

August 2, 2010



An Interview With:

IOWA COACH KIRK FERENTZ

THE MODERATOR: Next up is Iowa Coach Kirk Ferentz.

COACH FERENTZ: First statement is I'm not used to getting dressed, apparently. Thanks to the hotel gift shop, I got a snazzy new belt on. A little bit young for me. But, anyway, they saved me on that one. I didn't pack very well coming in here. Not used to getting dressed up. It's been a good month.

I think everybody is certainly thrilled to be here, only because it signifies the start of things. And it will be good to get on the field with our players here at the end of the week. So we're all looking forward to that.

And I'll start just on defense and run through our offense special teams. I think a lot of you probably know more about our personnel with all the information out there than any of us.

So just go through it defensively, the first focus we have is replacing some outstanding players from last year. We had Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds, two outstanding senior linebackers, gave us great leadership as well as great play on the field. Amari Spivey out there on the corner also did a nice job. So we've got three key losses there.

The strength of our football team overall probably and certainly on the defensive yard, defensive line, we have all four starters coming back, and a young guy, Mike Daniels, has really stepped up and done a great job this past spring. We consider him to be a starter, too, so we have an opportunity maybe for a nice rotation.

And the seniors that we have, Christian Ballard -- I wasn't able to bring him -- really has played well for us four straight years, going into his fourth straight year. And then two guys that have

redshirted, Karl Klug and Adrian Clayborn, are both with us in Chicago.

Karl really played last year, his first year as a starter. Did an outstanding job and was just a half a step behind Adrian. And Adrian's just had a great season last year and is one of the better players that we've had through our program in the last decade. So we're certainly looking forward to having him back. And both those guys I think have already given us great leadership with the football team.

The linebacker position we've got Jeremiha Hunter back. He'll be a three-year starter.

A couple of guys that -- seniors that have stepped up done a nice job. Jeff Tarpinian had a good spring. He'll be a senior and he'll be the starting linebacker. Troy Johnson is a guy that stepped in for Jeremiha last year in our last ball game, ended up being the Co-Defensive Player of the Week in the Big Ten against -- in our last ball game. Troy Johnson, another guy we're counting on. And then Tyler Nielsen on the outside had a good spring, and we're looking for him to replace A.J. Edds at that position.

And then back in the secondary, kind of like our defensive line. We've got good experience certainly with our two safeties. Brett Greenwood is a senior and will be a three and a half year starter by the time he gets out, and Tyler Sash had a tremendous season last year, his second year of playing for us back there and really did a nice job, and we're excited to have him back as a junior.

And Shaun Prater on the outside did a good job at corner as well, and pleased with Micah Hyde, a young player who really did a nice job in the spring.

Offensively, we lost some good offensive linemen. Certainly over the last two years we had significant losses there. That's going to be an item for attention for us.

Tony Moeaki is one of the better players, again, we've had in our program over the past decade, and that's a big loss for us not only production, but also leadership. And Troy Strauss



visit our archives at asapsports.com

K. Ferentz - 8.02.10

on the outside.

You know, Rick Stanzi is with me. Came in with the group. He's one of the players here. And really has done a great job leading the football team. We're excited about having him back. He's excited about being a fifth-year senior. Did a lot of great things. James Vandenberg stepped in for him when Ricky had an injury last year. We feel good about him as well.

The receiver position, we've got one of the more experienced groups we've had in quite some time with Derrell Johnson (Koulianos), Marvin McNutt to name two. Allen Reisner is at tight end, and we considered him to be a starter. He'll move up to the number one position. Filled in when Tony was out last year.

And then at the running back position we've got Brett Morse, who's a veteran fullback for us, a senior, from Chicago. And then we've got three tailbacks that have all played with Adam Robinson, Jewel Hampton, and Brandon Wegher. Brandon was a true freshman last year.

And experience up front, we've got Julian Vandervelde back as a senior and excited about that, and then Riley Reiff really had a tremendous year as a redshirt freshman a year ago.

