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An Interview With:

**COACH KIRK FERENTZ
LESTER ERB
DARRELL WILSON**

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome, everybody. What I want cover the press release together Steve Roe put together with the last couple of pieces of the puzzle with our staff and the last couple of additions or changes.

First of all we added a new member, Chris Polizzi, a couple weeks ago, our defensive graduate assistant, replacing Charlie. Charlie did a great job. His three-year term was up so he landed a real nice opportunity down at the Miami Dolphins. We are excited for Charlie. He did a great job, and Chris has already been really good on the job just in a short time here.

Chris most recently is a grad assistant at Utah, worked with Dave at UCLA and actually crossed paths with Seth Wallace, another former GA who has done a nice job when they were at Wake Forest together. Chris joined our staff a couple of weeks ago and it's good to have him on board.

The last two things, Eric Johnson is going to shift over and help with Reese Morgan with the defensive line. I think the more we have on that group, the better. And the number one driving force there is just the way recruiting continues to change and evolve. I just think the demands of that segment of our organization are so, so strong. My goal was to get Eric in a position where he could dedicate more time to that area. So he's doing a lot of work for us in regards to our personnel. I think it's a critical job certainly and always has been.

I just think with the ever-changing face of recruiting, it was something that could really benefit our staff and Eric has done a great job in that role and has done it for many years. As I said his responsibilities will increase.

That leaves open the tight end position. So Dave Wright is going to transition into that. He's coming into his third year as a grad assistant, he's a former player here, and he's done a great job over the last years working with the offensive line. He'll take the responsibility of the tight ends. Very much like Dan Clark did a couple of years in 2009. Dan handled those guys and did a great, great job, too.

Those are the final pieces of the puzzle, and we have everything in place the way we want it to. We have had good practices, tempo has been really good, and the interest and attentiveness of our players has been really pleasing thus far.

This is another step today. We'll put shoulder pads on and start working in a different way but the guys have really been very attentive, they pick things up quickly and the cumulative effects will be interesting to see how that goes. So far so good. Couldn't ask for better weather.

I think I said this last week, but depth charts at this point are really just a starting point. Nothing more than that. Especially with a young team like we have right now. I think we'll see a lot of changes over the next couple of weeks, not major but little movements here and there and really doesn't mean anything until August. This is all just a chance for us to start seeing the guys on the field and see how they react and how they learn all these types of things.

Q. Have you come up with recruiting areas for each?

COACH FERENTZ: We are pretty well settled in now. The big thing with the new guys, LeVar, Kansas City down into Texas, most of the

concentration will be in Dallas.

Brian is going to take over Ohio. And then Erik Campbell will focus on Michigan. Phil will not have an area specifically but he'll float, as will Greg, and we'll help out and look at players on their side of the football and also where they have ties.

Q. Can Eric Johnson --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, Eric can go anywhere, any time and he'll keep outside of Kansas City. He's going to cut that out.

But what this frees him up to do is watch a lot more film during the course of the day and next year, we have not really utilized the travel days and moved into them during the course of the season. The problem is when a guy is on the road, he's away from our team, and I have mixed feelings on that. I think you work really hard to have players on campus and we owe it to them to be here when they are here and especially in season.

By doing this, that frees him up a little bit so if he wants to skip out for a day or two in season, he can get out and see some prospects and I think if you think about the guys that we look hard at, that can be a real value for us. The obvious players, Tony Moeaki, doesn't take a long time to figure those out, but if this will help us get another Karl Klug or two, that would be a real benefit.

Q. What are some of the changes in recruiting over the last 20 years?

COACH FERENTZ: The number one thing is just the speed of it. There are a lot of prospects out there right now, a lot of players out there that have not been offered scholarships, and we feel like, what have I done wrong. That's just a culture that we have created in college football right now. It's hardly the case.

Just mentioned Karl Klug, both our quarterbacks, I'd say at least half of our roster is made up of players that got offered during or after senior years. That's not uncommon. Common sense will tell you that's the best time to evaluate players and prospects but that's not way it works anymore. But by freeing Eric up to do more film and tape evaluation of prospects and contact, and that's nonstop now with Facebook and all these different forms of being in touch with prospects, it's just, you know, we can all be doing it 24 hours a day, all year round, but we have to coach some football, too.

Hopefully it makes everything move a little smoother.

