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An interview with:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome. Injury-wise we're probably about the same as we were Saturday. Greg Castillo, we're not sure what his status is. Hopefully we'll get him back. Bryan Bulaga is in the same situation. They're both day to day. We'll kind of play that out.

Captain-wise, same four guys we've been going with. We've got Tony Moeaki and Rick Stanzi on offense and Angerer and Edds on defense.

Certainly last week happy to get the win. Happy for Tyler Sash to be recognized by the Big-10 as co-defensive player of the week. Certainly very deserving. He played an excellent football game.

Then as far as Arizona goes, they're a team that has very good size, very good strength, very good athleticism, and they also have good experience. So just watching them on tape, they're a very good football team. They're a team that's got some momentum going for them, carried over from last year. They've played very well in their two opening games.

Probably two things of note, the Central Michigan win has a little bit more style points right now, if you will, based on last week. I think you can say the same thing about their win over BYU in the bowl game, based on two weeks ago results.

We all realize how good a football team BYU was and is. Look back last year, they really finished with momentum, finished with Arizona State, beat BYU, come in 2-0, beat Cal last year, played USC to a seven-point game. This is a team that's a very good team, very talented. They look very impressive on film. A credit to Mike Stoops and their entire coaching staff, their players.

I'm sure this will be a game of significance to Mike and Mark. Mark is the defensive coordinator on his staff. Always good to have former Hawkeyes home. Better if we're not competing against them. More enjoyable if they're coming for a reunion. That's not the case. That is a great family. The entire Stoops family has a great part of Iowa football history. From that standpoint it's great to have him back.

On the other hand, we're going to be competing on Saturday. I know they want to win every bit as much as we do. Ought to be a great football team. If we do our part, hopefully we'll improve more this week.

Q. Where do you think you need to improve heading into this game?

COACH FERENTZ: Everywhere. We did things better this past week. Looking at the tape, we kind of sensed that even on Saturday, there are a lot of things we need to do better right now. It's just how football is, it's certainly how the season is going to be. We did some things well. But, we're not sharp enough right now. We're going to have to step it up this week for sure.

Q. You'll have your offensive line really together for the first time.

COACH FERENTZ: Well, we'll see. That's what we thought last Tuesday. It's been like the Bermuda Triangle out there for 30 days. Hopefully one of these days we're going to be settled in. But we are moving in the right direction.

Based on last week, we settled in a little bit. Hopefully we can keep everybody afloat.

Q. Same this week at runningback, equal amount of carries?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we plan on the same rotation probably. We'll see as the game gets going. Right now that is the plan.

Q. What is it about those two guys? They seem to progress pretty quickly to where they are.

COACH FERENTZ: Neither one have much game experience obviously. I think they both have handled what we've asked them to do in a pretty good fashion. But that being said, they both have a long way to go certainly because they're younger players, first-year guys. But they've performed well so far. We're hoping to see them improve.

That's a good thing about young players, too, they tend to improve a little bit more dramatically than older guys maybe. They also tend to have a miscue or two along the way, too. We'll have to be prepared for that.

Q. With younger runningbacks, are you more worried about what they do in pass protection?

COACH FERENTZ: Two things you worry about are pass protection and ball security. I'll go back to 2004. Sam Brownlee's statistics weren't impressive. But he was on top of his assignments at all times. He also did a great job protecting the football. Those two things can get you in trouble real quickly. If you blow a pass protection, that opens the door for a turnover. Obviously, if you're handling the ball, you got to do a great job with the ball security part of it.

You look around the country, I think I was flipping around last Thursday at the Clemson game, true freshman playing, a runningback, true freshman can be playing and contributing. These guys have done a good job in practice. Hopefully we'll continue that way.

Q. All things being equal at runningback, will you generally go with a guy who has given you consistency in practice over a freshman who may have flashed here and there in practice?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. You know, you base everything off what you see in practice going into the season. Spring practice is part of that. Then once the games start, it's like any position, what happens on the game field is the most important thing at that point. But usually it's a reflection of what you see in practice.

