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An Interview With:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome. As captains this week we have Tyler Nielson and Mike Daniels defensively, Marvin McNutt and James Vandenberg offensively. Certainly was good to get the win on Saturday. The environment was just fantastic. Our fans have been just outstanding all season long for a long time, and night games in Kinnick are really special and we appreciate the fans and their participation with the cards and what-have-you; I think that got pulled off well. Paul Federici does a nice job orchestrating that or hatching some ideas and just a really great environment.

The only thing I was remiss the other night, I didn't congratulate Marvin McNutt, but two pretty elite players in Tim Dwight and Danan Hughes, that's quite an accomplishment, so congratulate Marvin on that feat and hopefully he can push past those guys certainly.

Playing Indiana this week obviously, and we move on to our next Big Ten opponent. Glad to be at home. And as everybody knows, we have had a really difficult time with them the last two years. Last year's game went down to the last snap. Two years ago we were very fortunate to get that thing turned around because it wasn't looking too good.

So you look at that, you look at just their game at Penn State a couple of weeks ago; I would much rather have been in the position they were in the last couple of minutes than where we were at against the same opponent. But their team going through a little bit of a transition with the new staff, but certainly they have a lot of talented players. And so we have a challenge of trying to match up with them and we also have a

challenge of trying to better and clean up a lot of our areas that need improvement.

So those are the two tasks that we'll start in on this afternoon.

Q. How are you guys health-wise?

COACH FERENTZ: I think decent. Probably like most teams, we are really -- we have got a lot of guys that are getting treatment and have injuries, that type of thing. But the good news is I think three guys have a chance to return, Morris, Nardo and Hitchens all have a chance to play. They were all cleared last week but I don't know how effectively they would have played.

So hopefully we'll know more at the end of the week but hopefully they will be ready to go and we'll see what happens.

Q. How about Canzeri?

COACH FERENTZ: He strained a hamstring on Tuesday, naturally, last Tuesday. I don't know if he could have played or not last week. He probably could have played Saturday as well, but he didn't practice all week, so kind of threw a monkey wrench in that one. As I understand it he'll be ready to go this week.

Q. Inaudible.

COACH FERENTZ: We just wanted to take advantage of that opportunity to move him towards practicing today. So I think he should be ready to go today, and hopefully -- just be careful with him, that's all.

Q. You had No. 95 (Orne) blocking as a tight end?

COACH FERENTZ: Last week we were blocking and now we are going to expand his role. Mitch Frerotte, was that the guy's name, from Buffalo, you remember who I'm talking about? He had five or six touchdown passes? Told Woody to look it up. He has not come back with a report yet.

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Coach Ferentz

Q. I wonder, just with Marvin at this point now set to break this record, can you take a step back and reflect on what he's meant to this program, considering this is only two and a half years he's played wide receiver.

COACH FERENTZ: I think two things. First of all, that really makes it more commendable, what he's done. Because as far as I know, Tim (Dwight) became a receiver when he got here. I know he did a lot of things in high school. He did a lot of things here, too, but he was I think a receiver the full-time and Danan Hughes was, as well, too.

Marvin has really learned on the fly, that's a credit to him. And second point would be, I hope he reflects in January, that's the best time for reflection. Or maybe December. He can do a little of that in December; that would be fine.

Q. Did you have to do any convincing to get him to switch to wide receiver when he first came?

COACH FERENTZ: Not really. I think when Ricky Stanzi emerged, that's usually how it goes. At that point it looked like Ricky was going to be our quarterback of the future. I think Marvin, the big thing is he wanted to get on the field and play.

When he came here, we recruited him more as an athlete who we thought could be a quarterback and I'm still not sure he couldn't have been a quarterback, but as Ricky emerged, it became more of a natural flow for him to seek out a position where he had a chance to get out on the field.

Q. Going into that first fall, he was the No. 1 on the depth chart, and there's been a lot of speculation as to why that was the case. What did he show you early on?

COACH FERENTZ: I know he was right in the middle of it. We felt really good about both he and Ricky, quite frankly.

Going back to his recruitment, he actually got recruited to play high school football. He was more of a baseball, basketball guy. Baseball was probably his sport at, at least it was at that point and his high school coach was no fool. Got him to come out and got him going on the football part of things. We just thought he had an awful lot of up side. And he did.

Just was one of those deals where Ricky Stanzi ended up being an NFL guy and sometimes those things happen. But to his credit, when you

recruit good athletes that are good people and good football players in general, usually they find a place.

Q. Was Marvin all -- was it quarterback all the time, when he first arrived? Total intention?

COACH FERENTZ: Totally.

