

Nebraska vs. Oregon (Sept. 17, 2016)

Nebraska Head Coach Mike Riley Quotes

Opening Statement

"Well, I don't even know where to start with that one. I think that it was a great football game, both teams fought, lots of plays made, key stops from different times. Just talking about our team, I am so proud of them and I thought we were tight at the beginning of the game, it felt so good all week and it didn't feel very good at the beginning, but after Oregon took the lead on us we kind of settled down and started playing and then it was a football game. Both ways, lots of different things that happened in that game that influenced the end. I think it was just a great game."

On Tommy Armstrong Jr.'s toughness

"He made some big time plays, played really good, clutch football. Most of it was cramping, we had a lot of that as you could see."

On his personal satisfaction

"I think that it's about this team in particular. I came to Nebraska and so I'm coaching this team so whatever that history is, I've always loved that history. I've been involved with Oregon since my dad coached against them in the '60's so this game. This Husker team, what it means to us is a lot. I think it's a lot to get 3-0 going into the Big Ten. I think it's a really good deal. This team and what we're doing. We still have a lot of work to do, but I love the fight and just the fact that we kept our poise so well to come back and make the plays to win."

On freshman punter Caleb Lightbourn

"I thought he just got better as the game went on. I think everybody got a glimpse of the ability of Caleb today."

On De'Mornay Pierson-El's first-half punt return

"I thought that was almost a 14-point swing around in there. We needed something, either a drive, or I didn't know that it was going to come from a punt return. But we needed something and it ended up being that punt return that was so big to get that right before the half."

On the congratulations Riley received from his staff

"I think it stems from a long history with Oregon, and I don't want to talk about this too much but that was not only that we had some frustration with that because we didn't win enough but we also are excited to win and coach against that group because they've done a good job. They've done a good job, so I think that we beat a good team that is well coached and has been for a while. So that's the bottom line for this Nebraska team. Really good win, showed a lot of good stuff today."

On Michael Rose-Ivey's interception

"I was just tremendously excited for everybody in the state, and I think that everybody in the state must have been in the stadium. It felt like it today. It was beautiful. What a great, great picture of college football today - that stadium and both teams playing like that. That had to be a remarkable scene for the people that could sit and enjoy it."

On Oregon's two-point conversion attempts after touchdowns

"I think that's kind of Oregon's M.O. That's what they do. That's not anything new to what they do after touchdowns, so they succeeded on one or two at least of the two-pointers, but that's what they've done historically. They force you to keep having to defend, and that's just their identity."

On the best aspect of the game

"I think the thing that meant the most to me just in this brief moment after the game is how we just stayed in and had enough about us to win the game. As many of you know that sat right in this room last year we had too many of these that went the wrong way a year ago. To play tough with a lot of poise and make the plays to win at the end was really good for this group of guys."

On halftime changes

"Well, we always wanted to run the ball, and our guys really came out in a flurry and we went to sleep for a little bit and they woke up and that was kind of the flow of the football game. A lot of times...a lot of things are dictated in a tight game by what happens on first down. We followed up those two nice drives with a really bad series and a bad first down and that kind of put us on a negative point for a little there, and that's the point we had to rally from to win."

On why Nebraska didn't punt late in the game

"I ended up with a lot of time to think about it. There was an injury out there, so I ended up going for it. Punting, and then going for it. And why it was, I did not want to give the team a shot to win the game right then. They're a good offensive team, and we had done pretty well defensively but they had moments where it didn't look like we could stop them, and we couldn't afford that. We couldn't afford to wait there and see what might happen. I thought we'd just go ahead and go get it."

On the decision to punt instead of going for it on fourth down

"It's just off of what you would call "all-verticals," a three-by-one formation, but there are some adjustments to it and [Jordan] Westerkamp made a great adjustment. Tommy [Armstrong Jr.] saw it and made a great throw. It was just really good football, really clutch football."