Q. Would you say the strength of the staff is the flexibility - that they are football coaches first and not pigeonholed?

COACH FERENTZ: I think so. We are really fortunate, we have a great group of guys and veteran coaches, that are really experienced. You know, Lester is an example. Lester is one of the only two guys now coaching the same spot they were at last year.

But as you know Lester came here as a receivers coach and he's been a special teams coordinator, transitioned the running backs a couple years ago and did a great job off the bat. That was part of my thinking and rationale of moving Reese to the defensive line. Reese is just a tremendous coach, and he may or may not remember it, but when he came here, he indicated to me he actually preferred defense.

Darrell is an excellent coach and he coached on the offensive side of the football and then defensive as well and played in the secondary. So in my mind, he'll do a great job with those guys and free those guys to roam around and oversee things like a coordinator does. I feel fortunate. We have a lot of teachers that are really good coaches.

Q. Did you anticipate that many changes on your staff this off-season?

COACH FERENTZ: Not at all, 13 years with the same two coordinators, so we've really been fortunate. We were probably stealing time there a little bit. That's when changes occur. You just try to map out the best possible formula for our program and you know, it's something we took a lot of time thinking about and gave a lot of thought to every aspect of it and this is where we are at today.

But I'm really pleased with the way things are going and after two practices, seems like everybody is functioning and working well together.

Q. Is special teams still Lester and Darrell?

COACH FERENTZ: Pretty much the same as it was. LeVar will absorb some role. Darrell has some new challenges just with the new position. He is going to keep the kickoff team and then LeVar will probably assume the punt return

team. Darrell and LeVar will work together on field goal blocking, and Lester will work on the rest as he has been.

Q. How are the players adjusting to two new coordinators?

COACH FERENTZ: They have been great. They have been really good. Changes are not extensive at least on defense, terminology and those types of things.

I thought offensively there was a lot of new lingo and a lot of new terminology that's forced all of us to be on the edge of our seats. Start with our coaches, I remember last week, we were probably the slowest learners in the group. Players have been great and they are all ears right now.

Q. Wienke is he --

COACH FERENTZ: He'll compete for that punting job. He'll also be our holder again and he'll still work with the quarterbacks. It's safe to say Jake is ahead of them on the depth chart.

Q. You said the depth chart was not set in stone, but are you planning on doing the same things you did with the running backs, spreading it out more?

COACH FERENTZ: I see it being spread around. And Marcus Coker was the premiere guy because he was the premiere guy last year. He clearly was the head of the class like Sean was in 2008.

We will kind of go with what we have and those years in between, we had a mixture of guys running the ball and I could see that happening. We have not ruled anything out. It's so early in the game right now.

The one thing I will say, all three guys have shown out on the field that they are capable. They have got a lot to learn still. We have not been hit, all those types of things. Ball security is the first thing you worry about with the running back and then maybe protection or vice versa. But you can't really judge those things until you start hitting.

Q. Does it concern you that so many kids are committing early?

COACH FERENTZ: No, that's just the nature of the beast. You adjust to it. You go with it. It's been in a way for a couple of years. I think that you have to resist the temptation. We will still make our evaluations based on what we are

seeing and what we are learning and hearing about prospects, doing it our rate of speed.

I think the biggest thing that we try to keep in mind is we don't want to make an offer unless we really want that player here; we are sure right now we want that player here and there will be a lot of good players available in the fall, too.

Just because you're the first one in or first one to get ten commitments, that really doesn't mean you're going to have the best recruiting year. At the end of the day, it's all about where they are at four years down the road anyway so, that's what we try to keep in mind.

I'll turn it over to Lester.

Lester Erb

COACH ERB: Coach alluded to the transition that's going on in the off-season and I really want to just start off saying it's been a pleasure working with Greg Davis over the past couple weeks and really picking his brain and learning from him.

He's a very knowledgeable guy obviously and the best attribute about him is he's just a tremendous teacher, and our players have really taken to him on the offensive side of the ball.

So the transition on our side of the ball is really going quite smoothly and just been a pleasure to work with Greg. His track record, his years at Texas, with the players he's produced and the offenses he's had, it's really going to be a great transition for us.

