

October 19, 2010



An interview with:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Our captains this week remain the same four guys. Again, we were pleased to get the win this past weekend. Any time you win on the road in our conference and get a conference victory, it's a good thing, certainly. And happy to see Ricky Stanzi be recognized by the Big Ten as offensive player of the week. So that's a positive, certainly.

We've turned our sites now to our next game. Certainly we have a tough, tough challenge playing Wisconsin, an excellent football team. They're a veteran football team. Obviously, they've got a staff that's been together and philosophy that's well in place, and they're playing very, very well, as was evidenced by Saturday's victory over Ohio State.

They're good in all phases. They've got a lot of good football players, very, very veteran, particularly on the offensive side. But I'd say the same defensively and special teams as well. They're a team that's got all their bases covered.

It's been a great series, and I would expect this to be a really hard-fought game and be a tough football game.

Q. How did the grade come on Michigan? Was it maybe the best game Iowa's played?

COACH FERENTZ: Offensively I think we certainly did a good job. Did a nice job of responding, especially in that second half.

Then defensively I thought we were really playing well. They got off to a good start which they had done the week before. I thought we were playing well. When the quarterback change took place, the new guy came in and was really

effective in throwing the football, and made it a really interesting game to say the least.

Yeah, we got a passing grade, and we're happy to get the win. Unfortunately, we don't get much time to celebrate or enjoy them, but we did on Sunday and now we've moved on.

Q. Brett Morse, is he injured?

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's realistic to think he'll play. He'll practice today without contact, and then hopefully tomorrow be back in full. So we're hoping to get him back. It's a tissue thing or a muscle thing, nothing structurally.

Q. How about Tarp?

COACH FERENTZ: Probably less likely. We'll just have to wait and see. It's just taking a while to regenerate. Hopefully, you know, hopefully it's coming sooner than later.

Q. Can you talk about their three running backs? Different styles from each of them?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, they're all good, first of all. They've all been very, very productive. James White's really kind of given them a change of pace, if you will. He's been different than the big guy. And Clay's a very strong, tough runner and very explosive.

James White's a totally different type guy. So it gives them a nice, I think, effective changeup and they've really used it well. It's been good for them.

Q. White's a kid you guys recruited pretty hard. Can you just talk about, is he what you thought he would be?

COACH FERENTZ: We thought he'd be an excellent football player. You never know how quick it's going to come, but it's come very quickly for him. We're not surprised. He's a tremendous young man, too. Really a nice young person.

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Q. When you look at J.J. Watt, he looks like a bulked up version of Matt Roth, and he seems to be playing all over the place. How do you stop that?

COACH FERENTZ: I think first point you made is first of all, he's a good story. He transferred back there, I believe, from Central Michigan. I believe I read about that in the paper this weekend. But from Wisconsin, left to go to Central Michigan, I believe it was, as a tight end and has found his way back to the field as a defensive lineman.

He is a great effort player. That is his first, he's got a lot of attributes, but that is the first one that would jump into my mind. He was the same way last year. He's a year older now, more experienced, but plays with great energy. My guess is he's one of their team leaders, not just a leader on defense, just guessing looking at him on film.

Plays with real enthusiasm. If you let your guard down at all, he's going to get in there and be disruptive and make plays. Even if you're playing your best, he'll still make some plays and that's what good players do.

Q. How do you feel about the Wisconsin series not being an annual series anymore?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I haven't really thought much about it. All that stuff got determined and decided during the season. I'm not thinking too much big picture during this season. I just go back to before the announcements were finally made.

You know, it's going to be different and there's no way to please everybody, I don't think. Certainly this is going to seem really, really strange and different. I think probably to everybody, both sides involved, it's probably unfortunate. But, again, I just don't know. We'd have been saying the same about another game, probably, if this one had continued.

Q. Place any extra emphasis on the trophy this year or to the players the rivalry that it will be wherever it is for three years?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. To me the game is important regardless. If we weren't playing for a trophy, it would still be a very, very significant importance. All it means is that trophy's going to sit somewhere for a little bit longer. But I

don't think anybody's going to be thinking about that on Saturday.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about how strong Wisconsin's offensive line is. When you look at the film, what makes them so tough?

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, they're gigantic. That jumps right at you. That is the major difference between our two teams. Their size compared to ours is a pretty significant difference.

But more importantly, they're good, they play well and they're veteran. They've been together quite some time. They've made a change at the one tackle spot, but all in all, that group has been together for a long time.

They've played very well together, and that's part of offensive line play. Good offensive line play is cohesion and just being able to react together. These guys do a very nice job. They certainly have a good understanding of what they're being asked to do.

Q. What is the challenge going from keying in on a guy like Denard Robinson and Michigan's running attack and going to a more straightforward downhill running attack?

