

Nebraska vs. Wisconsin (Oct. 7, 2017)

Nebraska Head Coach Mike Riley Quotes

Opening Statement

"OK, obviously very disappointed in the loss and you know we started off with a situation where you absolutely can't have against Wisconsin. We, you know, had an interception for a touchdown for them after a drive that was pretty well done. So it was something I thought our team had a little bit better resilience than when that has happened before, which I appreciated. But, those things against a team like that that's pretty methodical and eventually they're being as physical as they are, we just gave them too many opportunities and not really taking advantage of ours to put some points on the board. When we gave them that touchdown and then, you know, this was going to, at that point, first, second, and third quarters real tight game we give them that touchdown and then don't get that field goal, you know, those were parts in there that you just can't be doing that against Wisconsin. So, and then that put us in that predicament where they controlled a good part of the fourth quarter and before that even. I think we had moved the ball decently at halftime and had pretty good totals but not much to show for it. And then I think we only had the ball for one series in the third quarter, I might be wrong. Not much more than that."

On the last three drives

"We pick and pin them, too. We got in the position where we tied it up, pinned them I think they had the ball what on the 9? Something like that, inside the 10. A great opportunity for us but they very mechanically, methodically, physically - what did they throw, one ball on that drive? On the third down-conversion ball. So that's what happened. They controlled the ball on the ground."

On Tanner Lee and the offense

"You know there were parts of it that, for a while in the ballgame, we were doing what we kind of...except for giving them the touchdown, which was a pretty strange looking play. Devine (Ozigbo) just didn't get his head around quickly enough and Tanner (Lee) felt the ball looked OK. We did parts of what we needed to do to have a recipe for winning that game. I don't think Tanner (Lee) got sacked, am I right about that? I don't think he got sacked and I think we ran OK, not consistently enough, but our production wasn't bad. I think Devine (Ozigbo) had another 100-yard day. So, in that only. I'm not saying that in total, but in parts of the game that was what we thought we had to do. We had to protect Tanner (Lee) and we had to run the ball effectively. We didn't expect some of the other parts."

On the play of Joshua Kalu

"Well you know we did, somewhere in there, we ran into injury problems with (Antonio) Reed. And (Antonio) Reed did not finish the game. He's got... we will be able to tell you more over the next couple of days. He hurt his knee. I don't think he structurally hurt it, I think it was bruised."

On the defense

"As you watch the game from the boundary there, it looked like we were holding it together there OK for a time. And they're persistent and they're powerful, a big, powerful back is good. We knew all those things. You know, I think that probably the key point in the game was their response to us making the play to tie the game. Our pick six, their response to that was pretty interesting and it was very physical."

On how close the team is to playing at Wisconsin's level

"You know I think that... you know, we don't have to be carbon copies but recipe-wise, there are definitely similarities. Obviously, Paul and I kind of grew up in this thing together and, you know what, I think we... I think with what we're doing strategically with our team, as we put it together. See we have to live in a world that is day by day but think oftentimes kind of ahead of what that big picture and good way will look like, too, and establishing some of those things. So, you know the proof will only prove when we get there how long we'll take but I feel good about where we're going. We have definitely made some progress in some of those areas. We made progress within this season with some individuals running the ball, with what we've done in protection, with what we're doing with our passing game. And what we're, almost as importantly, what we're not trying to do. We're being very thoughtful and selective with that so we're making some progress. It wasn't good enough progress against that team that was ready, that is really ready to do what they do real well. I mean their run-play action is really good. I thought we started doing a good job on the bootlegs. We never really gave up any big hits, throwing the football which they usually get in ball games, big play actions. Our biggest issue, obviously, was the big big run. That was right before the halftime. That, I thought, was a huge play in the game. And then the other one was their consistency with the run in that fourth quarter which was, you know I don't have to explain that to anybody. You know what that looked like."

On junior I-Back Mikale Wilbon

"Mikale possibly could've played in a real emergency-type mode situation, but we never got to that where I thought about playing him. When you have a guy like that that gets back and might be OK on Friday afternoon, if you can get by without playing him, he's going to be better off for it and so will your team probably."

On the factors in the first half that caused Nebraska to punt

"I think that that 40 to 33 is my gray area right in there, and a lot of times at his four down, I did not feel great about giving them any kind of short field at the time, however. So, I decided to punt."

On the pick six in the first quarter

"I don't know that yet in a practice or a game that we've incompleting that ball, let alone throw a pick six on it off of a top of a head, it's a pretty ridiculous play really."

On how senior defensive back Chris Jones feels after playing in the game

"You know what, I'm going to have to delay that response, I haven't talked to Chris. I've been able to assess overall the play, I know that our wide receivers out in space weren't challenged a lot today and there weren't a lot of balls out there. Where our corners were more often challenged was condensed formations and making them tackle, so we'll have to see how that goes."

On what Coach Riley expected from Wisconsin after the Huskers' pick six touchdown

"I knew there were two things coming, one of them was going to be the run, and the other one was going to be a play-action or probably, to keep the quarterback more out of harm's way, a bootleg, it would make it simple. But he opted for just flat out running the ball."

On what happened with the Huskers' run defense

"It looked to me like we lost some spots, when they're running the power play, we lost some force on the edge, we were getting engulfed, and they were actually making our secondary tackle by bouncing that ball on the corner and forcing- and actually using the wide receiver to block the safety, and a lot of times, forcing the corner to try to have to tackle. So we probably with our front need to force that edge and hold that a little bit better than we did for sure."

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On redshirt freshman wide receiver JD Spielman

"JD, I'm excited about JD, I think for a guy that would've played more runner and DB in high school and is a redshirt freshman, he doesn't blink, he's a real competitor, he's going to get better and better as he understands how to play in that slot and the things that he can do in that slot. Pretty close to having a few other plays tonight, we threw him a corner in the end zone, that I think that he'll come up with eventually. We threw him an inside fade a little bit later in the game, I think he'll come up with that play. He's a tough kid, he's smart, he's really a great guy to have on our team. And he's a- I've had all different kinds of slot backs, but his prototype is one that can really, I think, be exciting in there."