a screen one time. They make it tough on you.

**Q. When you play a defense like Michigan how difficult is it, especially on offense when you're limited, and just trying to press the right button at the right time whereas you don't have a full playbook?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's a challenge. We have a lot of respect for them coming in. Even more now. Certainly their defensive side, both sides, but their defense. We knew it was going to be tough, but we still thought we'd be able to come up with something. And obviously it didn't work out the way we hoped.

**Q. What adjustments did you make against their pass rush (indiscernible)?**

COACH FERENTZ: There's not a heck of a lot you can do, try to throw the ball quickly. You try to chip with the tight ends or backs. It's not new to the guys. They've been seeing it all season long. The other thing you can try to do

is minimize the third and longs. And if you do get into them, be smart, because as I alluded to, they can change the game, that Wisconsin game changed real fast in the fourth quarter.

Just trying to give yourself a chance to stay competitive in the game and close the gap at some point. But they make it a real challenge. And I alluded to it, they're a good pro defense where they're stout inside and then passing downs they've got two guys that can rush that passer really well. It affects the game.

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# Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

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## Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Sam LaPorta

### Press Conference

Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: It hurts. The team is -- we've been working for a moment like this since January, a lot of these guys, four, five, six years. So it hurts more than anything to work so hard and fall quite a ways short. Yeah, it hurts.

#### Q. You guys were (indiscernible) going down the field making plays. What did you see? What do you think worked for you especially since you had a couple catches?

SAM LAPORTA: There were a couple of explosives early, which it helps to move the ball down the field in big chunks as opposed to little chunks. The run game early, it was tough. We couldn't really get it going. A yard or two a pop, maybe. We weren't very great on third down early either which was really tough. It was a drive stopper at the end of the day. And I don't know, we just needed to be more efficient on third down get the run game going early.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: Well, I mean the red zone is as hard as it is because the field is so shrunk with so many people in a condensed area. A lot of the play calls, you can put those out the window. It's a much different playbook than the rest of the field.

But I don't know, it just seems like the last couple of weeks we couldn't really get much going in the red zone, which hurts. That four-point swings between field goals and touchdowns. And we came up short, missed a field go early, which hurt. We tried to bounce back, went back down and Shudy made the next one, he picked us up there. We weren't good enough today in the red zone. We



needed to put points up and we didn't do that.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LAPORTA: No, of course not. I think it comes down to running the ball. It's really like the gel to the offense. If you can run the ball effectively you can get those chunk plays -- five, six yards -- stay ahead of the chains. Third down conversions are a lot easier when you convert third and one and third and two as opposed to third and eight, third and ten-plus. That's always difficult. I feel that was a commonality between that Wisconsin game and tonight.

#### Q. Could you tell Spencer wasn't right in the second and third quarter?

SAM LAPORTA: I thought he was feeling fine. He took a big shot into, I think, the lower abdomen or something like that. I won't speak for him on that. But, yeah, I think he took a shot and I mean he wasn't right after that. We went to Alex, I guess.

#### Q. Couple weeks before you have to play -- (indiscernible) trying to take off. Where are you guys mentally? Do you still have pretty good morale, (indiscernible) take a few days off?

SAM LAPORTA: Of course, this one's going to hurt a couple days, especially since that bowl game. Once we get the bid we'll figure out how many weeks and how much time we have off. But, I mean, the guys are really proud of each other. We've been working for this since January.

And to fall short in one game, it doesn't describe who we are as people and as a team, I don't think, but it hurts.

#### Q. What were you most proud of?

SAM LAPORTA: I think coming off that two-game loss streak. We had that early last year. The morale in the locker room kind of like it is tonight; it hurts. It hurts a lot to fall short twice in a row after having a really good start. Number two in the country and all that. That's really cool.

But to bounce back and win four straight off that two-game



loss streak, win four in November and get this bid. I think that's probably what I'm most proud of.

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# Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

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## Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Alex Padilla

### Press Conference

Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

#### Q. What are the emotions like after a loss like this?

ALEX PADILLA: As you can imagine, obviously disappointed when you put so much work into it and it doesn't go how you planned. Obviously very disappointing. Thought we battled hard today, but just the outcome isn't what we hoped it would be.

#### Q. Is there any deflation in the offense (inaudible)?

ALEX PADILLA: With our guys, we always want to fight down to the very end. That's the kind of team we have. Wouldn't say there's deflation, but we always want to end the game the right way. We play to a certain standard every time out no matter what the score is.