COACH FERENTZ: It's a totally different preparation, certainly, but that's football. I mean, next week it will be something different or maybe not next week, but the week after, somewhere, you get my point. Every week it is apt to change, and this is certainly a big departure from what we saw last week. You know, you just have to make those adjustments and try to really practice well that week.

But, again, we can't simulate the size and the strength that Wisconsin has. We can't simulate that in practice, we couldn't even do it if we put our starters out there against our best defense. It's one of those things that's tough, but we had the same problem last week.

Q. Your defensive linemen have been around together about as long as their offensive line. Is that something, who I would imagine is a connoisseur of fine play, are you kind of looking forward to how that plays out?

COACH FERENTZ: If we do, okay, I am. But your point is well taken. You're looking at two units that are veteran and experienced. They both have good experience. You know, experience is

one thing, but Wisconsin's had a lot of success with this group, and we could say the same. Our defensive line has played pretty well for a period of time now. I think as a fan, it would be really a point of interest, and it's an interesting match-up.

Q. Can you talk about Karl Klug and his development when he first came on to campus and where he is now?

COACH FERENTZ: Karl's just a great story. We've had a few of them. Our programs are paralleled. Wisconsin's had a lot of neat stories, too, and they've got some on this team. We just talked about one, certainly, the defensive end.

Karl's a guy that we projected as a defensive end, quite frankly. We accidentally discovered he's not bad inside only because we had to throw him in there at one of the practices a couple of summers ago. We were thin on players and we threw him in there in a goal line scrimmage. Just saw something there that indicated maybe he could be pretty effective playing inside.

Backed up a pretty good player in Mitch King, and when he got an opportunity a year ago, he really had a fantastic year a year ago. Adrian Clayborne certainly played tremendously well in '09, and Karl was just a step behind him.

He's worked extremely hard physically. He's had to spend a lot of time training. He was about 208 when he showed up here. He's in the 270 neighborhood now. Endured a back surgery. He's had some injuries he's had to cope with, and persevered. The guy just plays with a great, great motor.

I guess very similar to the guy we just talked about. So he's an excellent football player. Just a great guy, and he's really emerged as a strong team leader, so that makes it even better.

Q. Is it a different mindset maybe you have to have from an end to a tackle? There is a little bit of mental adjustment Karl had to make?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's a little dirtier down inside. You know, there's a lot going on. There is a lot of action. Basically, some players don't deal so well with -- you know, you have to react to things on both sides of you. Where at least if you're on the outside position, you kind of get a little different vantage point and things are a little cleaner sometimes out there.

Same way on the offense. Sometimes guys don't function well in the middle of things and others do. But Karl's got a real knack in there. He's got a good feel and just has done a really good job. Really thrives in there.

Q. What do you think the difference is between Ricky Stanzi this year and Ricky Stanzi last year?

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's experience. Ricky was a great guy last year, great guy and a very good player. I think right now he's playing at a higher level. Experience is a real benefit at any position, if you make it. That's the other part of the equation.

He's always worked extremely hard, but now he's got four years in the bank going into this year, plus you factor in his work ethic, and I think we're seeing just excellent things from him.

Again, I bounce it right over to their quarterback, it's the same thing. He's a veteran player who is really doing a good job leading their team.

Q. Is this a peak period for quarterbacks in the Big Ten?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, it seems to be. I only know the ones we've played so far, but obviously the guy at Ohio State's pretty famous, and there are a lot of good ones. It's probably part of the reason that the conference, at least to us, we thought it was pretty strong this year. All the coaches kind of feel that way.

Q. How has Adam's workload on Saturday changed the way you treat him in practice during the week?

COACH FERENTZ: We're just going to be smart with him. We did the same with Fred Russell and Shonn Greene, anybody that's carrying the ball a lot is a unique challenge. It's not quite like being -- I don't want to minimize other positions -- but it's a little bit different.

We'll be careful about what we're asking him to do. Then also what other people are allowed to do around him, like hitting him, you know, that type of thing. He doesn't have to prove his toughness to us. We have great faith that he's going to do what he's supposed to do. So we try to just be careful with him. The big thing is to have him effective on Saturdays.

Q. Are you still on a Michigan State sort of track with Norm's return?

COACH FERENTZ: It could be a week after that, but I think that's realistic. It won't be this week, obviously. We say Michigan State, but that's out of the center right now where he's at getting those rehabs. So he's not home yet, so at least that.

Q. How would you describe the Iowa-Wisconsin rivalry on and off the field?

COACH FERENTZ: From a recruiting standpoint, you're alluding to at least off the field, you know, we're in the same region, so we frequent the same territories. We don't do real well in Wisconsin, typically, and they probably don't do a lot down here. But if we go into other states, obviously, we bump into each other.

