

**April 16, 2014**



An Interview With:

## **COACH BRIAN FERENTZ**

COACH FERENTZ: I'll start with a couple of words about our offensive line. We're excited. We have four returning players with what we feel is a lot of experience, real experience. We're excited to see them improve and continue to improve as we head into 2014.

And then after that, we've got a stack of guys that don't have much experience. We were fortunate to get them a little experience last year at various points in the season, but for the most part, these guys haven't really played in competitive situations. So we're a little bit excited to see who will emerge from that group and provide a little bit more depth and fill out the rest of that roster.

With that, I'd open it up to you guys.

**Q. Your Dad talked about taking o-line scholarships and moving it to other positions. Does that impact the depth chart? We have seen walk-ons competing at the No. 2 spot.**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure. We're always trying in recruiting to make our football team better. So if you compare it to the NFL Draft, we want to take the best available, and unfortunately for us, at the offensive line position over the last few years, really we haven't been able to develop some of the depth perhaps we'd like from a scholarship standpoint.

To me, where we've been fortunate is we've had some guys that have walked on to our program and paid their dues the hard way. They've really improved and elevated.

Frankly, it's kind of like the draft. I know they do this exercise in the NFL. They go back, and they redraft. You guys do that stuff. Teams obviously cannot. But the benefit of hindsight, sometimes it's 20/20, and I feel like if we could redraft some of our recruiting classes, perhaps

those guys would have had a different avenue to go to school because they've turned out to be very good players for us.

**Q. How is recruiting different coming off four wins versus coming off eight wins? Is there any noticeable difference?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not to me. I think in recruiting you're always doing the same things. You're trying to identify the guys that can help your football team. You're trying to build a relationship with them, and it's got to be a mutual fit. We're looking for players that we feel like will have success here, and that's just not being a talented athlete. That's a certain value structure or maybe how they're raised or the environment they come out of.

Generally, whether we've won four games or eight games, obviously, there's a lot more to talk about when you've won eight games from a win-loss standpoint, but there's a lot of other things about the program we're selling. When you find that mutual fit that it's a guy that shares your values and shares the values of the guys that we have on the team right now, a lot of times, the on-the-field stuff, as far as wins and losses, almost becomes secondary so that other aspect of recruiting.

Not that it's not important, but there are other issues that are just as important when recruiting.

**Q. You talk about a stack of guys. Sean Welsh maybe falls in that category. What is he doing that you like, and where does he need to improve?**

COACH FERENTZ: Sean's handled himself very well since he stepped on campus, really going back to the recruiting process. He acts like one of our type of guys. He plays like one of our type of guys.

What he needs to improve on is playing.

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He hasn't played very much. That's not his fault, but he needs to get more experience and continue to grow, and the only way to do that is to play. That's what he needs to do right now. That's what's happening in the spring. That's what will happen in the fall.

Obviously, he needs to continue to compete as well. We're not ready to anoint anyone.

**Q. You have two rotating guys at the left guard spot where he is, or are you mixing and matching across the line to see your best five?**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure, we're always looking for the best five. I know that's been discussed ad nauseam by myself, by Coach Morgan, by Coach Philbin, by my dad. Sometimes it's more apparent. Sometimes the pieces don't have to move as much. I think maybe this year is one of those years because we have some guys coming back that have experience.

We have what we feel like are really two experienced tacklers. I know Andrew Donnel hasn't started a game at tackle. He's played a lot of games at tackle for us during the course of the game, and he's obviously worked a lot in practice. We're fortunate last year he didn't have to play very much tackle. So we feel like we have two experienced tacklers.

We feel like we have an experienced center coming back, a guy that's played a lot at that position and gained a lot of experience the year before in another position. We feel like we have a guard on the right side who has started over the course of two years a few games -- he hasn't necessarily played the entire game, but he's played a lot of football.

Where we're really trying to figure something out is probably at that left guard position. I think what will happen is you saw last year, if we could play six guys, if we could play seven guys, if we feel like we have that kind of depth, we'll play those guys because we feel like that's very good for our football team, not just for the guys or for the unit, but for the team to have that kind of depth, be gaining that kind of experience. If we can do that again, we'd love to do that.