#### Q. The spot you got put into, try to move the team back. Not like you can run the whole offense at that point. What was kind of your mindset? What were you told?

ALEX PADILLA: There's not too much time to think about it. Have to go in and play. Just run the offense as best you can. It was obviously a tough situation being down like that against a really good team. They made it hard on us told. A lot of things we can improve on. Let's get back to work and improve on things we can.

#### Q. You warmed up at one point and put the red hat back on and came back. Did they say something at halftime like you might have to go in for Spencer?

ALEX PADILLA: We knew he got dinged up at some point in the first half. Thought he would be able to go. But kind of overtook him as the game wore on and as he took more shots. But, yeah, that was that.



#### Q. In this game how (indiscernible) do you think (inaudible)?

ALEX PADILLA: As you can expect, they're a really great team, great defense, tremendous players all around. I thought we moved the ball really well on a portion of our drives. Just couldn't execute well enough to finish.

We knew coming in that they were a great team, had a great defense, that was going to be tough sledding all day. And that's what it was.

#### Q. Was that fourth-and-three play, I think it was, is that a pass back to the tight end? Is that what you were you're looking for? (Inaudible)?

ALEX PADILLA: They covered it well. Wasn't a whole lot we could do on that. But credit to them.

#### Q. Seemed like that first drive had a little bit of spark going. What went right there?

ALEX PADILLA: I just thought we executed well on that drive. Had a good rhythm going, kind of mixing up the run and the pass, kind of keeping them off balance. But I thought we had a good drive there. Obviously wasn't able to finish it. That's the most important part. But that was a good drive for sure.

#### Q. (Indiscernible) a week and a half or whatever, you have the flu and then the Nebraska game? What's this been like for you to ride this roller coaster?

ALEX PADILLA: It's been an up-and-down experience. Obviously having the flu and then playing the game coming out, a whole bunch of uncertainty. It's been a roller coaster, like you said.

But credit to my teammates. They've handled the situation really well. Credit to Spencer as well. He's helped me a lot. I've helped him a lot. Kind of like we've been saying all week, that we've been in each other's corners all the way. He's helped me out a lot. And our entire team helps us out with the whole situation.



**Q. Did the flu bother you against Nebraska?**

ALEX PADILLA: I would say so. But not really thinking about the past anymore. Just focusing on this game, how that went. But, yeah.

**Q. (Indiscernible) have you and Spencer talked about coming back this spring or anything like that at this point?**

ALEX PADILLA: Haven't really talked too much in the future. We were just kind of focused on this game and this game solely. It's a conversation for down the road. But we were just focused on this game and focused on our improvement moving forward.

**Q. How much more difficult is it when you don't have a game (inaudible) to be able to move your focus to (indiscernible) and just sit there for a while?**

ALEX PADILLA: Obviously this one will sting for a little bit because, like I said before, we've been putting so much effort into it and so much work over the course of the 11 months. This one will sting a little bit. But I'm confident we'll get back on our feet, get back to work and get ready for the ball game.

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# Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Kaevon Merriweather

### Press Conference

Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

#### Q. What are the emotions like after a loss like this?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: Definitely disheartening. Definitely sad. Mad. Angry. Pretty much everything, all the above. I mean, with a loss like that especially on this stage, this big of a game, I think the emotions are definitely strong in that area.

#### Q. 42 points on the scoreboard. What would you chalk that up to today?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: Disappointing. I think the defense, we try and limit opponents to 18 points. And seeing 42, that's really not us. That's not really what we preach. That's really not what Coach Parker preaches on our side of the ball, and definitely disappointing as a defense. I think we're definitely disappointed as a defense.

That's not something that we do. That's not something, like I said, that's not something we preach as a defense giving up 42 points.

But I think learn from it, watch the tape, pick it up next game.

#### Q. Big plays that you guys find early and very uncharacteristic. Can you quantify what it meant for the game just to go down 14-3 after giving up (inaudible)?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: I mean, Coach Parker, we try to limit three big plays a game over 25 years. And I think there's like five to six players in the game that really counts towards the game. You never know what plays those are going to be. When you come on the short end of those plays and change the energy to the way the game's going to flow, the way everything's going. Just being on



the short end of those plays definitely shifted the game and tied this game, made a major impact on the outcome of this game.

