

Nebraska Football Weekly Press Conference

Nebraska vs. Southern Miss Game Week

Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2004

Defensive Coordinator Kevin Cosgrove

On what areas need improvement

"We have to refine some of our techniques. We have to improve our man coverage techniques and some of our run fits. We just have to try and improve on everything we did last week, basically."

On creating turnovers

"We have a minimum of three turnovers we want to get a game. Turnovers can change a game and we were fortunate to get five last Saturday. That's very hard to do, but I was very pleased with the results that we had."

On having already played a game

"Most teams make their most improvement from their first to their second game, so we're very fortunate. We're able to clean up a lot of things. I was very pleased with our tackling for a first game. I think we only missed a couple tackles for the whole game and that is unusual for a first game, so I'm very pleased with that. You make some big improvements from that first to second game in all areas."

On defensive philosophy with a quick-strike offense

"Really the West Coast Offense is a ball-control offense. A lot of times last Saturday we scored very quickly and were back on the field. We needed all the preparation we could get in that game situation, so it was good in that way. We played over 70 snaps and it very easily could have been in the 40s, but the way the game went it worked out in our favor to get those extra snaps."

On Chad Sievers' status for this weekend

"He should be ready to go. Time will tell the rest of the week, but we expect him to be ready to go."

On Southern Miss' offense

"They have the ability to run the option at any time, so we're going to have to work hard on the option this week. They have big, tall, physical receivers and their skill level is very good. The quarterback is a winner and has a very good arm. It will be a tremendous challenge for us this week."

On Ira Cooper's performance against Western Illinois

"I was very pleased, but I expect that of Cooper. He's been one of our most improved players on defense since spring ball, and certainly in fall camp he was one of our most improved guys. I was pleased with his performance, and I was very happy for him to have that type of game. He's a very physical player. He's a contact player and when you hit like he does, he's going to create turnovers by himself with the contact that he has on ball carriers. He did a lot of things well and there are very few things that he needs to get corrected. He played the ball well in zone coverage and his man coverage techniques were good. He needs to improve some of his blitz techniques, but that will come. He played two positions in the game, he's been playing two, and he will play two for the rest of the season. At this time, he's a top-three linebacker for us and is playing like a starter. He'll need to continue to learn two positions and fortunately he is a real sharp guy and he picks things up very well."

On pressure the defense was able to generate against Western Illinois

"We were switching things up a little bit with our pressures. We probably pressured more than we intended too. Situations dictate certain things and we probably did a little bit more than we normally would have. But that's a pretty good defensive line and when we get our speed guys on the field, it puts more pressure on an offensive line."

On responding after offensive turnovers against Western Illinois

"Those sudden-change situations and the situations we were put in, I think those are the truest test of the character of a defense. When you're put in those situations and respond the way we responded, I'm very pleased."

On punt returns

"We absolutely have to correct the problems we had and we will. Cory Ross is our punt returner and we wanted to get some other guys work, which we were able to do. Kade [Pittman] actually had some good returns. A couple of them need to be corrected. I think he lost the ball on the one he muffed and on the other one I think he turned his shoulders and didn't stay square on the ball and didn't watch it all the way in. Those are things we work on every day and we have to continue to work on them to improve them."

On kickoff coverage

"Some of our guys were out of position and we need to correct that."

Offensive Coordinator Jay Norvell

Opening Statement

“There are three areas we were really pleased with. The first was our first-down efficiency. We averaged 7.97 yards on first down. We had a lot of explosive plays, which we really challenged our guys to do, and we had 16 plays of 15 yards or more—nine in the run game and seven in the pass game. The third area was our red zone efficiency. That was an area we were really pleased with. We were 6-for-6 in that area and that’s something we really challenged our guys to work hard on in the offseason and spring football and training camp, so we were pleased to see that.”

“The areas that we have to shore up are, No. 1, the turnovers, which is obvious. Our No. 1 goal offensively is to secure the football and we didn’t accomplish that last weekend. Our tempo faded a little bit in the second quarter. We came out fast and we challenged our guys to do so, but we faded a little bit and we’ve got to continue to be consistent with our tempo throughout the game. Then we had a couple penalties that hurt us. One put us in a backed-up situation and another took away a big play, a touchdown to Willie Amos. Those are some areas that we really have to shore up moving into this second game.”

On Quarterback Joe Dailey’s performance

“He was very, very sharp early and focused. I think all of our guys were so ready to play after preparing for so long, and I think the air just kind of went out of our sails a little in the second quarter. Joe was really sharp in the first quarter and a half and he lost his focus a little bit and got a little careless with the ball. I think he’ll tell you those are things that he really has to be conscious of and just get back to his fundamentals and the things he’s worked on all offseason. When he does that, I think he’s very efficient.”

On Dailey looking off defenders

“Every play is its own entity. He has different reads on every play and on deeper routes we try to get him to look people off because you have to throw the ball further down the field. He has specific reads on every play and each play is different. We teach each play specifically and take repetitions that way so he learns them individually. We have a lot of plays so he has a lot to decipher. When he gets off that progression read is when he has problems. The biggest thing a quarterback has to do is stay disciplined because that’s when you don’t get into trouble. When you stay disciplined, you can avoid bad plays.”

On rotating running backs against Southern Miss

“We think we have good backs. David [Horne] wasn’t in this game, but our three backs that played were really a positive. The rushing yardage that we were able to obtain and the real positive performance by Cory [Ross] and Tierre [Green] and then Brandon [Jackson] were all positives. We really feel we’re going to have to rotate those backs because we’re going to be by committee and they each give us different strengths. I think it’s a great changeup when you bring Tierre into the game with his speed and Brandon’s a little bit more physical and that’s something different too. By committee, that’s what [Running Backs Coach Randy] Jordan has always talked about. We really need to get what we need out of that whole group of guys by rotating them.”

On Southern Miss’ defense

“They are an athletic group and they run to the ball. They give you a variety of different looks and they’ve got a great tradition of playing really solid defense. They really tie you down. You really have to play physical against these guys, you have to be assignment sound and you have to stay on top of your fundamentals and that will be our challenge this week. They are a challenging group and they are as athletic of a group as we’ll play all year. You really have to be on top of your game when you play this football team.”

On the benefits of having already played a game

“I always think it’s an advantage if you play. It’s a little bit of a disadvantage that we haven’t seen them play this year, but they have basically the same coaches. They have some new starters on defense, but we’ve gotten some good looks at them from last year’s tapes and we have a pretty good idea of their schemes. Like every team, in the offseason you study new things, and I’m sure they’ll have some new things in their package this weekend for us and we’ll do our best to prepare for what we might see from them.”