Last year that rotation kind of settled on the right guard spot, and what that means is it was really simple. The other four guys we felt like were on a certain level, and then the next two or three guys, towards the end of the season, we felt like

we're playing at a high enough level that they should be competing for us on the field, but we didn't feel like they were playing at a high enough level to displace those other four guys.

That's why the left guard kind of became a hot spot there as far as bringing guys in and out of the football game.

If we could do that again this year at left guard, we'd like to do that, but I'm not naive enough to sit up here either and tell you that the same five guys are going to start every football game for us this year. I think we were fortunate last year, but I don't think that's a realistic expectation.

Right now, if you were to see us practice, what you would see is guys playing different positions. Maybe some of the young guys are in one spot because you don't want to cross-train them as much, you want to get them a little more comfortable. But certainly as they get older, they're working at guard, they're working at tackle, they're working at center. They're doing those things so that we can make sure, no matter what happens in the fall, that we have five competent guys on the field.

That's the goal. Do we always get there? I'm not sure.

**Q. Coach Kennedy and others have kind of credited you as being the guy who got them on Twitter and got them onto social media. Is that something generationally you picked up, or were you picking that up before you even came back to Iowa?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'd say that was recruiting-based, how I got into that.

I was laughing the other day, my phone broke. My daughter smashed my phone. So it's like in a million pieces. So I have to go to Verizon because they have to set it up. I don't even know how to activate it and all that, and the guy was laughing, and he actually said -- he recognized me, and he said, Well, I thought you were the technologically advanced one, and I said, yeah, but within reason.

The thing about social media is I understand how to tweet. I understand how to Facebook. I understand how to e-mail and do all those things. I would say that Bobby and Chris have taken it to another level. They're probably much more proficient even than I am.

I just think that all that stuff certainly is

generational, and it's very important to recruiting because it's the only way we can contact prospective student-athletes. We can't text them. Right now we're in a block where we can make a phone call, one over a six-week period, which is not very efficient, and especially when you're dealing with 16, 17-year-old guys, they don't like talking on the phone. Some of you guys probably have teenagers, and if you text them, you probably get a quicker response.

We can't do that either, but that direct message aspect of social media becomes our avenue for communication with those guys. As far as the other aspect, the more public aspect of it, I really think -- I think it's just based on your personality. I know I've said that to you guys before. If our head coach was on Twitter, I think it would become very apparent to everyone that he wasn't running his account because that's not very much in his personality.

For my personality, I think what you see, what I put out there, that's what I'm comfortable with whereas what you see with Bobby or Chris, those guys are more comfortable maybe sharing a little bit more. It's just unique to every person, I think.

**Q. In basketball, they have prohibited social media. Is that something that you talked with them about?**

COACH FERENTZ: The last thing that anybody in the basketball program wants is a former mediocre wrestler talking to them about sets or out of bounds plays or anything like that. So I've never had a conversation with anybody in Iowa basketball other than friendly banter and good luck and best wishes and things like that.

I think the things that happen in their building, they determine the course of action and what they want to do. As far as what happened with that, I don't really have much comment other than what I've said publicly about it.

**Q. Last year you tweeted about stadium experience, and that kind of blew up. What was your point and what -- do you see any changes?**

COACH FERENTZ: I knew that question would come up. You surprised me on that question. I knew this question would come up. There's one more I'm waiting for. We'll see if we get to that. Let's see who drew the short straw on that one.

As far as my tweet last year, what I tweeted was exactly what I meant. I had a pretty good understanding of what might happen, and I shared that information publicly. Again, it goes back to whatever your personality is, what you're comfortable sharing, what you're comfortable commenting on from a social standpoint.

I don't tweet about politics. I don't tweet about other things like that. I made a comment about something that I thought was relevant. Has it improved? We'll find out when we get to August.

But I know this. From the standpoint of the Iowa football program, what we're trying to do is provide our fans with the best possible experience on a weekly basis. That starts with us winning football games, and certainly that's important, but also just the standpoint of what are our fans -- our fans have options nowadays, unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, and I know the NFL is dealing with it, and we're trying to deal with it.

What we want to do is provide the best possible experience for our fans because we value our fans and we value their support and we value the contributions, financially and from a time standpoint, that they make to support us. That's why we go to West Des Moines, and that's why we do things like that. We'd love to do more things, kids days. We're always looking to augment what is on the field with some more exposure or access or the general experience, whatever that may be.

