

October 11, 2014

An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Certainly we're thrilled to get the victory today. I'm proud of the guys. They played hard. Good effort.

Indiana is a good football team as well. We knew that coming in. They played extremely hard. A good football game. A little bit unusual football game, different than we're used to being in, especially that first half. The swarm guys did a lot of good things. The biggest thing is they finished up with the victory. So we're happy about that and we'll move on tomorrow.

Q. Fourth and one, snapped the ball. Looked like you were going to the left side, then to the right. Did you change the play there (end of first half)?

COACH FERENTZ: We did. They got a good look at it. Good timing on their part. We just decided to change.

Q. Looked like you converted Tommy Gaul to the center?

COACH FERENTZ: That's one of the good stories today for sure. We talk about next man in all the time and I just said on the radio last Friday night, I was standing at a high school game with Tommy. He could run for office. Everybody loves him there. Tremendous young guy.

His character really showed up today. He's been practicing well. And Jordan came out early and so we just shifted Austin out and put Tommy in there. He did a really nice job.

Q. Momentum-wise, everyone gave you a lift after halftime?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, just the way the game was going. They would hit three really big plays on us in that first half. So looked like we were going to need points.

And it didn't affect field position. It was the end of the half. We have faith in our guys. We wanted to play aggressively at that point.

Q. Where did that play come from, from upstairs, the switching sides?

COACH FERENTZ: All the coaches are in communication on that. They saw the play. We felt it was best to change it.

Q. A play on the quarterback for the whole game or just kind of a --

COACH FERENTZ: We had a couple of plans. And one of the scenarios we forgot to cover is what unfolded today. It was just a wild game. Weird game.

You play things by feel. And nothing's really changed. We like both guys.

Q. First half, looked like you were playing basketball?

COACH FERENTZ: Basketball or arena ball. I couldn't make up my mind. We're the birthplace of arena football. Probably appropriate today.

I'm not fond of a scoring contest that's for sure but, boy, looked like it had the chance to be one.

Q. Jake played for quite a while, pretty sharp out there. Did it surprise you how sharp he was?

COACH FERENTZ: No, he's been practicing well. So we thought he'd play well and we thought C.J. would play well also.

Q. You see this team finally get off to such a great start. How did that all come together and how nice was that to see?

COACH FERENTZ: We made some big plays which is obviously helpful. Not just offensively. But Desmond coming up with that pick six, got a good jump on that ball and then finished it.

Next thing you know there's a spark or two and good to go. And we didn't quite finish the way we wanted to at the end of the game. They played hard. It was good to get off to a fast start. We haven't done that in a while for sure.

Q. Big picture, you called one timeout when you had ten men on the field, one time you had 12 on the field and two onside kicks.

How disappointed were you?

COACH FERENTZ: There's going to be a ton of things to talk about tomorrow. The ones you pointed out, burned two timeouts for really dumb things. Those are things that are going to cost you games at some point.

The onside kick -- they did one last week too. We might have talked about it, covered it a couple this time. But you'd never know it watching us play.

That's just bad coaching on our part. And it reminded of Bill Parcells as a young coach. I think it was at Hastings College. Hey, coach, I covered that 43 times with the guy this week. And the head coach told him you better do it 44. That's kind of what it looked like a little bit. We'll have to get some of that stuff corrected.

Q. Jonathan Parker has been a big play guy. Even without the ball. At Purdue, didn't give it to him maybe three times. It affected the play. To give it to him on that jet sweep, not only the way he performed, but also your blocking. I think Jacob Hillyer and Jake Duzey did a really good job.

COACH FERENTZ: There was a headline I saw somewhere that suggested we hadn't lost faith or are getting faith back in him. Just for the record, he had two tough plays in that Ball State game but I don't think anybody was ever down on Jonathan -- I want to make sure that I clarify this: He really practiced well last December when we were getting ready for the bowl. That's when we saw him start to come.