The great unknown in Brandon's case last week was we hadn't seen him on the field. I think he elevated his play on the game field, which is always a good thing. You like to see that with any

player. It was a really good start for him. He didn't look timid out there at all, which is nice to see.

Q. A bunch of games last year, Ricky seemed to take one or two quarters to get into the flow. What can he do to try to make it so right at the beginning of the game he is more in the flow of the game?

COACH FERENTZ: Cleveland had a guy the year before I got there, actually a first round draft pick, his second or third stop, but they told me the line coach that I ended up replacing would take him out and basically go through like a half hour without with the guy. The guy had an anxiety deal. He would literally work out for half hour, come in, go through pregame like everybody else did, all that. I thought about that Saturday. Maybe that might be a good idea. I don't know. Schedule a practice or something like that.

I'm joking about it. But, yeah, we need to come out sharper there, we really do. We're working on that. I don't have any great ideas. The way my mind works is we just have to practice better. I think usually what you do in practice carries over to the game field.

Q. Is that something you talk to Ricky about, though?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. He's aware of it. He knows better than anybody he missed a couple throws. He probably cares about it more than anybody, too. I think we'll see that progress as we go along.

Q. I don't think he's the kind of guy who would need this, but do you think about a lack of competition at the quarterback position?

COACH FERENTZ: No, I don't think that's it. I don't think that's it.

Q. You touched on 2004 when you had Sam Brownlee. It's not as extreme as it was then.

COACH FERENTZ: I hope not.

Q. You have to rely on the passing game a little more?

COACH FERENTZ: I think common sense would dictate that. I know right now there's an image that Iowa just wants to run the football, which is important to us. But the idea is to score

points first of all. Secondly, don't turn the football over. So whatever you're doing, you have to keep those two things in mind.

Field position's important, too. That's a big part of football. I mean, you guys probably know I'm not the smartest coach, but if Shonn Greene is in our backfield, we may try to feed him pretty heavily. No different than Ronnie Harman back in the '80s. We found him different ways to get the ball, we wanted him to touch the ball. Shonn is not back now, he's gone. We have to find other ways to move the football. I think probably at the end of the year we'll see we were a little bit more balanced than we were a year ago, or maybe a little heavier in pass percentage. We'll see how it goes. We have guys capable in the backfield. I am hopeful that our passing game would be better than it was last year, more efficient and more effective.

But we still have work to do, there's no question about that right now.

Q. Will Bulaga practice today?

COACH FERENTZ: Not today. He is day to day right now. We will know tomorrow and more on Thursday and right on through.

He had an illness. They're doing checks right now. It's just a matter of meeting certain levels, getting okays to move forward. Right now obviously he's not practicing.

Q. They have 13 players listed at starting positions on offense.

COACH FERENTZ: I hope the officials catch it.

Q. The difference is they run. What type of challenge does that present for your defense?

COACH FERENTZ: They're a multiple football team like everybody now. They have several guys playing very well for them. Probably going into the season if you said who's their best player, it's the tight end, and he hasn't played yet, although I understand he's practicing this week. He's an excellent football player. His younger brother is a very good football player, multi-purpose guy. And the two guys that really emerged in two games would be the runningbacks. Both those guys are doing a tremendous job. Lots been written about them right now. Rightfully so. They really complement each other. They're different style backs. So in preparation it gives you

some problems there. They've got a big physical offensive line, a really good offensive line.

Q. Similarities between Iowa State's offense and their offense?

COACH FERENTZ: I wouldn't compare them. I don't think that's fair. Very different style. Whole different style football.

Q. Mike had his struggles there in the beginning. He talked about the win over BYU. Do you get the sense that's a program that's maybe beginning to turn that corner?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's what I was referring to when I said they got momentum right now. I think the record is similar to what we had in 2001. When you don't have success, it's a process typically. There aren't a lot of overnight sensations. That happens occasionally. But typically it's something that you build to.

