

October 26, 2013



Iowa – 17
Northwestern – 10 O/T

A Postgame Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, just really pleased for our players. Both teams really competed hard. A credit to Northwestern and their quarterback, just a tenacious competitor. Both teams competed really hard, it was a great football team, and again, pleased that our guys were able to finish the game with a victory. They worked hard this week. I know our opponent did the same thing, and it was important to both teams. But just great to be able to walk in the locker room and see those guys pretty happy and feeling good about what they just accomplished.

Q. The play with Jake to C.J., did it unfold the way you thought?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you don't know if they're going to try to defend or bring pressure, and they brought the house it looked like. You can't block them all. He did a great job of waiting until the last second and then had faith that CJ would be in the right spot. Looked like he put the ball out there and C.J. went and got it.

C.J. is tough to defend down there. He's been doing a great job for us down in that tight area, and those are the kind of plays you've got to be able to make at some point if you're going to be able to win conference games. We needed one of those, and it came at a great time certainly.

Q. How nice it is to be able to walk in the locker room and have that feeling? How big is this for your guys to get the win after putting in three or four weeks of hard work?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, there's not a lot of great things that come out of losing, not a

lot of bad that comes out of winning, either. It was good for us. It's been a while since we've been in the victory locker room, and this one came hard. It's part of winning in conference play. There's nothing easy about it. That was evident today. But it's just a real tribute and credit to our guys, especially our older guys. The older guys, seniors, juniors, have been doing a great job of leading going back to November, and it's nice to see them get a reward for it.

Q. Koehn made a couple big plays, a hit to break up a pass and early he recovered the fumble in regulation. Is it part of his maturation process?

COACH FERENTZ: It is. He's a confident player, maybe sometimes too confident, but he's a confident guy, just doesn't seem to be overwhelmed by it.

Turnovers ended up being a big part of the game certainly. Our last one, that was a good shot by Jake trying to get that first down, and we were going to shoot for the field goal there. But coming up with the two turnovers, that was a big, big part of the game and allowed it to go to overtime for us.

Q. The defense in the overtime was --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, just from where I stood, the coverage must have been excellent. We'll see the tape on that. But it looked like he had nowhere to go with the football, and then the good news is the guys up front stayed where they should stay. We didn't get out of our lanes, so he didn't have an alley to run through. But that's something you have to worry about, especially with this guy. He's a tough, slippery guy to catch. It was a great effort for all 11 guys.

Q. Win or lose, everybody is so quick to judge your team this year.

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't noticed (smiling).

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Q. How has that been this year?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I think it's been building, but we didn't do well last year. The critique-o-meter is out there, and that comes with the territory. But it just shows you what a fine line it is between winning and losing, too, and I think that's the bottom line. If there is any bad that comes out of winning, you just have to stay grounded and stay focused on what's going to help you win.

But I don't think today will be tough to illustrate that point. This thing was hard all the way, and it was hard for both teams.

Q. In regulation did you have a point on the field that you thought you would let Meyer kick from?

COACH FERENTZ: On the last one going down there? Yeah, we wanted to get at least inside the 25. The 20 would have been better, but the situation we ended up in, we just figured let the clock go down, try to convert, and if we did we had two time-outs and get the field goal then. But inside the 20 would have been better. Inside the 15 would have been even better.

Q. Did what happened before factor into that?

COACH FERENTZ: Not at all. He would have nailed it. I'm confident of that.

Q. Some of the games with Northwestern have gone (inaudible). This one was following the same pattern, they get up early, you come back. Do you feel like you've exorcised some demons?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, for at least a day, for five minutes. But we've had great games with them. I'll go back to my first year here in '99. They were a different team, but I remember they ran it in down on the goal line. I think it was a fourth down call. They ran an option to our right. I think it was a fourth down call. That's winning and losing. We've had a lot of games with these guys that, I can't tell you why, but it goes back and forth, and this was no different. Probably the average fan would have thought there would be a lot of yards and points today. It was a defensive battle in a lot of ways.

Q. Do you feel personally the same feeling against (inaudible)?

COACH FERENTZ: Only in the sense that it was tough and hard fought. It looked like we might have a chance to get it going the first half, then we couldn't, and then they came right back and we were right in the dog fight. The momentum shifted both ways. But that's conference play, and it certainly seems to be the way it goes when we get together, these two teams get together.

Q. You added a new wrinkle this week on defense. What was it that you saw that led you to believe this would be effective?

COACH FERENTZ: We fooled around and that's something we had years ago, just the three-down, four-backer package. Part of the thinking is that we're a little deeper at linebacker than we are at some other spots and we had Dom out today. So it gave us a way to maybe utilize some personnel that we had and also factoring in was the mobility of No. 2. He's a tough guy to defend, so at least we had more guys on the field that could run a little bit better. That was our thinking behind it.

Q. Hitchens had a great game.

COACH FERENTZ: He really did, yeah. He's playing hard, and those linebackers are doing a good job. Hitch is really doing a nice job.

Q. You've been able to finish these tight games that go right down to the wire. What does that tell you about where your team is right now?

COACH FERENTZ: Again, I really credit our older players, seniors, juniors, and this goes back to last November. They've been doing a good job of really setting the pace for our younger players. The bottom line is in conference play and historically, at least the last 15 years that I've been around, if you don't win close games the season is not going to go the way you want, and if you can win close games you give yourself a much better chance. That's kind of the nature of conference play and the way we're built; it just seems like we've been in a lot more of those than the other, on either side. I guess that's a good thing, and it comes down to how you finish games. It's something we have not done the last two times out. Certainly we haven't been able to get it done in the second half.

Q. (Inaudible.) This time you got the

job done. What does that do for this team going forward?

COACH FERENTZ: Hopefully it's a learning experience for us, and that's something obviously we've emphasized. The last two times we've had leads at halftime, couldn't finish the game. And maybe it's even better this one went beyond the 60 because that was kind of our message, 60 and whatever else. But it came down to four stops on defense, and it may have been more than that if they converted the first down. Hopefully it's a great step for our team, a positive step, and certainly be easier to critique and build off of this than a loss, that's for sure.

Q. Are your linebackers getting better as the season goes on?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I think they've gotten better. You've got three guys that have played a lot of football, but they practiced like they were freshmen just with their attitude and energy and attentiveness, and same thing at camp. So when I refer to our leadership, that's a good illustration of it, and I'd say the same thing about Bullock and Weisman. Neither of them are seniors, but they played okay last year when they were healthy, but they've had the right attitude. They've embodied what you want from a player.

So that's healthy for the other guys that haven't played to see that.

And as far as today, when you play a team like this, they do a good job, run or pass. They're going to make you defend the entire field, especially those shorter zone areas. They're just really a diverse attack with the option and all the stuff that they do and execute, so if your linebacker play is not good, you're going to be in trouble, and the guys really did a good job.

Q. Did you guys do a better job of setting --

COACH FERENTZ: I think so, for sure, and contain and all that stuff, yeah, they did. There were a couple ones where they got outside that was tough, and I think they had a couple perimeter holding penalties, too, but they put a lot of pressure on you there.

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