So we'll find out, I think, as we get to August, if we've made any progress there or not. I can assure you, from our standpoint, we intend on winning more than eight games. So we're trying to do our part.

**Q. Report about you and the NFL.**

COACH FERENTZ: So you got the short straw. Did you guys flip over this? I won't even let you finish the question.

What I'll tell you guys is this. What I'm here to talk about is the 2014 Iowa football season, and what we plan on doing, what we're working on doing right now. As far as things like that, I never made a public comment, and the reason was very simple. There was no need to make a public comment. I'm the offensive line coach of the University of Iowa, and I'm very happy to be the offensive line coach of the University of Iowa. I have a great job.

**Q. I don't know how you talked Brandon Scherff into staying, but his presence really kind of saved the day for you guys at tackle. Without him, there's a pretty big deficit experience-wise. How did you sell it? Was there even a sell? It seemed like he wanted to come back.**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure. I don't think you can sell a guy like Brandon into coming back for his fifth year. I don't think it's a recruiting job. I don't think it's anything that the head coach or the strength coach or myself said to him. I think Brandon wants to be here. You would have to ask him that question, I know you have, and he's answered it. I would tell you that's the reason he's here.

What I would tell you about Brandon from my standpoint -- and you try not to brag on players too much. And I know I sat up here last year, and I answered a lot of questions about Brandon Scherff this and Brandon Scherff that, and I tried to temper the enthusiasm because at that time he really hadn't done very much. I feel very different about him a year later.

Brandon has a lot of things to improve on. He needs to become a much more complete player, run game, pass game, leadership. There's a lot of things he needs to do better for us. He would tell you the same thing, I think. That's why he's going to continue to improve. He thinks right. That's the best quality he has is that he thinks right. That being said, that's my disclaimer.

I will share my love letter to Brandon Scherff with you guys now because if this guy doesn't get recognized for what he is moving forward, I think it would be a real travesty. There's not a better offensive lineman in college football, that's my opinion, and I think you guys know after two years -- and some of you knew me well before then -- I don't say things like that lightly. That's coming from his coach, but I think that's coming from a very objective place.

In my opinion, he was the best offensive lineman in our conference last year, and I got a chance to see through Bowl preparation, some tape of some other very good offensive linemen in the Southeastern Conference, and I would have stacked him up against any of those guys.

I know NFL guys do work and they care about certain things, I understand that, the draft process, but in my estimation, he was certainly one of the best football players in the country last year. I don't know if he deserved -- or received the proper recognition for that. I would expect him to

this year. If he doesn't, I don't know what people are watching or what they value or what's important.

But he does everything right. He plays football the way football is supposed to be played, and he acts the way football players are supposed to act on the field, off the field, in the building, out of the building.

Basically, as long as PETA or animal rights groups don't get involved, I think he should be pretty popular. They may not like him so much.

**Q. How do you compare him to other college linemen. How would you put him in a category with guys that have been here in recent years, like past decade or something?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think that's a good question. I'm not sure it's fair to Brandon or to those guys. What I would tell you is I would put him in that category, and I think that's the most fair thing to say about any of them.

I just saw Marshal Yanda upstairs. He was training. I think he's going into his tenth -- ninth or tenth, it's hard to believe. Here's a guy that's an All-Pro, that's a Pro Bowl player, that's a Super Bowl champion.

You look at a guy like Riley, who was with us for a lot of the off-season. On a side note, I wasn't fortunate enough to coach Riley. Coach Morgan coached Riley and helped him become the player he is. But from a work ethic standpoint, I don't know how many starting left tackles in the NFL were in the building with their college football program at 6:30 in the morning on Saturdays helping younger players there to become better players in the future while they were polishing their own skills. I don't think many guys probably were. That's why he will continue to play at a high level in the NFL.

I'd put him in the same category as Riley, Marshal, Bryan Bulaga, another guy who's a Super Bowl champion. I'd put him in the same category as Robert Gallery, Bruce Nelson, Eric Steinbach. Guys like that have paved the way. How does he compare to every one of those guys? I don't know. They're all really good. I'd take them all. I'd put him in the conversation. I think that's fair.

Now, he's got to live up to all this. I would just throw that disclaimer out there. That's part of the challenge that he has right now. He's garnered a lot of attention and rightfully so. He needs to continue to elevate his level of play.