On trusting Tommy Armstrong Jr. more than last year

"I would never say that we had that feeling at all. It's our job to coach guys and build them up. If there's something that needs to work on then we work on it. We certainly never had that kind of discussion as a staff. Tommy's our first-string quarterback, let's coach him, put him in the best position to win games. That's what we're supposed to do."

On the Armstrong's performance

"I think it kind of speaks for itself. It was a really, really well-played, hard-fought football game. Lots of different things happened in the game and it went back and forth. Lots of different momentum where it looked like one team was going to take over. Nobody ever did until the clock ran out. The quarterback is at the center of a lot of that, and of course he made plays throwing the ball, running, and making some good reads handing the ball off. Played a heck of a football game, and a lot of times players end up being defined by those moments where you have to drive a team down and win the game. It's a really good sign."

On whether or not he recalled a specific inspirational quote being said on the sidelines before the winning drive

"I don't remember anything like that particularly said. I do remember us talking continually about we will need one more stop or we will need one more drive and if we get this drive we will need one more stop. It was just talk like that. That's how that thing - if we had a vision for how it

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was going to play out when we were behind that's what was going to have to happen. So that's really the focus of that and what's being called. Thought we made some great plays. They started off that drive pretty well and then we made some great plays to get them out on four downs."

On that being an effort to keep the focus of the team straight ahead

"I think that's always important, to paint that picture of what has to happen. If we're going to win the game, at some point when you're looking at the clock you know this hour is coming where you know it's going to be decided by how we do in these next couple of drives. This is what's going to have to happen for us to win the game. I thought the response was awesome."

On carrying the momentum into Big Ten play at 3-0

"I thought it was a really good win for this team as far as confidence and momentum. I think a lot of the team's identity will be sort of defined by how we respond, whether it's respond to a loss or respond to a win. I think this team will respond well to winning this game, but that will be big. At this stage in the season, it is still continually all about growth. It is really, really important that we take this game starting tomorrow. We'll enjoy it tonight, start tomorrow, dissecting it and start building because obviously we're not perfect. We played a good team and did what we had to do to win but we've got plenty of work to do. As the games go on, if you continue to win they get bigger and tougher. This game will be really, really good for our team. We played a team with a lot of speed, and they have a lot of character because they have won for a long time. It's been a long time that they've had it, had really good teams. They were going to fight, and they knew how to do it. That's why when people ask me about Oregon coming and playing in our crowd. I think our crowd can affect games and is really, really great, but I knew Oregon would handle it. They've been in it a long time."

On this game getting Nebraska back on the national radar

"I don't know what that'll mean. We'll just see, I think it will be good for us in that regard. We'll have to keep putting an exclamation point on it week after week, to make it real. It's obviously a really good start."

On Oregon putting flowers at the 27-yard line before the game to honor Sam Foltz

"That was real classy. I didn't actually even see it. I wasn't out there in time. I talked to Mark [Banker] about it and we really appreciate that. That was very thoughtful of them. Like I told Mark [Banker] too, almost every day by the hour we're reminded of Sam Foltz, and we're thankful for that. For them to step out and do that it was great."

On the effect of forcing fewer turnovers than the first two weeks

"I think that Oregon's pretty tough that way. They take care of the football. I didn't know if we'd get any balls from them. They certainly haven't historically thrown many interceptions or done much to hurt themselves. I didn't know what to expect. Of course, we wanted them and I thought that we've done better at that. One of the things we did better than we have last year and historically against Oregon, frankly, was big plays. They did get some big plays, but I thought our pass coverage on some deep balls was way better than last year. That probably made as big a difference as anything. The big plays they did get they scored on, and we had to recover from. That's a real big goal of ours. If we can do better in turnovers both ways offensively and defensively, and big play defense in particular. We need some more chunks offensively. I don't think we got as many today. I think those two factors themselves are major, major contributors."

On having seven penalties compared to Oregon's 13

"Well we just made a point. I think our team is pretty mature, I think they don't scoff at stuff like this. I just told them if we're going to play like we did in the first two games with those kinds of penalties, then games like today we would have lost."