Obviously moving into spring practice, getting into pads today and again Kirk alluded to it, we'll find out a little bit more about the running backs as we move forward here. Obviously Jordan Canzeri, we saw a little bit last year in that Bowl game, he played pretty well for getting his first extensive action. But he was a guy who had some hamstring issues there at the end of the year. So we didn't quite get him as much work as we would have liked throughout the season. He's doing a nice job.

Damon Bullock has really jumped around, found a home now at the tailback position and he's doing a nice job. And then De'Andre Johnson is another guy that has an awful lot of talent and he's really going to be competing for the job here in the spring.

As you know we have two young tailbacks coming in in the fall in August in Greg Garmon out

of Erie, Pennsylvania and Barkley Hill out of Cedar Falls. We'll be excited to get those guys up and running around here come fall camp.

You look at the specialist position right now, Coach alluded to it again, Jonny Mullings and John Wienke will be competing for that title job here throughout spring ball.

And we have Connor Kornbrath coming in, a young man from West Virginia. Phil, is that the first recruit from West Virginia to play at Iowa? That will give you something to do in your retirement. Something to do here between golf rounds, start looking that up.

Obviously Connor will come in here and have a chance to compete for the job here in fall, also. And then every spring ball, this place kicking competition is open and obviously Mike has kicked for us here in two years, has done a good job but it's going to be open between him and Trent and Marshall Koehn will jump into the mix here, also.

Q. With the running backs, how much has that helped you having inside Bowl prep with the same three running backs that are on the depth chart now?

COACH ERB: Those Bowl preps are invaluable, just to be moving those guys forward. Obviously Damon had a little bit quicker transition. He started off as a tailback, moved to wide receiver, back to running back I think for the two games in the season and then back to receiver, and then about a week before the Oklahoma game.

He's probably a little bit further behind from a knowledge standpoint. But you know, those practices are invaluable.

Q. What does Jordan still have to show you to make you believe that he's your No. 1 guy without question?

COACH ERB: I think it just comes down to consistency. Jordan again was hampered with some injuries last year, so like I said, we didn't get him quite as much work as we would have liked to throughout the year.

But he's really added some weight. He's a little bit bigger than he was last year. You know, he did a good job in that Bowl game.

I think what he demonstrated in that Bowl game is, I think he carried the ball 22 times in that game so he demonstrated a little bit of durability there for being not the biggest back out there.

But he's got to improve on some things, pass protection and some of those other areas, and that's what we are looking for.

Q. What has it been like adjusting to new coaches, old coaches at new positions and just all of the change this off-season has brought?

COACH ERB: You know, I'm probably the one having the most trouble with the transition just from -- I was in the same terminology, the same system for really about 15 straight years.

So obviously the terminology has changed. The concepts haven't changed a whole lot. But our players have really taken to it, and a couple of the players might even be a little bit ahead of me just to be honest. But that just comes down to me being able to translate it back into the system that I've been in 15 years.

But our players are doing a great job with that transition.

Q. How challenging have the last few years been for you as a position coach, all of the different backs coming and going?

COACH ERB: I'm getting good practice at it. The biggest thing is, you know, our players are eager to learn and really, coaching is coaching.

You know, the guys we have had in the room have been eager to learn and it's just as a coach, you kind of start over every year anyhow. But I've had some practice at it.

Q. Do you get asked about recruiting by other running backs?

COACH ERB: Not a whole lot with that. I think it just comes down to, you know, there's going to be opportunities for those guys.

When you recruit guys, they see an opportunity that they are going to come in and have a chance to play, and fortunately over the past couple of years, we have been able to sell that.

Q. The running back position --

COACH ERB: I kind of look at it like this. We are dealing with 18- to 22-year-old guys. As you know, 18 to 22 years old, you don't always make the best decisions.

As much as we can educate these guys and Kirk does a great job of educating these guys on the pitfalls of being a college student, especially

a college football player, I mean, through the various program speakers, we have had a number of examples obviously, but really it comes down to decision making and as coaches, we cannot be with those guys 24 hours a day. It really comes down to education and hoping those guys make good decisions.

Q. Do you think they don't seem to grasp -- you're in the room with them all the time; I'm sure you've hammered them.

COACH ERB: Yeah, again, it's an educational process. And you know, whether you're a parent, whether you're a teacher, when your students don't always get the message, you have to re-evaluate what you're doing, and as a coach, you're evaluating anyhow. You're always evaluating.

So it's an evaluation process and you're always trying to educate these guys.