**Q. Brian, how important was your dad's decision to add Reese Morgan to the staff?**

COACH FERENTZ: For me?

**Q. For just the program in general.**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it was a huge moment for the program. It was a huge moment for me personally because it gave City High a chance to beat West High, which I greatly appreciated in 2000.

But Coach Morgan, you look at what Coach Morgan has done, he's coached NFL players at the tight end position. He's coached NFL players at the offensive line position, and right now he's coaching NFL players at the defensive line position. And I think history will bear all that out as we go here.

But I think sometimes what he doesn't get credit for is, if you look at the NFL players that we've developed at the University of Iowa, if you went back and you looked at all these guys, the guys that go to the combine, the guys that get drafted, the guys that go on and have good NFL careers, successful NFL careers, I'd challenge to you go back and take a look at where they're from and who recruited them and who identified a guy like Chad Greenway, who was playing eight-man football. He may have been playing nine-man. They've got some goofy deal. He was playing quarterback and safety on a field with less than 11 guys. He was playing basketball, and he was triple jumping.

You look at a guy like Matt VandeBerg, who contributed for us last year, and a lot of people didn't even know who he was going into the season. Here's a guy, is he going to gray shirt? We've got a scholarship open, bring him to training camp, and he produces more than any other freshman we had on the roster.

Who finds these guys? Who identifies them very early in their high school career, sometimes earlier than that? And who recruits them and sells them to the rest of the staff when there's perhaps not as much tape, not as much evidence as a guy from, say, Chicago where I recruit, where you can say, well, look at who he's playing against. Look at all these guys. Look at this field. Look at all the players on this field. This is what he does.

You can't always say that about a guy like Brandon Scherff, who's running around playing quarterback at 290 pounds and then tight end his

senior year, but he throws a shotput 65 feet and does all those things.

James Ferentz -- and maybe that's a bad example because how can you miss a guy like that? But there weren't a lot of people recruiting him, and he played at a pretty high level for us, was an all-Big Ten player. You go down the list.

Guys that are on our current roster right now. Boone Myers is a perfect example, a guy that's really doing a lot as a freshman, as a first year player for us, and here's a guy that played tight end in a single wing in Webster City, Iowa. I promise you, the only other people that knew about him were Coach Nelson and the guys, you and I.

So you look at all these guys, and what's Reese Morgan's impact on the program? I'd start with them, and then I'd go all the way through to the way we think, the way we act, the way we do things. You're not going to find a guy who's more Iowa than Coach Morgan, you're just not. Humble, hard-working, and he has a saying -- you can throw this back at him, and he'll wonder how you found out. He believes in prideful simplicity, and I think that's well said.

**Q. You brought up the rotation that you had at the right guard spot, and now it seems like Jordan has that. What are the areas of his game that you're looking to see now that he is probably going to get more snaps at that position than he did a year ago?**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure, consistency. I think that's what it boils down to for anyone. That's the difference, if you look at last year, and it's certainly no knock on Jordan or Andrew or Nolan. But you look at Connor, Brandon, Austin, and Brett, from a consistency standpoint, those four guys were more consistent than the other three, and that's why they didn't come out of the football game, and that's why the other three guys rotated.

So for Jordan, what he has to improve is his consistency. He's capable of being a great player, and he flashes that at times. He needs to do that all the time. That's what we're looking for, and he knows that. I expect at this point in his development, he's older. He's a year older. He's a fourth year guy, and I would expect to see that from him.

**Q. There's seems to be a tradition of being a great team when flying under the radar,**

**and then people start putting them up expectation-wise and maybe they don't live up to them. Is that fair, that you'd rather be under the radar, or do you mind being a favorite?**

COACH FERENTZ: We have no control over that. That's you guys, with all due respect. And I only have to ask you two guys and Pat that if you guys write a story about me and it's not my picture, my grandmother will be really upset. I just want to make sure you guys get that right, and I know it's not you guys, but I felt that needed to be said.

The question you're asking, hey, we can't control any of that. What we can control is the way we show up every day and go to work. That's it. We come to work every day, and we're trying to improve, and we're trying to become a better football team and have a better understanding conceptually of what we're doing, do a better job of executing our assignments and learning the things we need to learn to be successful. That's what we control.