On the field, I think it's been really a good series, a really good series. I go back to my first couple of years here. It was really a tough competitive series, then things dropped a little bit there in the late '80s.

Conversely when I got here, it was the other way around. I got here in time for that victory party up there on Big Ten championship day. Which, as a fan, it was a great experience, wasn't much fun to be the head coach here.

But at least we've come back and made it competitive. Both teams have really done a lot of good things, so it's a good series, I think.

Q. Do you recruit the same kinds of players?

COACH FERENTZ: I think there are some parallels, because we're not the same as them totally, but I think we're on the same page philosophically in a lot of ways. For one thing I'm an old play at tight ends and fullbacks, so that makes both of us a little unique. So that's one area.

I think when I look at their football team, I think there are a lot of parallels to what we do and vice versa. I have tremendous respect for Barry when I came here. And Bret's done a great job of carrying that on.

Barry and I probably both learned an awful lot from Coach Fry. Not that we're the same as, but some of the things that we believe are important. I think that's been reflected in their play. And Bret comes out of that same family tree, so there is probably a common bond there with all of us.

Q. Do you think that coaches -- I don't know if bad wrap's a right word -- when they go to a school in a conference that's opposite where they came from, like Coach (Indiscernible), I would suggest that he's not the number one favorite opposing coach of Iowa fans. But do you think that that's fair?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I guess I'm not aware of that, but I don't know if it's fair or not fair. I don't know why Bret wouldn't be there. I guess I'm just trying to logically look at it. His path left here to be a co-coordinator at K-State, and had an opportunity to be the coordinator at Wisconsin. I don't know why he would have turned either of those opportunities down.

Now, in hindsight, it looks like Barry sure knew what he was doing when he made the move a couple years ago. My guess is that I think obviously Barry saw some things in Bret that everybody's seen in the last four years.

I don't know anybody that would be mad at Bret. It's not his fault all these things happened. I think he's walked into a great situation, and more importantly, he's done a great job in a great situation. He's prepared for that, and has done a great job since taking over.

Q. The NFL's doings and saying this week with hits and trying to legislate things. Obviously, you're more from the college end of things now. But can you legislate that? How do you control?

COACH FERENTZ: It's tricky. It's a tricky thing. I think the key things are leading with the helmet. You know, hitting defenseless players. Those are to me the biggest points of emphasis.

Riding into work this morning I heard Merrill Hoge talk about he's coaching a little league team, and when he gives out the equipment, the pads are for contact and striking and helmets are for protection. I think that's basically what the game's about.

I could also suggest it's really tough to block and tackle without a head being involved. It's tough. If you don't want to get the head out, take the face mask off, and we'll go back to having shoulder separations, I guess.

But when people just lead or spear, that's not right, obviously. I don't think anybody's teaching that. Hitting defenseless players, that is something that's got to be officiated and emphasized. I think everybody's been doing that

for several years now. The awareness of it compared to ten years ago is much, much more heightened.

Q. Do you think suspensions are the answer, the kind of reaction the NFL had this week?

COACH FERENTZ: I didn't see those hits. I've heard about one in particular that if a player does something flagrant, it probably has to be handled.

I'm not sure what the right way to do that is. I'm just not aware of a lot of situations, you know, conference play where we've had a lot of issues. I'm sure we've had some, but they're not coming to mind to me.

Q. Do you remember the hit with Sandeman last year, that was kind of a similar bang-bang situation?

COACH FERENTZ: I didn't see that being a flagrant thing or an intentional thing. Maybe it was, but I sure didn't see it that way. A penalty worthy of a penalty, I could see that. After watching the tape, I could see that. But to say it was flagrant, suspensions, that type of thing, I don't know that I could say that.

Q. Did you get to watch Pat's first start on Sunday night?

COACH FERENTZ: No, but I heard a lot of good things about it. I didn't get to see a snap, unfortunately. But a couple people told me it looked like he was playing at Iowa, which is a good thing, because he played really well for us.

He had 11 tackles, I heard. Heard he had a sack dance. He's a pro, he can do that. That's a good thing. I'm really happy for him. Not surprised, but really happy for him.

Q. When you look at the Big Ten race right now, and even though it's early, it looks like the other three teams beside yourself that have the best shot at it all have to come here. Is that something you bring up with the guys or do you just ignore that?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not looking at the race. I hope our players aren't. To me, there is no race yet. We're two games into it, and it's a long race. And right now I know we have a tough game Saturday, that's as far as I've looked.

Q. Is it hard to play a team that's coming off the momentum of beating the No. 1 team in the country?

COACH FERENTZ: I'll tell you Saturday night, I don't know. It means they're pretty good, that's all I know. It does mean that, because that was not a fluke.