Q. Are you looking forward – Damon Bullock, we didn't get to see him much last year at running back. What kind of running back is he, and what can you expect from him?

COACH ERB: Damon is really demonstrating to be a versatile athlete. He has great vision, real good balance, can really catch the ball out of the backfield well, and he's a little bit faster than people give him credit for. He's kind of more of a slasher. He's not going to be a true downhill, punishing runner, but he does have some toughness and he has demonstrated he can lower his pads.

We are excited to give him a number of practices together to see how well he can improve.

Q. With Coach Davis, with running backs catching pass, is that more of a feature this year? Do you see that coming?

COACH ERB: I told the backs the other day, the more you catch the ball out of the back field, the more the quarterback is going to look for you. It really comes down to that. Coach Davis does a great job of working with the quarterbacks, going through their initial reads, and obviously getting the ball down and out quick.

So you know, we will look to catch a few more balls, but again it comes down to, as long as we catch them, the quarterback has more trust in us.

Q. What do you see out of Brad Rogers? Do you see an expanded role?

COACH ERB: Brad is just -- the biggest thing Brad brings to us is versatility. He has played tailback here. He was brought in as a tailback. He can run the ball. He can be a big one-back type of back, but he's also tough enough to play fullback.

And Brad is really kind of another example of Brad -- a year ago wasn't able to build because of a medical condition. We threw him in early in the season, he didn't have a ton of reps before we threw him in some of the games so he improved as the year went on.

But Brad Rogers, the biggest thing he brings to our room is his great, great leadership and he's a guy that can do a lot of things that we would ask.

Q. You've had a lot of recruiting success in Chicago; what do you attribute that to?

COACH ERB: Recruiting is a group effort. I just happen to have the Chicagoland area. Really when you go in, and you talk to any recruit in any area, it comes down to really what you're trying to sell.

And we have got a tremendous program here. Obviously we have got the best head coach in America. We've had some success around here. Once guys get on campus and see it, they tend to fall in love with it. Those guys we recruited out of Chicago recently did a tremendous job of helping us with some of those guys over there. Ryan Ward, Faith Ekakitie and Jaleel Johnson all really bought into what Iowa is all about.

Q. Do you see these guys producing -- you have a guy who is about 250 carries usually; do you see this group producing one of those?

COACH ERB: Time will tell. We'll see as we go through spring and then obviously to the fall. But we have a number of guys that are versatile, so we will -- ask me that question in November and I'll give you a better answer.

Q. Can you talk about the two guys coming in?

COACH ERB: With both Greg Garmon and Barkley Hill, two guys that had tremendous high school careers, both guys obviously Greg coming out of Erie, Pennsylvania where we have had some success with guys coming in here; both of them are a little bit bigger backs. Greg is more

of a slasher. But he shows he can get downhill and run tough. Very good speed.

Then Barkley just had a tremendous high school career up there at Cedar Falls and we are excited to get him in here. Both guys have a passion for football and both guys are going to have a chance to come in here and compete.

Q. Was playing time a big deal with Garmon -- being able to sell that?

COACH ERB: I think it was. I think it was both him, Barkley and Greg, coming in and competing for a spot, and the best guy is going to win. I think that was attractive to both.

Q. Is basically what you see in August going to determine what action those guys are going to see?

COACH ERB: Depends how well they can pick up the system and how well they can hold up the ball and how well they can protect the quarterback. That all goes into it. And that's not the end of our evaluation.

It really comes down to the transition that they make into college, because obviously coming from high school to college, the game is going to be faster. We are going to demand more of them from a maturity standpoint. We have got to see how all of those things factor in.

Q. How open is it, and what do you need to see out of Mike Meyer? He started out really great, I think 12 of 14 and then tailed off.

COACH ERB: At the kicking position more than anything, it just comes down to consistency. That's what it comes down to.

Mike started off the season great and missed a few kicks that he knows he can make. Mike has tremendous talent. Again it just comes down to being a little bit more consistent.

Q. Can you envision using somebody else on kickoffs to maybe help with his leg fatigue?

COACH ERB: We have done that in the past and again it will come down to who is best suited for the job.

Q. Punting ... was that something Wienke volunteered for or something you saw?

COACH ERB: A little known fact coming out of high school: John Wienke was the all-state punter. He punted seven times in high school.