We can't control expectations. We can't manage those. We can't do any of that. We have to focus on what we're doing in this building, and maybe, if we haven't lived up to those expectations in the past, maybe that's our fault. It's certainly not your guys' fault. We probably need to do a better job of improving as a football team and not worrying about what's going on outside of this building.

**Q. How is Ryan Ward doing?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's doing very well. He's been working at tackle. He's working some at guard. He's one of those guys, along with Sean, along with Boone Myers, along with Mitch Keppy. There's a whole tier of guys that are really competing to earn some playing time.

I didn't see Coach Morgan in here. Did you just walk in here? I sufficiently embarrassed you, I think.

**Q. C.J. Fiedorowicz seemed to make real strides as a blocker over the last two years. Do you expect the same type of movement upwards from Ray Hamilton and Henry Coble? Are they capable of becoming the online blocker that he was?**

COACH FERENTZ: Certainly, I hope they did. C.J. improved. Coach Dave Rye worked very closely with him to help him improve, and Coach D.J. Hernandez did the same thing last year. With D.J. working with Ray and Henry and Jake Duzey,

Jon Wisnieski and all of those guys, I'm hoping we'll see some of the same improvement.

One thing about Iowa football, we're going to count on the tight ends to help us win football games. They need to block. They need to run. They need to catch, and they need to do all those things. I think we need to see improvement in all those areas from those guys, but I do think they're capable, and they've shown improvement so far this spring, and I think that needs to continue. Obviously, their role is going to become much increased with the loss of C.J.

## COACH REESE MORGAN

COACH MORGAN: Before I talk about the guys, just a couple of general statements. First of all, it's really great to be here today. There's two of us who work with the defensive line, Eric Johnson. I'm just really proud to work with him. He does a tremendous job.

Eric played in this defense at Vanderbilt under Norm Parker. He was a GA. He did the playbooks. He knows this defense in and out. And he's been just a great guy. He's a great teacher, very humble guy, and I really enjoy working with him and value our time. I think we're a great team.

The second thing is that last season was extremely rewarding as a coach because of the players and the people you work with, and we've got a great group of guys. We love going in the room and working with and having the opportunity to do that, and I can say the same thing about our coaching staff.

In the defensive room, we've got some interesting characters, and everybody's got positive input, and we really feel good about that. I'll talk now about LeVar Woods. You've talked to him already before. LeVar has played here. He's played in the NFL. He's coaching here. And you won't find a better person, a guy that cares more deeply about people and has such an unbelievable background. Great teacher, excellent coach.

Jim Reid, you talk about a guy that's enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and has great wisdom. The way he got our linebackers to play last year, my wife was impressed. He did a tremendous job with those guys, and he's just a cornucopia of ideas.

Then you go to Phil, you know, he got back coaching a position last year, and it really

was a benefit for us. He is an outstanding position coach. But the things you don't see probably is the leadership he provides for us in that room and the way he is in our meetings with our guys. I wish you could videotape that sometime because he does a masterful job of keeping things simple.

He's been around Norm, and he has identified that trait and characteristic to take a very complex task and make it simple.

And then it really all starts with our head football coach, Coach Ferentz. The thing that he's done in 25 years here. What he's done, his commitment to this university. His three sons have played and are playing here, are coaching here. His three kids are raised here.

Just the type of human being and the example he sets -- humble, intelligent, tough minded, pretty doggone honest, and does things right. It's great to be here.

**Q. Coach, are you comfortable where the defensive line is now?**

COACH MORGAN: No.

**Q. Going back to two years ago when you didn't have much depth, do you feel like you've kind of built it back to where you've got some depth and getting it back to where you like it?**

COACH MORGAN: We have a lot of work to do. We're still a work in progress.

That first spring football practice, we were Custer, and the offense were the Indians at Little Big Horn out there the first 9-9-7 of practice. We had a lot of work to do and so forth. We had a great group of guys that bought in and so forth.

I think we're at the point now where our guys understand the expectations. We're trying to teach fundamentals over and over and over again. You would be absolutely bored to death trying to watch us teach stuff. We actually think it's exciting. We think it's fun. And we know it's the most important thing is to just go ahead and try to create muscle memory and do the same things over and over and over again until you get them.

I think we've gotten to the point where we are a more experienced unit, probably the most experienced unit on the team with three guys that started almost every game and one guy that started half the season.

