

Nebraska vs. Illinois (Oct. 1, 2016)

Nebraska Head Coach Mike Riley Quotes

Opening Statement

"Did you all stay around for the fourth quarter? It didn't look like much up until then. I'm really proud of this team because it was also pretty obvious that they had the edge early. They were on top of it earlier than we were, they were making more plays and they were tackling well and making us miss. There was a lot of hard stuff, but I'm really pleased with our ability to stay in it and then play better and make big plays to win the game. That's great stuff. We obviously have a lot of work to do to improve those other things, but that part of it is a great quality to have."

On the offense's long drives

"The one thing that I felt like was that they [Illinois] hardly had the ball in the second half. That was a result of exactly what you just asked about. I thought that was good."

On outscoring opponents 78-6 in the fourth quarter this season

"Well it's kind of like the qualities that I just said. I think that our team has made plays to win games, and I think the fourth quarter is when you're doing that. Like I said, I'm proud of that. Maybe whatever they did, and what our people did to condition them and to last and play. I don't know if that's a part of it, but it could be. I think the biggest part is the mental competitiveness. Keep your poise, keep playing, even though it wasn't very pretty, and then make some plays to win the game. It was great."

On senior I-back Terrell Newby

"My thoughts about him have always been good and they went up a ton today. I really have a lot of respect for what he did today. We were down. Devine [Ozigbo] was out, [Mikale] Wilbon was hurting, it was pretty thin. He stayed up and played physically tough, took care of the football and made big plays. You have to give the line some credit there. We started making some hay on some of those zone runs that we had. So they're doing a good job there. I thought [Terrell] Newby was a real man today."

"I think that he is quietly one of our better workers, quietly well-respected. He's not going to make a lot of noise, but I think everybody does have a lot of respect for him. I think he prepares himself at the top level for his senior year so he's taking advantage of it and when it all came down to it today, when nobody else was left, he stepped up and played hard and made some great cuts and helped win the game."

On putting Cole Conrad in at offensive tackle

"We thought [David] Knevel has been improving, and he has been improving with his ankle all the time. It's better each day, but he struggled. So when he was struggling, we didn't hesitate to put him [Conrad] in the game."

On the status of players who were injured in the game

"The status of [Cethan] Carter is that he hurt his elbow. I don't know how long that will mean to him being out. They took [Jordan] Westerkamp to the hospital to make sure they checked everything out on him. We don't know more on that yet. [Devine] Ozigbo has an ankle sprain, and that should be okay. Summarizing and looking at our team, and watching that take place today appears to be a really good time for a bye week. I want to think that [Jordan] Westerkamp is OK, but I say that because I really don't know more than that. I shouldn't say one more word on that."

On Drew Brown's missed 56-yard field goal

"That was a bad decision by me, and I would take that back right now. The wind had been going back, we didn't have a good gauge on the wind. It had been going back and forth, so it wasn't smart at all."

On the play of the defense

"I didn't think we were really right on top of it. Like I said, I thought Illinois was well prepared. Lovie [Smith] did a great job with that team in the time they had to prepare for this game. They were on top of it. We missed tackles and made some plays in the passing game. I thought that we were OK. But I do think the guys made some plays and better plays as the game went on, so the fourth quarter was a lot different. The plays we had to make in the fourth quarter were made. We had some really good downfield knock-away balls, I think one of them was Aaron Williams. One of them might have been Josh Kalu."

On going for it on fourth down in the fourth quarter

"I knew we'd get it. No, the way that game was going I just thought 'we better do this right now' because I felt the more confidence we gave them the worse it was. We kept giving them life throughout the game, and I didn't want to do that one more time."

On if he thought they got the first down

"I think we got it by a little. They measured it, didn't they? I've been through a lot of those in my life. I've talked to officials about that, that's their toughest review right? That idea. I actually felt pretty decent about it. I was ready because I thought 'OK the worst thing that happens here is that we've got them backed up, and we've just got to stop them and get the ball back.'"

On the upcoming bye week

"I think there are a few things about this; we want to spend good time, but not too much time to get ready for our next game, so the game preparation part of it. We want to work on some situations in football games and general stuff like two-minute, four-minute offense and end of the half stuff. Just some specific deals that I've been writing down for the past week on scheme situations, and then we'd like to get guys feeling good physically as best we can. We're also going to do a bit of work and let our young guys that have been scout team players for an extended period of time so far this year, let them play a little football and get coached by our coaches this week."

On his team only committing three penalties

"I think a lot of it has to do with the choices that players make. The penalties that I really think have to be controlled are those penalties that have to do with procedure of the game, offsides, false starts, illegal formations, shifts, motion, stuff like that. That stuff is obviously a poor reflection on everybody. The other thing that I'm most pleased with, I think we had one of them today, was unsportsmanlike, late hit, roughing the passer, those can be game changers. There's going to be some holding calls, some pass interference, there's going to be some of that stuff in football in general. You want to hold those down, you don't want many. Three penalties is a far cry from where we were a year ago and even today. That's the big three; turnovers, penalties, and big plays. I don't think we did a great job with big plays today, but those are three areas we definitely improved in."

On turnovers in the red zone

"The turnovers in general get you beat, and the turnovers when you have the chance to score just can be lethal. So it's always a big concern."