You look at the victories I mentioned, the BYU game, the Arizona State game, huge for them, not only in conference, but in state, a big rivalry. You look at the losses, too. Look to Oregon State, who was a very good football team last year. The way they played against USC. That caught my eye, whatever weekend that was, I think it was in October of last year. I perked up on that one knowing that we were playing these guys this year.

To me it's been a process for them. I think they're starting to enjoy the profit a little bit from their hard work and it shows up on film. They're a very good-looking team on film in all regards.

Q. Talk about how your secondary will have to compensate a little?

COACH FERENTZ: We lost Greene. They lost their quarterback. He was a spark for them not only last year, but that was part of the building process, too. He really grew into a very good football player for them. They went in with two quarterbacks. I read somewhere recently that Coach Stoops mentioned Scott is going to start this week. So I guess that must be a question he has to answer. Imagine that occasionally. Yeah, this guy is a good football player, good athlete. A running threat.

Got a couple backs back there that are very dangerous. The quarterback can pull it down and run, too.

Q. Is there an opponent in recent memory that you can think of that they do compare to or they're completely different?

COACH FERENTZ: If you asked Norm, he would say they look a little bit like us a little bit last year. That's how he would describe it. That might be fair. Especially right now. They're geared to running the football. They have guys that can catch it, do a good job there. If they get the tight end back, he's a very dangerous player. He's been really effective and efficient for them. His younger brother had a big catch in the Bowl game, caught a ball down the middle for a big touchdown. I remember watching that on TV in Tampa actually, I think that was in Tampa. So, you know, they got some guys.

Q. I heard from a number of Farmers who were touched by the return of the sticker. Might that come back more often?

COACH FERENTZ: It's possible. I've heard some requests for it since that time, too. It's possible.

Q. Is there a NCAA against helmet stickers?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm a little fuzzy on that one (laughter). I'm not sure what the penalty is either. I guess that's the more important question. I know Texas has a thing on their helmet. Seems like Ohio State has a bunch on theirs, too. So I don't know. I'm not sure. Make us taking our Tigerhawks off, too. I'm not going down that road. We'll just stop right there.

Q. Is this a game that's maybe critical for national scope?

COACH FERENTZ: For them or for us?

Q. For you, in light of the Big 10. Ohio State seems to be the whipping boy, the Big 10 seems to follow right behind them.

COACH FERENTZ: I guess my thinking really has never been too global, you know, ever. I'm just more worried about how our team's doing. Whatever perceptions are, we'll go down that road again, too. You go back to the Bowl season. Texas has a pretty good team. Texas, Ohio State. I thought everybody thought Missouri had a pretty good team. Northwestern played them pretty well.

You know, I think all that stuff just comes and goes. I'm just worried about us beating Arizona. That's where my thoughts are right now because it would sure help us. It's more fun to win,

I know that. And I want us to play well, that's the most important thing.

Q. Saturday you said you were satisfied with Riley Reiff after seeing film.

COACH FERENTZ: Same. I thought he competed well. This is no slam on Adam. But he played better than Adam did the week before, and they're both first-time starters. It's hard. Your first time you're out there playing, it's hard. I go back to the first spring game. I remember the first spring game he was in, we had everybody going left, he went right. It kind of impacted me. Guy from Masonville is a little nervous. We have 20,000 people in the stands. There is a factor there when a guy hasn't played. I thought he did a good job. The good news is he'll improve. Whenever he gets that opportunity, he'll improve.

The biggest thing is he looked more comfortable playing tackle. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes guys move in. Richardson really hasn't been affected by being inside. Riley looks more comfortable. Doesn't mean two years from now we couldn't move him in there. He probably could. He just hasn't played much. I think it's probably best to keep him in one spot.