We are not there. No, we're not comfortable with it, and I certainly hope nobody in our defensive line feels comfortable because I

know the coaches don't, and especially after watching us the other day.

**Q. What are your expectations for defensive ends? I know everybody attaches pass rush to them, and I think backs are so hard to get anymore. That's a whole different deal. What are your expectations?**

COACH MORGAN: I'm glad you said that. The defensive ends, there's two different things here. We are playing with guys that in a lot of programs would be defensive tackles. Mike Hardy was a defensive tackle a year ago. We moved him out because of our needs.

We're playing with guys that, number one, take care of their job. They have a run responsibility. They have a key they're going to read. They have a certain way they're going to take on blocks and get off of blocks. That's the number one thing.

On third downs or passing downs, we, as many or most teams do in the NFL, most teams are doing in college football right now, you have a special package you're going to put in the game where you're trying to get speed on the field and so forth, and our package was very productive for us last year, and we feel pretty good about it.

So I think we have the group of guys that are going to be out there primarily down situation, and then you're going to have a special unit or group of guys which may comprise of other people outside the D-line that go in on passing situation, and I think that's really helped us.

So at a defensive end, we want -- who's the number one guy? Clowney at South Carolina. Okay, we want to recruit three Clowneys every year, and defensive linemen are really one of the hardest things to find.

We just sat in this very room three hours ago and went through our top defensive ends. They're great athletes, but they also have offers from a lot of different places. So we do have to be realistic about who we can get and how we can develop him and what we can do within our framework to play our team defense because ultimately it's all about the team.

**Q. Last year you had a healthy Carl Davis. How did that impact the defense, or how did that make better in a sense? Is that going to be the same case again this year having Carl healthy?**

COACH MORGAN: That's a great thing, and last year was the first time he was healthy consistently. I think what happened, as much as the health, was that Carl really grew up and matured.

Carl spent a lot of time a year ago studying and understanding and learning the defense, developing a lot of knowledge about it and a lot of confidence. But once he got on the field, he backed it up with action.

I recall vividly one of our earlier scrimmages where we did a period called tempo, where we're going against the no-huddle group. Carl's going to be in there ten plays. Coach, after four, I'll tap my head or raise my hand, and you can get somebody in for me. After four plays, he's okay. After six plays, he's okay. Eight plays. He kind of looked to the sideline, and I just smiled at him and waved and kept going and going.

That was the defining moment for me that, hey, I can go out, and I can play 60, 70 snaps a game. Now, we're probably playing him more than we need to. We'd like to back that down maybe a few snaps, but Carl has really developed that and has taken a lot of pride in what he does there. And being healthy is absolutely paramount.

**Q. Carl was talking before the Outback Bowl about how long it took him to get on the field. He was talking about how Jaleel Johnson was saying, "Boy, I want to play," and he was telling him, "you've got to wait your turn and earn it." I know you want guys that want to play, but as a coach, how do you temper it between wanting to play and showing what they have to do to play?**

COACH MORGAN: I think the tape is probably the best way to do that. Hopefully, in the classroom we're doing a real good job of identifying this is what we're looking for. These are the techniques, the production. This is a good play. This isn't a good play. This is how we want to do this as compared to that. And then do your responsibility.

Over time, a young guy like Jaleel, who really has ability and desire to get on there, just understands that, hey, I've got to demonstrate in practice on a consistent basis that I can do this job. Once I get to the point where I understand that, I can execute it, and I can be productive within the team framework of the system, that's really good.

We want guys that are hungry. If that young guy is better than a guy that started for three years, he'll play if he knows what to do.

We're going to play who we feel, based on practice, are the best guys.

**Q. You've had situations where two years ago it seemed like everything started to click for Louis, and then last year it was Carl. Is there anybody right now that you're seeing in spring practice where you see things are finally starting to be there for them?**

COACH MORGAN: I think there's a lot of guys -- I think realistically, there's 19 guys in our room. One is not participating because he just had surgery. But the rest of them are just really -- everybody's showing some progress, and everybody's doing some things that are improving.

That as a coach is what you take pride in is the fact that, okay, we saw on tape. We just watched tape yesterday for 90 minutes. What we worked on, are we seeing a guy try to do that correct technique today, when we practice today? If we're seeing that, then we're on the right tack. If we're seeing the same old stuff or a guy that's maybe afraid to get out of his comfort zone and try something different, then we've got to find ways to get him to take that step.