#### Q. Seemed like you had to play kind of a close style of play with your offense -- that you had to play not necessarily perfect but a very good game. How disappointing was it (inaudible)?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: Like I said, it's definitely disappointing. Like I said, that's not something that we try to preach or teach on my side of the ball. Giving up 42 points, really try to limit the offensive mobility, what they're trying to do, not give up those big plays, not give up that many touchdowns and limit their drives and them moving the ball. Like I said, giving up 42 points, that's not something we really want to do. That's not something that Coach Parker preaches on for us.

#### Q. What do you attribute (inaudible)?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: I mean, like I said, nothing really specific. Just us not really paying attention to our keys, not being locked in what is going on. Those trick plays, those are hard, not easy plays. Like the halfback pass, he's running, then he pulls back, throws the ball. That's a hard thing to read, especially as a corner or safety. Those are plays that have been really difficult to read. Like I said, you're not going to play a perfect game. But someone will definitely hit those passes and plays. You've got to be able to read out of that.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: Most definitely. I thought we were gaining momentum. I thought we had them backed in the end zone probably three times, I think. I think as a defense we definitely had a lot of energy, definitely had a lot of momentum during those drives. And I think we were tuned in, locked in into what we needed to get done during those drives.

#### Q. Is the 24-hour rule harder when you don't have a game right away to focus on --





KAEVON MERRIWEATHER: No, I already put the game in the past. It's already behind me. I'm not even thinking about it anymore.

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Iowa Hawkeyes

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Seth Benson

### Press Conference



Michigan - 42, Iowa - 3

#### **Q. What happened on those two big plays early on? Was it just -- especially the run?**

SETH BENSON: Yeah, caught us in a good blitz. They executed really well and, yeah, just comes down to fundamentals and details. We didn't execute on those two plays. And they busted out of there.

#### **Q. Did you wear down in the second half?**

SETH BENSON: I wouldn't say so. I would say we've got a group of guys that will go out there and fight hard as they can each and every snap. No matter what the score is, might not reflect that. You might beat us but you'll never break us. That's the attitude we fight with each and every time. I'm proud of everyone, how they fought each and every snap. The score obviously didn't reflect that. We're disappointed with that, but we fought off our tails every snap.

#### **Q. How much emotion do you have put into this describing last Friday and today, how much --**

SETH BENSON: We're ready to go. We had a great week of practice. And just great guys, great group of guys to be with each and every day. And just disappointed that we couldn't do it for each other. And that was the goal, just to do it for each other. That's what we pride ourselves in, as a defense just being so close.

But, yeah, we just fought, had a great, great week of practice. And of course the score didn't reflect that.

#### **Q. Was there something they were doing particularly in the second half? Seemed like you held them mostly in check the first half.**

SETH BENSON: I didn't think so. We've just got to limit the big plays and pride ourselves on no explosive plays. They had some explosive ones out there, and that will hurt. And we just gotta keep going.

#### **Q. You seemed like the (inaudible)?**

SETH BENSON: Yeah, yeah. We were ready for them. But just didn't execute. Got to have our eyes in the right spots and just gotta make plays, they made more plays than us.

#### **Q. (Inaudible) if you give up two explosive plays, have you been doing that? Those two plays, that's what happened?**

SETH BENSON: Obviously when you're giving up big plays, creates momentum. But I think, like you said, there's probably crazy stats out there. I can't remember exactly what it is.

But you've got to limit the big plays, make them drive the field. You want them to get out of the stuff they really like to do. But when they're giving up big plays, they can just keep calling plays and stuff like that.

#### **Q. How much more difficult is it to (inaudible) when you don't have a game next week to think about?**

SETH BENSON: I mean, it's tough. But I think in life you've got a choice each and every day you wake up, and I don't know what time it is now, but it's pretty late. And the sun is going to come up pretty early tomorrow. And you have two choices: You can sit and sulk about it, or you can get up and move on.

We've got another game left. And I'm super excited to play another game with all these guys. And I think we've just got to be optimistic. Obviously it sucks right now, but just keep moving forward.

#### **Q. Was Pasadena something on your mind?**

SETH BENSON: I think -- I mean, during the week you



just want to win this game, but I mean you just want to get in the best bowl game as possible. But I think during the week we were just focused on this game.

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