Q. Your kickoff coverage the past couple games has been pretty good. I'm sure you saw the opening kickoff against Ohio State with Gilreath. Have you kind of burned that into your kickoff coverage yet about what he can do and how explosive he is?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, that will start today. But, yeah, it's a not a huge secret, but we've all been a little concerned about our kickoff coverage. Starting somewhere, I think it was the second Saturday of the season. We had a little reason to maybe have some prep trepidation, and we have.

So we've been fooling around with it, and we have. I thought we played better on special teams and I thought our kickoff coverage was better. Now we'll have to amp it up even more because, certainly Gilreath's an excellent returner. He has been and still is.

Quick way to get in trouble is to give up a kick return. Not the way you want to start a game, and certainly not the way you want to start any half or after you score, give one right back to them. So we'll have to be at our best.

Q. Talk about Prater's role, and kick coverage and punt?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, Shaun's -- I don't know if ball hog's the right term -- but he's an aggressive guy to the football, loves to compete. So we'll continue to utilize him.

We have a lot of young guys in the lineup on Saturday. I won't tell you how many, you can go back and look if you want. But I did count them in our walk through on Friday, which added to my angst on Friday evening. But the guys came through and did a nice job.

Sometimes a little youth might be good, too. I think those guys are pushing it hard. They're starting to get the feel of things a little better than they were a month ago. So I think they're making some strides, but we're going to get tested Saturday.

Q. Throwing the football, what is the ratio?

COACH FERENTZ: With who?

Q. With Wisconsin?

COACH FERENTZ: They're like a 60-40 team. They're about a 60-40 team. Run the ball first and passing it. But their quarterback's done an excellent job and I think that's the big difference. Because a couple years ago they were back and forth for a while, but they've settled in with him, and he's done a good job leading their team and makes good decisions.

They throw a lot of play-action off that run game. It's so hard to stop the run, so they.

Q. Talking about philosophical differences, is size of the offensive line one of those?

COACH FERENTZ: We've got one guy that's 295, and he's done a nice job.

Q. What do you think about tattoos?

COACH FERENTZ: It's just not my personal preference. Tattoos are like whatever turns you on is good. They didn't have tattoos when I was young. I mean, I'm old, okay. I'm old. When I was young, they didn't have them.

Q. You've had at least three really good candidates for Big Ten offensive player of the week?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, good point. I'm not sure the answer to that. I think he's deserving of it, certainly, but I haven't thought about that. Not really. I didn't look at what everybody else did, so I don't know.

Q. Just to nominate somebody, really?

COACH FERENTZ: No, not to my knowledge. If they do, I'm not involved. It's possible, there are a lot of things that happen that I'm not involved in.

Q. We've been told by the Big Ten that schools nominate a player in each category.

COACH FERENTZ: You're asking -- yeah, I've got no idea. Should we know about that or not? Should we have a hand in that? Come on. Okay, I learned something today. Thanks, Mike.

Q. It's right here.

COACH FERENTZ: You're kidding. I guess I have to start reading it. What publication is

that? I picked up one of these today. That is the first time. Might look at that. There is something interesting in that. I'll start reading that too.

Who else have we nominated? We've totally derailed this conference here.

Q. You had Adam --

COACH FERENTZ: I just walk up and utter a couple of syllables and walk out of there. You don't think I make decisions like that. Derrell could have easily been nominated by us last week. That was a pretty good performance. Three touchdowns, take that.

Q. Conspiracy theories perhaps?

COACH FERENTZ: No, no, I'd like to take credit, but I can't. Sorry. No, that's one more thing I'm getting nailed for now, huh?

Q. There's a story about you when the recruits came up.

COACH FERENTZ: I've never said a word. That's all I can say. I've never said a word.

Q. Are you keeping a UCONN sweatshirt or anything?

COACH FERENTZ: I've got a former player hat that Andy Dale gave me two years ago when we went up and looked at their facilities. They, by the way, have the nicest facilities I've seen. But I don't wear it. I don't know that it's appropriate.

I coach in college, so it really isn't appropriate to wear UCONN stuff, but I'm all for it. Chris Kettle's got a Hawkeye tattoo. He's at Oklahoma. I mean, those guys went to school here, that's all?

Q. The tight end, Lance Kendricks is kind of the third in all of this with Travis and Garrett Graham. How does he compare and what challenges does he present?

COACH FERENTZ: Excellent. Beckham was more of a receiver and they called him a tight end. But Mike Graham, the tight end, he blocks, he's excellent in the passing game. He's another top-notch football player, and Graham was tough to defend. Those guys are right there with him.

The other guy was, too. But he was just different. He was really down in the box. But Kendricks is a really good football player, and one of their favorite players, certainly.

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