But to identify somebody, I think Carl's improved. Louis is not with us a lot because Louis is in grad school, and he's got conflicts that interfere with practice. So it's hard to really put an evaluation on that.

I think both of our -- I'll tell you what, Nate Meier is really coming on. I would say that Nate Meier is a tough son of a gun. He's really doing things where he's a 235, 240-pound guy taking on a 300-pound tackle, and I think he's demonstrated to us that he can be an every down guy, and I think other guys have stepped up. He might be a guy that's kind of in that category.

I think our young tackles are improving. Riley McMinn is coming around, and he's finally healthy. In fairness to all our guys, I should mention each guy because I think every guy has really made some progress.

**Q. Have you found it easier or more difficult to recruit offensive linemen or defensive linemen since you've been doing this?**

COACH MORGAN: I don't know that. I know that kind of offensive linemen -- I think I have a pretty good idea what Coach Ferentz wants here, the kind of players that are going to be successful



in it our system.

I think that being said, we also have a pretty good handle on what we can -- the type of guys that we can get as a defensive lineman. However, in the recruiting areas that I recruit, there probably are more guys that would tend to be offensive linemen from that standpoint compared to defensive linemen.

Clowney isn't in Springville, Iowa. He's not there. But we can find a guy like a Matt Nelson right up the road that we think can be a great player. A guy that maybe he's a hybrid. Maybe he did some really good things in camp that impressed us, his tape was good. But I think it is a little tougher. I know a lot of programs have to go national to recruit defensive linemen.

I think you can find inside guys. We'd love to find all of our guys within a five-hour radius. That's probably the best thing so their parents can come watch them play. Sometimes you have to travel a little bit further to find those special guys.

**Q. Brian Ferentz was talking about your prideful simplicity. What does that mean?**

COACH MORGAN: It's something I wrote up on the board. I read it in a book. I don't know if that's a mantra, to be honest with you. I think as teachers, our job is to keep things as simple as possible, and if we can do that and we take great pride in what we're doing and we understand that we're just a small piece of the whole team and everybody's got a job to do, and, yeah, we want to make a tackle and we want to make -- but if we take care of our technique, that's going to free up our linebackers, that's going to help our cornerbacks, and so forth, and when we get that opportunity, we take advantage of it.

I have everything you can imagine written on my wall. We have kind of wall talkers. You can write on them like your grandkids did with crayons, only we do that as professionals. That's kind of overrated, to be honest with you.

**Q. Are you searching for a number three defensive end? It seems like that's probably the hottest spot you have going.**

COACH MORGAN: I think Nate has earned the trust and confidence. We've got three guys right now, 95, 98, 34, that can play there. I think there's other guys that are contestants. We have six practices to go. I think 94 and 49 are guys that are doing some stuff. 75 is going in and out and so forth.

You really want to play -- last year we played six guys predominantly, three inside, three outside, and then 34, Nate, was our special teams package. So we played seven guys.

Right now there's probably 11 guys where you say I think in some way, shape, or form, these guys have an opportunity to get on the field and be successful, but they have to demonstrate it in practice situations, scrimmage situations.

**Q. Last year the three senior linebackers really were leaders of this team, and you mentioned the experience the D-line has. Do they have the potential to step up and be that vocal leader this year as well?**

COACH MORGAN: I don't know about a vocal leader, but I do know this. We lost three great linebackers. In addition to being great players, they're great young men, and they were great leaders in their own right.

We've got some guys up front that are different kind of leaders. I think Louis is the kind of guy that, if I turned on tape and you watched it here with us for five minutes, Louis would stand out. But it's just with his effort and such.

I think Carl Davis is really becoming a leader for us. He's trying to be a vocal leader. He's one of the Hawkeye Challenge captains as elected by his teammate. So he's really, really working hard, and I think it's reflective in some of the ways he's playing. And he is, by his own self-admission, he has work to do to improve and so forth.

But I think those are two guys right now that are showing some leadership. They've been identified -- I think anybody that's been on the field has earned the respect of the other guys in the room because of that. Drew Ott, 95, he's out there. He doesn't say much, but he's extremely tough. This kid thinks he's a lot better than he really is, which is really a great testament to his high school program and his parents and what he's hearing here.