Just finishing up on special teams. We feel good about what we have there. Two local products, Ryan Donahue, who I would have loved to have brought here, is from the Chicagoland area, has really played very well for us and punted extremely well last year. We're counting on him doing the same thing next year. And a guy you don't hear much about but has done a great job is Andy Schulze, another Chicagoland area guy. Tremendous player and student and has done a great job as deep snapper.

As far as place kicking goes right now, we've got a two-way battle going right now with Dan Murray and Trent Mossbrucker, wide open. We'll see how it goes during camp.

And the returner positions right now, I think we've got some qualified guys, some capable guys. It's just a matter trying to determine who is going to be doing what, and narrow that down.

Again, we're anxious to get started, I think like everybody, and the real work begins here coming up this coming Friday. And it would be good to get back on the field.

And it goes without saying that I think every team in our conference, we're all going to have a lot of challenges in front of us. All of us play challenging schedules as a tough, competitive

league, and it's going to be certainly interesting to see what happens over the next couple of months.

With that being said, I'll throw it out try to answer your questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Can you talk about Nebraska and what the addition of Nebraska does for you as far as your recruiting base? And I have a follow-up question.

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not sure what it's going to do for us recruiting-wise, but it's a tremendous addition to our conference. Makes a lot of sense for a lot of reasons.

And I think certainly being from Iowa, I think a lot of people in our state are excited about it. And as I travel around the state, that's one of the more asked questions, you know, are we ever going to play them again in our non-league portion of our schedule. I think that will probably take care of itself now.

On that front, certainly people in Iowa are certainly excited about it. I think, more importantly, for the entire conference it's very positive. I think everybody's excited about the addition of Nebraska.

Q. (Wisconsin) Coach (Bret) Bielema talked about a rivalry game with them and talked about texting the associate commissioner about that. Is that something that you'd like to see for Iowa, to have a rivalry game with Nebraska every year?

COACH FERENTZ: I can read texts. I can't send them. I haven't gotten that far yet. I'll work on that next summer. You know, it's going to be interesting, and the one thing I do know, I've never been through an expansion process, certainly. Never been a witness to it. Things are going to be different. It's going to be a different approach totally. And I'm sure there are going to be some traditional things that get changed a little bit. I think that's just probably natural byproduct of expansion. But wiser heads are going to prevail on that. We've got people more qualified to make those decisions making those decisions.

And I think once everybody settles in, everybody will be happy and everything will work out just fine.

Q. Given your win in the Orange Bowl and Ohio State's in the Rose Bowl, and the

expectations for those two programs coming in this season along with Wisconsin, do you think the national perception of the conference is changing for the better? And, if so, how?

COACH FERENTZ: I remember coming in here in 2002 and we were getting beaten up as a league. I don't know if we even had a returning quarterback that year or anybody prominent. Brad Banks ended up having a pretty good year, and I think we had four teams in the top 13 at the end of the day, and Ohio State won the national title that year.

So a year ago or last several years there's been a lot of negative talk, however you want to put it. And I just go back a year ago. Ohio State lost a very tough game, competitive, excellent game against Texas in a bowl. I think Northwestern lost in overtime to Missouri.

Perception is one thing, but if you look at reality, you know, the truth is somewhere in the middle. You know, it was a good year for the conference last year certainly.

I've been an associate of this league. It's my 12th year going into it as a head coach. I just think the Big Ten is fantastic in all regards. I don't think we have to defend ourselves to anybody. And let the results speak as they may, and that's really what football's all about anyway. But things are going to swing back and forth, and that's just how it works.

Q. You often joke that nobody asks you for your opinion on things.

COACH FERENTZ: There's a reason for that, too.

Q. But if you had a preference on the divisional alignment and teams that maybe you would play annually, Wisconsin and Minnesota are the two you play now. Are those you'd like to see continue or do you have a preference?