Q. I know you were on staff when Mike Stoops was a player, you worked together. Can you talk about your relationship with him and what it's been like over the years.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's hard not to include the entire Stoops family. When you meet one, they're a close family. My first exposure here, Bob was a junior at that time, a team leader, very inspirational player. Mike was younger obviously. Bob graduated. Mike stepped in and did a fantastic job. Was an excellent player, too. Maybe one of the best hits I have ever seen in Kinnick Stadium was involving him and John Frank 1983 against Ohio State. I don't know if you guys remember that, but it was right down the hash. I didn't think either guy was going to get up. They both did. Both of them were good players.

I probably know Bob better because Bob ended up being -- we were kind of coaching associates, if you will, through the mid '80s. After he graduated, he stayed on. We used to visit a lot. But I had a chance to bump into Mike a couple, three, four springs ago. They make us do the Nike -- let me rephrase that. Part of our partnership is we do a couple clinics a year with Nike. Anyway,

he and I ended up at the Orlando clinic together three or four years ago. We really had a good opportunity to sit down and visit a little bit. We ended up getting picked up at the same time, shared a ride over to the place. I think he spoke last.

We visited a little bit that evening. It was really good to catch up with him. I hadn't seen him or talked to him probably in 15 years. He was no longer clearly Mike Stoops the player, but Mike Stoops the head coach at Arizona, who is doing a great job.

Q. Is that pretty neat emotionally?

COACH FERENTZ: It's not a lot of fun to be honest with you, to see each other on the field. Fortunately or unfortunately, I've never really enjoyed -- I'd rather be playing somebody I don't know quite frankly or don't have an association with.

But all that being said, we both want to win. I'm sure both of us want our teams to do well.

Q. Different offense your defense will be facing this weekend. Talk about the adjustments to your secondary.

COACH FERENTZ: They're used to playing us in practice, practicing against us. So it's not going to be a big departure. Flip it around, it's going to be the same way for them. I'm not saying these guys are Wisconsin or Michigan State, but at least we're moving in that direction as opposed to the spread, standing around at the line of scrimmage, all that stuff, which is really popular right now.

Q. Do you remember why you picked Arizona, the non-conference team, to play?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not sure I had a vote on this one. I think to explain the logic, we've had an ongoing series with them 1982 was the return trip from 1980, I think 1980 it was 5-3 up here. I can't remember how many innings that went. We beat them in '82. We upset them. We played 1986, 1987, home and home. I think without going any further, I think this is probably scheduled before I got here, I can't remember.

But I think the logic there is we have a lot of lowans in Arizona, so when we do the return trip, hopefully when we do the return trip, we'll all show up this time. Last time we were down there, it didn't work out so well.

I think that's probably the Arizona, Arizona State logic.

Q. Would you rather prefer the eastern time zone teams?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, personally. I don't mind it now. In fact, I was hoping this was going to be 11:00 kickoff. We lost an edge there. But it's fine when we play them here. It's not good when we go there. It's not so much being there, that's not a treat, but coming back, it screws your whole week up, get back here at 6 or 7 in the morning.

Q. With all of the flu going around, impacting some football teams, has your staff done anything extra?

COACH FERENTZ: I can't believe nobody picked that up Saturday. We had a guy that was quarantined Friday night. I think we found out 7 or 8 o'clock. Friday night I was told we had a guy with a fever. He just stayed in the hotel. We got a couple guys with it right now. I imagine we'll have more to go. I saw an article talking about just on college campuses right now it's probably a national thing. So we'll have to weather the bumps.

Q. You just take it as it goes?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. They distribute hand sanitizers, you take it once a day or clean your hands once a day, try and do all the precautionary things we can. I'm sure we're going to be affected by it like everybody else, too.

Q. You're talking about the H1N1?

COACH FERENTZ: They didn't get that specific. I guess the bad thing is somebody has a fever. That's not good. Trouble with those fevers. Feed a fever and starve a cold or the other way around? Anybody know? Hopefully our medical guys do. Football players, probably feed it. I think that would be the best thing. That's something good to end on, right? Okay, thank you.

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