And I thought he had a really good spring. Good camp. So when you've got a young guy out there, a guy who hasn't played, he's going to go through some tough times. Two like that, probably not desirable. But it happens.

It just wasn't for a lack of trying or concentration. So we're staying with them just because he's been working so hard and doing good things in practice. And that's all you can evaluate.

So it's hard to get down on anybody that is doing things day-after-day in a good fashion. So I think he's trying to help our football team. I'm really happy about that.

Conversely, some of the mistakes that were pointed out and some of the things that you see that are the result of somebody maybe not being as consistent with their effort and their commitment to getting better.

Those are a little bit frustrating, and those probably have to be addressed a little bit better by me. So we'll have to do a little better job on that front.

But going back to JP, he's just been working hard. He's really carrying himself like a winning football player and it's really fun to watch that.

Q. The blocks they had from Hillyer, blocked two guys on that.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, those guys are doing a good job. That's part of that little package, if you will. And the guy's done a good job in practice on that, too, so it was good to see.

Q. In the fourth quarter you rode Weisman to control and shut the door?

COACH FERENTZ: Even the next to last series there we came up short on third down, it was third and whatever it was. Short of the first.

We ate up some clock and changed field position a little bit in that possession, and then certainly the last one to finish the game that way.

The guys up front, tight ends doing a good job, and fullback also. And Mark running really tough out there. That's something he's really good at.

Q. Indiana got those signature big plays. But what did you think about your defense's ability to kind of shrug those off?

COACH FERENTZ: I guess it's -- thank you. You gave me a positive spin. I can use it tomorrow a little bit because I was looking for one.

But it's interesting coming into this game. Nobody's held them to under 200 yards rushing in a game.

I looked at that stat and I just found that kind of hard to believe, with all due respect. But we witnessed it firsthand. They worked us pretty good.

Those three runs that Coleman had were outstanding runs. I said during the week, all their backs are good. And they are, they're all good, but he's really good. You get on the field live with a guy and you really find out what he's like and what he's all about.

I can't remember anyone doing that to us, and I'm including us against ourselves in spring practice, August, we've had some good backs here, Fred Russell, Shonn Greene, Albert Young.

It's a little scary. We'll face more good backs. We have to get better stopping that run.

Q. Tevaun Smith really seems to be -- big play receiver for you. Caught one huge third down pass, they interfered with him a couple times trying to go deep.

COACH FERENTZ: Same comments as Jonathan Parker. Tevaun has been working hard. And we made the decision, ironically, I think it was this ballgame in 2012 I think it was the first game we played him.

Kind of like Drew Ott, which we made the decision to throw him in the water, get him swimming, see if we can't expedite the process.

I think both players, Drew and Tevaun, have grown into good football players since that time. They work hard in practice. And they do a lot of good things and they're really committed to being good football players here.

So it's fun to watch them have some success out there, make some plays and do good things to help us.

Q. You have a lot of dimensions with him?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's nice to have a guy who can make some plays out there.

Q. Update on Willies?

COACH FERENTZ: We lost two guys during the week. Derrick since Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Derrick and Boone Myers, didn't dress either of them. I think we're hopeful to have them both next week. Probably know more tomorrow and know more Tuesday when we talk.

Q. Offensively did you see and sense that this team grew up a lot over the last couple of weeks?

COACH FERENTZ: We're making progress. The other part about today is clearly we've got a lot more to make and we better do it fast, because we got a peek at Maryland in preparation for this ballgame.

They've got a good team too. And one thing I remember from our summer is I think they got about 23 starters back. Is that possible? Basically have their whole team back from last year.

That will be a challenge. We've got to keep growing. And we just have a week to worry about it. And just like today was a weird day,

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we've got a weird schedule with another bye week coming up. All or nothing here for the next seven days including tomorrow.

Q. How much does it Gaul benefit being a fifth-year senior really seemed like experience really helped him?

COACH FERENTZ: It helps. There's a lot to be said for experience, especially with linemen. Experience is only good if you make it a positive. And he's done that.