But he's a pickup truck. Reliable, he starts every day, he's tough, he works hard, you can load him up, he's not afraid of anything. You can take him on the interstate. You can take him on a dirt road. That's the kind of guy he is. And I think Mike Hardy is in that boat as well.

And a guy that doesn't play, a guy that's a senior that I just met with this morning, Wil Rathjen, senior, he's a leader on this football team.

He's down on the other end of the field with the scout team, and he takes great pride in his role on the team.

And hopefully the leadership -- and that's just something we talked about yesterday in our points of emphasis, everybody in the room has a responsibility for leadership, and the best thing that they can do as a leader is to do your absolute best every snap, every rep, study, treat people the right way, do things the right way.

It's more than just blocking and tackling. It really is. It's about preparing people for life. And that may sound corny, but I believe it.

**Q. We got to see Nathan Bazata and Brant Gressel Saturday. They look like they're fun players for you. They're developing, and I think they take the coaching well. It seems that they're on the right path.**

COACH MORGAN: I think they're in the right direction. Bazata is an interesting guy. He's working with the second group right now. He studies extremely well. He's really tough. He's a very quiet, humble kid. He's headed in the right direction. He's really showing us some things.

And Gress, he's out there. He's improving. He's really shined here the past couple of weeks. But both of them are projects, please. They really are. But in terms of fun to coach, they're great to coach. I can't think of a guy in our room that's not fun to coach. There really isn't.

You may not see that or you may hear something come out of our mouths that may not sound like a fun adjective, but we are really having a great time out there.

**Q. Your ability to look under rocks to find recruits. Do you have a blueprint for that?**

COACH MORGAN: No, I think that's very overrated, to be honest with you. I really think coming from a background where you have to develop -- you're in Benton community, and you have to -- you're recruiting guys that come out for your team. You're at West High, you're trying to get guys to -- you have to develop the guys that you've got.

So some guys that may not be as pretty and attractive, may not have the stars, you may see, there's a guy that could really be good. And you look for him. Maybe you find him on a track. Maybe you see him on a wrestling mat. Maybe you see him on a basketball court or hear about him. But most of those guys that we find out about, usually we've been recruiting since they've

been maybe in eighth grade, ninth grade, you hear about them.

And that's the luxury, the nice thing you have about recruiting in the Midwest, specifically Iowa, most of the coaches you know, and they can pick up the phone and say, hey, I got a call last night from a kid of a guy I played college ball with. Hey, there's a kid over at this school I'm coaching here, and you're going to find out by word of mouth.

I think there's a lot of different avenues, and I think good players are good players, whether they're from eight man -- we've got four eight-man guys on our D-line right now. Whether they're 8 man, 9 man, 12 man, 11 man, wherever, I think you can find players.

**Q. I know you worked really hard to get Matt Nelson. In fact, I think at last year's spring game, you were hollering at him, hey, why don't you come in and play a couple of plays. I know you also don't rely on true freshmen to walk on and compete. It was only necessary with Drew Ott five years ago, but is he capable of walking in and competing for playing time?**

COACH MORGAN: He's shown some things on tape that are pretty good. Gosh, we hope that we don't have to, but if there is a freshman, him or somebody else, that comes in and demonstrates that they've earned the opportunity, the right to at least take a look at and get some reps with the first or second group, that certainly could be a possibility.

It would be a disrespectful for our current players to say we're counting on a guy that's a freshman coming in and playing because everything has to be earned.

**Q. What's it like -- you recruited Brandon Scherff. What's it like going up against him every day now in practice, and how is that helping your D-line get better?**

COACH MORGAN: First of all, going against our entire offensive line. Our offensive line is very talented, extremely well-coached. Brian does a great job. He's much, much better than his predecessor at that position. That's a fact. He's done a great job with those guys.

And Brandon is a special guy, and he's that way. Brandon -- a lot of guys will come back, and he had an opportunity. A lot of guys will come back, and they'll just kind of, okay, just kind of go

through and maybe worry about, hey, I don't want to get hurt. Every rep he's trying to go 100 percent. He's trying to punish guys.

Him and Ott have got a little thing going, and believe it or not, Brandon's winning most of those. But Drew and Riley and Mike and whoever's going against him is really a chance for them to improve. So it's a tremendous opportunity, tremendous opportunity for our guys, for any of our guys to go against him.

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