Q. Did he show you -- when was the first flickering of wide receiver?

COACH FERENTZ: In high school again, he was an all-around athlete I think, and that's not the same, but like Ed Hinkle, we really recruited him to be a free safety, and I thought he had a chance to be a four-year player at free safety. I can't remember exactly who was on our roster at that point.

In his case, it was a matter of the day we got chased inside and walked out there and trainer came up and is said so-and-so is hurt. So we had like three or four guys that were actually going to be running routes that day. So it was kind of like, would you mind throwing a black jersey on today, and it just never came off, which is how he ended up on defense, same kind of deal, and sometimes that works out pretty well.

Q. That could be a blow to an ego for a player, especially quarterback.

COACH FERENTZ: To me, my experience is good players want to play. They want to be on the field and they want to help the team win, and that's first and foremost. I think that's how Marvin was thinking and he's invested a lot of hard work and a lot of effort into becoming a good player because it's more than just going in there and doing it and he had never done that before. He had never been a receiver in high school.

Q. You touched on before, the physical transformation it takes for a guy who drops back six to eight steps, and the guy who runs 40 yards on the field every play.

COACH FERENTZ: There's a lot to learn and there's a lot of reading that goes on, a lot of technique and you have to understand protections, which in his case, he had a little jump on that, that was good.

But nonetheless, it's just a whole different deal and in his case, receivers all they do in

practice is run, receivers and defensive backs run the whole practice, so it was -- and quarterbacks don't. So that may have been, if you ask him that, that might be the hardest adjustment he had to make, just developing some stamina.

Q. Do you remember who first came up with the idea?

COACH FERENTZ: No, I can't remember what happened yesterday. I can't remember that one.

Q. If you could profile the development of Tanner Miller?

COACH FERENTZ: Got deterred. First and foremost, got deterred last spring. He had a surgery, so you know, we made the decision a year ago to play him. He was a true freshman and he came in and did some good things during the course of the season. Did some good things during the Bowl game, and he's a guy that we just felt was a good athlete in recruiting, all-around athlete, basketball, track, football.

Good personality and so really glad that we pulled the trigger on that one and happy that he came here. He just did a lot of good things from day one and I think he's continuing to learn. It was a huge play the other day, and it was more than just him. So it's just really good to see him have that kind of success out there.

Q. The tight ends had no catches, how was their blocking?

COACH FERENTZ: I thought they played at a higher level, true at a lot of positions but I thought they played at a higher level. Unfortunately Brad Herman looked like he would have had a touchdown reception and our protection broke down. I think that was in the fourth quarter probably, right? He was just wide open and we couldn't get the ball to him unfortunately. So one of those deals. But I thought the group played better Saturday.

Q. What do you see out of C.J. Fiedorowicz coming in, when you look at him, 6-7, 260, catches the ball as wide receiver in high school; has he come along as you hoped he would or has he struggled?

COACH FERENTZ: I hoped he would have been starting and playing great from day one when he got here, but that usually doesn't happen. No, he's making progress and I thought Saturday was his best game quite frankly. So that's good.

And then you know, an added bonus there, he jumped in on the kickoff team and really did a nice job there. I can't remember who got hurt in that circumstance. Somebody had to come out and so he jumped in and really ran down with good intent and that was good to see. Most of our tight ends have been really good special teams players through the years so good to see him jump in there like that.

Q. Has the growth at that position been slower than you anticipated?

COACH FERENTZ: You just never know how it's going to go. It's been pretty even with all three of the guys, and so we'll just keep pushing forward and see how things go, but I think they improved Saturday.

Q. Are you okay with tight ends having less catches?

COACH FERENTZ: You guys know the stats better than I do. But outside of a week ago, we have been scoring pretty readily. Not readily, but we have put points on the board, seven of them the other night were defensive touchdown, got field position, that's all football.

Doesn't matter who's catching or whatever. Like, one game it's this guy, and another game it's that guy. It's managing -- the thing is trying to get points, that's the bottom line. So whoever is helping us out, that's good, typically during the course of the season we will get spread around, so it will work itself out.

Q. Indiana has a wide receiver, Damarlo Belcher, that last year almost came down with what could have been game-winning catch against you guys. What do you see when you look at him on film?

COACH FERENTZ: He's a really good player, and I don't think we defended him at all last year. Didn't seem like we did. They've got another guy, Hughes, is a really good player, also, and they use him in a wildcat formation. He's really been active and they have a veteran group of receivers and they are big, physical guys, too, and Belcher is a big guy. They have got some good size for sure. It's a dangerous group.

