

9/3/2013: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's teleconference on Tuesday with the Big Ten media:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"I thought, first of all, our crowd was tremendous. They were certainly ready to go on Saturday and I appreciate the great turnout and the enthusiasm there. It was a tough, hard-fought game. Northern [Illinois] has got a very nice team and we knew that coming in, so it was disappointing not to come out on top. But we'll go back to work and do our best to get ready for this Saturday."

On linebacker Christian Kirksey's performance against Northern Illinois:

"Yeah, we have three senior linebackers – Christian, Anthony Hitchens and James Morris. Certainly, we're counting on all three of those guys to play well and Christian certainly did that. All three guys did, I thought. But he played well the entire game and that was a huge play."

"We were kind of spinning our tires a little bit at that point and boy, that was just a heads-up play – a great tackle and then great awareness to pick up the ball and then finish it off with a touchdown. That kind of ignited our team and got the crowd fired up. It was just an outstanding play by a top-quality senior."

On his philosophy when it comes to playing FCS programs such as Missouri State:

"Well, I don't think they're going to fit in so much in our conference. I think we're moving away from them, at least that's the last understanding I have. Scheduling's an issue, certainly. But I think most teams, at least I think a lot of teams, are doing it right now and as we learned last weekend, there's no guarantees, period, any time you play against anybody with the FCS teams winning."

"But you know, scheduling has been a challenge and I think everybody is looking for the best possible way to do their scheduling and you know, that has been one route that a lot of people have taken."

On if not being allowed to have FCS schools on the schedule with nine conference games compounds issues with scheduling:

"You know, I think for the teams that are available, that's probably a good thing for them in contrast to market up a little bit. I think our intentions were probably to help, but then they make things a little bit more costly."

On what he believed happened on the second interception thrown by Jake Rudock late in the fourth quarter:

"Yeah, I think that was probably more about ball placement. Maybe as a decision, you'd like to take that back in terms of where he decided to go with the football. But you know, it was probably more ball placement. He threw it behind our guy and it would've been a tight throw. If you miss a throw, you want to make sure you miss away from the defenders, certainly."

"But that's part of being a first-year player, a first-time player. But I thought he did an awful lot of good things out there and we're awfully encouraged by what we saw. I'm really confident he's just going to keep growing."

On if he's referring to things like demeanor when saying Rudock did a lot of things well:

"Yeah, when I said there was an awful lot of good things, that is a big part of the equation. I thought his demeanor on the field was excellent. His feedback, his information, his conversations with Greg Davis were all good and his awareness was really good. So that was great. And then on the touchdown pass he threw, he got a mouthful of the defender as he released the ball. That's something you like to see.

"And then later on, he pulled one down and made a nice run. He didn't just get the first down, but he got the ball in the end zone. So I thought he did a lot of really good things and we're really encouraged by that. We felt good about him going into the game and we feel good about our other two quarterbacks as well."

On whether he has ever felt tempted to incorporate more of a spread attack into Iowa's offense:

"Yeah, I guess I'm a little fuzzy on what spread means exactly. But there's all kinds of ways to move the ball, but at some point, you have to execute and you got to block at least a minimal amount to get the ball. You know, at the end of the day, I guess you do what you feel fits your personnel the best way and there are a lot of different ways to be successful.

"You know, I can think of a team in the Big 12 last year at about the midway point was on its way to the national championship and they hit some hard times and they're a 'spread team.' In our conference, we've had two Big Ten championship teams that weren't spread teams and came out victorious in both of those, so you know, it's what you do.

"First of all, I think any coach is doing what they do best with their personnel. To me, at the end of the day, the teams that are the best are the teams that execute the best, whether

it's spread or conventional or whatever term you want to throw at it."

On if he believes the game is played more in space now than it used to be:

"Uh, you know, it depends who you are. Yeah, there's no question we're seeing more up-tempo stuff and we're seeing perhaps more 4-wide stuff, but that's not like it's all new and throwing the ball's not new, either. I remember Illinois with Mike White, I think they threw the ball 70 times here in 1982, in Kinnick Stadium, and set a passing record that day. They scored 10 points, I believe. But they set a record, a stadium passing record."

"So you know, it's not ... I don't think it's new to football, but there's a lot of people throwing it around and there's some option football stuff. That has always kind of been the way football is, at least college football."

On the performance of the offensive line against Northern Illinois:

"Well, we were all aware of the fact that we were having a new quarterback no matter who won the race, so that's certainly something we were hoping – that we could run the ball a little bit and that our line could do a good job and when I say our line, our tight ends included because we are a little bit more veteran up there. Overall, the guys performed pretty well."

"We're not maybe as veteran as we look. Both of our guards I think have maybe started 2-3 games career-wise, so far. We also had a new center for the first time in three years. Austin Blythe slid over and Austin had his ups-and-downs as a redshirt freshman, but I thought for his first time out as the center, he did a really nice job. So there were some things that we were really encouraged by and hopefully we can continue to play a little bit more proficiently as we move forward."

On the statuses of starting corners Jordan Lomax and B.J. Lowery for Saturday's game against Missouri State:

"Uh, you know, we'll find out. We had some heat issues. Those guys played a lot of defensive snaps and then also played a lot of special teams plays as well, too. So I think that's something probably most coaches – at least in the Midwest – are concerned about, just with how much gas is out of the tank with all of our guys. But we think both of them should be back. Hopefully, they will be. We'll just see how it goes."