Like I said earlier, he works hard every day. He shows up. And you forget, it's funny, when he's with everybody, he just looks like another guy.

When I was with him at that high school game a week ago, just me and him standing there, realized he's a big guy. No shrimp by any stretch.

But importantly he prepares every day, has a great attitude. Teammates love the guy. They singled him here out after the post game. It's fun when you see things like that and you can feel really good about what he did to help us win today.

Q. Do you know the extent of Jordan Walsh's injury?

COACH FERENTZ: It's an ankle. I don't think anything too bad. Can he play next week? We'll probably know more tomorrow, or maybe Monday and Tuesday.

Q. Looked like a tremendous play from Desmond King, almost reading the quarterback, baiting him, and the catch he made. Shown a lot of growth.

COACH FERENTZ: It was a good play. I just happened to be standing right there. Could almost hear the wheels grinding up there, like he read it out, and made a nice break. He's got good hands.

Ironically, the other day at practice, I looked across the field, saw him catch one with his right hand. I teased him, and I said showboating or what? He said no, the receiver had his left hand pinned down so he snatched it with his right hand.

Desmond's a good football player. For a young guy he's doing a lot of good things out there. And he has potential to grow. It's exciting.

Q. When Indiana cut it down to seven, you guys were able to get a couple of big stops, got the interception from Bo. Turned the

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tide before the half. How important was that?

COACH FERENTZ: It was important. They're a team that makes you really nervous. Nervous from the start of the game to the end of the game.

I'm hoping their quarterback's okay. But they're just a dangerous team. It's a unique attack. It's a high tempo attack. And if you drop your guard, they do a good job of finding you and they made us pay a couple times today.

So to stop things a little bit and for us to turn it into a positive right before the half was really important. Because I was not relaxed at any time today because they don't let you.

Q. About setting the edge, was it the plays or lack of play from the linebackers on the --

COACH FERENTZ: I'll have to see the film. But looked like a little bit of each to me.

If you let them get started, he knows how to get started and then finish. He does it really quickly. I think we'll probably see some things where we didn't take blocks on as well, stepping underneath blocks at times and things like that. You drop your fundamentals, bad things will happen. And a player like that will really make you pay in a bad way. That's the danger of playing a guy that good.

Q. How do you feel overall, you're 5 and 1, learning lessons with wins which is better than the alternative?

COACH FERENTZ: I would feel better if we were 6 and 0. Not realistic at this point. That's yesterday's news. We'll push ahead.

We'll enjoy this game today. Tonight we're feeling good about that, because bottom line is we won a Big Ten football game. We won here. And that's important.

Tomorrow we'll correct and then we have a week to get better. As long as we're moving forward, that's the biggest thing. And I think for the most part we are, and we'll have to because we've got six tough ball games left now and you guys have seen it.

I had a chance to watch football last Saturday. Conference football is always interesting. I'm chuckling right now about some of the predictions for the Final Four yesterday or two days ago.

I'll predict it will look different a month from now, certainly maybe three weeks from now. A lot of football left and it's about getting better and

improving. If your team's doing that, then you have a chance. If not, you aren't going to be in good shape.

Q. Did you find any clarity at quarterback, or is that more look at the film and then --

COACH FERENTZ: No, just again, it was a weird deal the way things went. But the only thing I walk away feeling about like I did coming in here. That's one position where I think we have two guys we can win with. And that's a really good thing.

Q. Looking at both playing next week?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see. We'll cross that bridge when we get there. If we do, I'll feel good about it. I like the way Jake and C.J. work. They practice well.

They're invested. And I talked about some guys earlier, they're the same way. Maybe at the front of the class there. If your quarterbacks aren't, you're in trouble there. So it's really good, and the good news, too, we got to work Wieggers last week during the bye week when Jake was still resting. Have a positive there with Jake sitting out a little bit, gave the other guy a chance to run our offense. He got better as well.

Q. Damond Powell the primary receiver on that route?

COACH FERENTZ: On that one, yeah.

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