Q. Going back, Indiana always seems to have that one receiver that you guys have trouble defending?

COACH FERENTZ: Seems like historically we have had a hard time matching up. Just hope that's not the case this year, but potentially could be. So here we go.

Q. Rogers -- more fullback in there, do you think?

COACH FERENTZ: It may. A lot of that is dictated by the game plan and who we are playing, facing and what-have-you. The good news is I think Brad was a lot better this past week than he was the week before. He really looked like he had not been out there for a while up at Penn State. He did some really nice things on Saturday, a lot of good things, and I think he's getting back into the flow of things is so that's really a bonus and we are really happy about that.

Q. How do you evaluate him as a lead blocker?

COACH FERENTZ: He did a nice job Saturday. That was him leading on the goal line, and he has not played that much fullback, if you think about it, in terms of broad picture, and he's missed a lot of practice time for obvious reasons.

But I think he's got the potential to be a really good fullback. You know, has a combination, he's got some ball skills and he's a guy that you can throw the ball to and do some things, too. He's a versatile guy and that's really something that we are excited about.

Q. Is A.J. back as your backup quarterback?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see how this week goes but he's back with us full speed. He did a really nice job the last two weeks. In fact, he was one of the guys running around throwing the ball against our defense, sometimes too good a job, so we'll see.

Q. Defense has put up a lot of points this year compared to last year; starting to get a little frustrating? Or just continue your game plan offensively.

COACH FERENTZ: Every season is different, and every game is different, and you know, you just adjust as you go along. But I was encouraged. Overall, I think we've been making some improvements defensively. Every week is a little bit of a different adventure.

But I thought we played with more energy and more intensity Saturday and I know they had a ton of yards and they had a significant amount of

points, but just the way we were playing, I think was encouraging, and you know, saw some individuals make some improvement and that's hopefully something we can continue. I think that's a key thing right now is what we do this week, how do we improve.

We showed some improvement, so can we sustain that and hopefully add on to it, that's probably the biggest key, whether it's offense, defense or special teams but we need improvement in all areas I know that.

Q. B.J. Lowery coming in on special teams, what does he bring on defense and special teams?

COACH FERENTZ: That was another plus, you had Brad on offense and then certainly BJ defensively. We were down a couple of guys defensively that had been playing well but the good news is we gained one with BJ and hopefully in maybe two weeks here, two and a half weeks, he'll have that cast off which would be nice.

He practiced well last spring. He had a good August. You know, until the injury. That was a big hit and gives you a little bit more depth in the secondary now and a little bit more competition, and then special teams as you mentioned gave us a good jump there. That's one we needed.

A lot of these little nicks really show up on special teams. So to get a guy back like that really helps. Getting Brad back on the punt team is a big, big thing for us. Seems like a little thing but it's really big.

So all of those things can really help us hopefully. Hopefully guys keep coming back. That's the next challenge.

Q. You mentioned earlier special teams was an area of concern; are the guys showing up the way you want to see them?

COACH FERENTZ: Not yet, but we are making progress. We have some guys that are a lot more confident than they were three weeks ago and more knowledgeable in terms of what they are doing and seeing in front of them.

But we are not ready to relax, and unfortunately for us, fortunately for them, they have a couple of dangerous returners. So we are going to have to do a good job there.

Q. Are they doing anything differently?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, they are

different. If you look at them offensively, it's a lot of what we saw maybe against Missouri when Oklahoma played last year, a lot of recurring themes there.

And then defensively, it's a different scheme than what we have seen the last several years. They are doing a good job and they have some good players up front that we had a hard time blocking last year, so that will be another challenge.

Q. How about the quarterbacks he's been mixing in?

COACH FERENTZ: That's been a little bit of a Round Robin, and injuries obviously have factored in there. You know, a little bit more of a running mode last week probably. And we'll probably see a little bit more of that. But will still throw the ball around that's for sure.

Q. Seems like the pass game, there's a lot of rotation, kept a lot of guys fresh – the rest of the year, do you see guys like Alvis and Getz coming in a lot more?

COACH FERENTZ: That's what we are hoping for. That's one of the groups that we saw the guys really make some strides up front. Not that they are yet but Dominic made some really good plays, and that was a tough team to play a defensive line against, so he did some good things.

I thought Mike Daniels did some real good things, certainly Broderick, thought he really did some good things as well and Joe Gaglione jumped in; Steve Bigach got the start and did a lot of nice things. Just out of necessity, everybody played, and Joe Forgy, also on the outside, giving Brod a little bit of a break. Hopefully we'll get Tom back this week.