COACH FERENTZ: I'll give you an honest answer. I don't have a preference. And if I did, I probably wouldn't share it right now. I really don't have a preference. Obviously there's certain things that seem logical, but anytime you go through -- if you're in charge of overseeing this whole realignment, it's not going to be just as simple as what looks to be logical.

So those are discussions that I know are going on that will continue to go on, and we'll just live with whatever gets decided.

Q. Your team was picked as the preseason No. 2 behind Ohio State who has been part of the last five Big Ten championships. What do you think about your team's chances to knock Ohio State off their pedestal?

COACH FERENTZ: Haven't had much luck. We had a great game with them last year. Great football game. If I wasn't a coach, I really would have enjoyed the game. We came out on the short end of it. It was tough to enjoy it. Great college football game. But over the long haul nobody can dispute what the records say.

Ohio State has done a tremendous job the last five years, and, really, since I go back to 1981, ever since I've been really paying attention to the Big Ten. And I know there's more than 13 years prior to that.

But they've traditionally been an outstanding program. And one thing for sure, if you're going to try to win a Big Ten Championship, you're going to have to find a way to compete with them and beat them. And not many people have had much luck doing that.

Q. Third game this season in Tucson. I know it's hard to prepare a team for heat, and I know it gets humid in Iowa this time of year anyway, but what do you do?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think the heat is as big a factor as maybe the time zone. I'm not really wild about West Coast trips during the season. I don't think it's the greatest thing in the world for a team from the Midwest or the East Coast.

But all that being said, we have a game with them. It's scheduled. I guess the good news is we did OK down there in the '80s. I remember making two trips down there as an assistant. I also remember our last trip down to Arizona, it wasn't Arizona, University of, but it was in Tempe. We had a game scheduled there; we just forgot to show up.

So it's our approach. It's going to come down to our approach. We already know right now it's going to be a 9:35 Central kickoff time, and that's going to be a late night.

So we've got a couple of months to get ready for that mentally, and hopefully we'll show up in both regards.

Q. With the positive start you had last

year going undefeated but eventually losing those two games late in the season, are you hoping to use that sort of as motivation going into the season in addition to building off your bowl win?

COACH FERENTZ: I think more importantly than the start, we have to look at how those games went, each and every one of them. We lost two heartbreakers, certainly, but if you look at the wins we had, and it goes back to the preseason rankings, what have you, I know last year it took us -- we were very fortunate to get our first win. It didn't come easy at all, Northern Iowa, took us right to the end, and we were fortunate to get out of there with the victory.

Before we went on our run it was extremely tough. It was a challenge. I expect all games to be that way this year. We're playing in a conference that's extremely competitive. We just talked about Arizona.

Before we get too far down the road or ahead of ourselves, we need to keep an eye on what's right in front of us. And really the most important right now is what we do the next couple weeks just to give ourselves a chance to compete the way we need to and have some success. But it's going to be tough for us.

Q. Kirk, running back competition, where do you see that going at camp and are there expectations for where you would like to be at that spot coming out?

COACH FERENTZ: Pardon the pun, but hopefully it's a healthier situation than it has been the last couple years.

If you go back a few years ago, Shonn Greene came out of a furniture store and gave us a heck of a boost. And then right behind him was Jewel Hampton, a kid out of high school, ended up being our number two guy and as the season went on really developed into a good football player. I thought he competed well.

Last year we had a good time keeping two guys -- getting two guys to a game healthy between Adam Robinson and Brandon Wegher.

So in a perfect world -- I don't want to get greedy here, but I'd settle for having two guys healthy at kickoff, and then a little bit of luck we might have three with game experience. I think all have improved. They're all first-year players basically, going into their second years. And all three of them made real improvement during the course of their first seasons on the field.

So we're excited about the group. I'm not sure how it's all going to shake out yet, and we'll probably determine that as we get closer to the season.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.
FastScripts by ASAP Sports