Ideally we would like to play a lot of guys, seven, eight guys but they have to also demonstrate that we can trust them and they will do a good job in there. If it can work in that directing your attention, that would be a good thing.

Q. What does it do for the confidence of the team, do you sense any difference after the win against Northwestern?

COACH FERENTZ: That's part of football, too, is you have to deal with the highs and the low. Saturday was a high for us certainly and it was a low the week before. But the real challenge I think is for us to get in here, Sundays, you kind of

experience both, if it's a good day, you enjoy the day and if it's a tough day, you don't feel so good about things. But to me when the players get here Tuesday, they have got to be focused on our next opponent and really focused on what they are doing. So I'm hoping that's the case today. We'll see.

Q. Teams have been running versus Indiana. How well do you need to run it this week?

COACH FERENTZ: In a perfect world, we would like to be balanced, and hopefully we can get the run and pass complementing each other, and I think we had a little success with that the other night. We did a little bit better job there. So in a perfect world, that's what we would like to do but you also do what the defense dictates a lot of times.

I thought we ran the ball a little more aggressively Saturday, and that's something I'm hoping will see us continue to do.

Q. Seeing contact sometimes, especially with guys in the secondary, is that something that concerns you with the depth situation at running back?

COACH FERENTZ: No, not at all. Marcus is a strong runner, and in a perfect world, I can't imagine it's a lot of fun tackling him. It's been 35 years since I've played, but you know, to me I think he's got to make that an advantage. And that's football.

If you break the line, which he did a couple of times the other day, there's always going to be somebody lurking back there and if you're a strong guy, run strong; if you're Ronnie Harmon, make one move and make the guy look like a fool but there are not many Ronnie Harmons. In fact, there's been one that I've seen in a long time. To me, just have to play through what you play and backs are going to get tackled. That's the nature of the game.

Q. Northwestern ran 92 offensive plays last week but looked like the defense was getting stronger as the game went on. Can you talk about the conditioning right now and how that showed up?

COACH FERENTZ: It felt like 192 I think for all of us, and it's a credit to them. They are really a tough team to defend. They are very

precision group with some really good players.

So yeah, I think that the guys did a good job competing out there. And they looked fresh at the end certainly and they were hustling and doing a lot of good things.

That's the thing we are hoping we can build on, at least the energy was there; the effort was there. A lot of things we can hopefully do better but at least we were trying to compete a little bit better out there and looked a little bit more like it.

Q. You mentioned last week Marcus Coker might be doing too much thinking. What does that mean for a running back? Is it just seeing what's coming and seeing what's developing?

COACH FERENTZ: Marcus was not necessarily in this category, but most guys coming out of high school, younger guys, tried to read too much or try to make too many cuts on a run. Defenses close too quick, so you really kind of have to make a decision at some point, hopefully sooner than later. If it's wrong, it's wrong, you have to live with it and go. It's kind of like making a call sometimes.

So you just have to have to do it, and live with it instead of trying to be perfect all the time and I think that's kind of what I was sensing a couple of weeks running. Part of it, just missed some practice time in August and so takes awhile for any player to get in a rhythm no matter what position they are at. And I think that was showing up a little bit.

Q. Where is McCall in his recovery? How is he coming along?

COACH FERENTZ: He's coming along. I look at him, not the same as Brad Rogers, I look at he and Nolan MacMillan, they could come back; they might not, too.

So I think that we just have to take the mental approach that they are not with us, and if they make it back, it's a bonus. On a couple of levels it's good for development and I think it's the same way with these two guys. Hopefully they will get back at some point.

Q. Does he want to play? Because if he didn't play, he'd have the option of the redshirt.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I hope we have that decision, and we haven't had discussion yet. Hopefully we have an opportunity. We'll see.



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Q. Have you ever seen a game so strange statistically, time of possession, plays, and all of the sudden you win by double digits?

COACH FERENTZ: Probably but I can't recall it offhand. Just a strange game that way. When you play an offense like that, you might be involved in some strange incidents and that's certainly one of them for sure.

Q. Do you feel like De'Andre Johnson is starting to make some strides?

COACH FERENTZ: We are. Yes, he's doing better, he's doing better. You know, Canzeri's bad fortune was his good fortune in one way.

I think I said this a week ago and it will stay this way the rest of the season; we have to get some other guys involved. Take some load off Marcus and hopefully we can do that and work in that direction. De'Andre got three runs and he did a nice job and that was good to see.

He's a good football player and he just has to get his feet on the ground here a little bit more firmly so hopefully he'll do that and I think he's making strides.

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