So John toyed around with it a little bit when he got in here, and obviously a pretty good opportunity for him right now. John was on the field for us last year as our holder. Good thing is, nobody knew it, but he was on the field for all of our PATs and field goals last year so, gave him a role.

Q. Think he can throw the ball, too?

COACH ERB: We faked one punt around here in 13 years, if you haven't checked. And I think it was Bradley who threw it who was an ex-quarterback, so we'll see.

Q. Kickoff from the 35 -- how will that change kickoffs?

COACH ERB: It remains to be seen. I think you'll obviously see lot more touchbacks than has been in the past. I think the rule is also, if it's a touchback on a kickoff, it comes down to the 25. So there will be some discussion as we go along here how we want to approach it.

Obviously it was a safety issue, so I think you'll see a lot more touch backs than you've seen in the past.

Q. Do you look for a kicker that can hang the ball up there around the 10?

COACH ERB: Yeah, I think he -- kicking the ball, not giving them a chance to return is -- you don't have to cover. You are taking an offensive play away from those guys.

Q. What does it say about Trent that he's willing to stick around, and you, that you are going to keep him on scholarship through five years?

COACH ERB: Trent is a competitive guy, and Trent is competing out there every single day. He's not a guy that when things get tough he's going to walk away from it. It says an awful lot about him and his character.

He's going to go out there and he's going to compete every single day and if he wins the job and he's the best guy for it, he's going to be happy. If it's not, if he's not the guy, he's still going to go out there and approach it like he is.

Q. The willingness to offer kickers scholarship --

COACH ERB: That comes down to the character of our head coach. Coach Ferentz isn't

in this just to win and lose games. He's in it truly for the well being of our student-athletes.

Q. What do you see in Marshall Koehn; do you think being maybe the only guy not on scholarship kind of drives him and gives him a little chip on his shoulder?

COACH ERB: He's going to be competing with it also, and Marshall has tremendous potential, too. We are pretty fortunate right now that we have three pretty good kickers.

Darrell Wilson

Q. Give us a few comments on how things have started off so far coaching the defensive backs and we'll go from there.

COACH WILSON: I've had two days, I've had two opportunities to work with the secondary. I'm really excited about it, one. Two, extremely talented group, both young and old. I feel real comfortable about the young men we have on the outside.

Just to name a few, B.J. Lowery and Micah Hyde, and then you have Greg Castillo who has been around but is doing some nice things for us and then Jordan Lomax, newcomer, who is having a really good spring thus far.

And then on the back end, you have Tanner Miller, who had a really good year last year and he's doing a nice job again. It's kind of that senior leader for us, although he's going to be a junior on that back hash.

And then we are working with Nico Law. Nico is extremely talented, still learning the game but he's going to be a nice player for us. John Lowdermilk we moved back on the hash again and he's really comfortable back there and with Tommy Donatell and Collin Sleeper; we feel we have a good group of safeties, also.

Q. You recruited Jordan and Nico, as well. Just talk about their development and what you've seen from them.

COACH WILSON: Again, primarily last year, they were just special teams guys for us. They had an opportunity to learn a little bit about the system, so it's still new to them.

But just working with those two, they are really, really talented. Jordan, it's more confidence right now, but he has the ability and Nico is not lacking confidence. We just have to let Nico know that you don't know everything just yet.

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He's a football player. He wants to learn. He's gung ho. We have to turn him down a little bit, which is okay. You would rather turn a guy down than have to turn him up. So those two are really coming along, and as mentioned, they come up and see me, they want to learn. They will come and watch film and they will ask questions. So excited about those two.

Q. There have been so many changes on the staff in the off-season; what's it been like and what's the adjustment been like?

COACH WILSON: It's been good. I've had opportunities -- I played in the secondary. My first collegiate job was in the secondary, so that's not really new to me. A young man in LeVar Woods that's played the position and knows it. He's going to grow and he's growing as a young coach and he's doing a fine job.

And Reese Morgan, he's a coach, he's a teacher, and it's just a matter of coming over and earning will the system. So things are going well and Phil is doing a great job of putting it all together.

We are really blending very well back there.

Q. Do all of the moves surprise you at all?

COACH WILSON: In this business nothing really surprises you and there's an ultimate plan and right now that's what it is.

Q. Are the defensive players having to learn all kind of new terminology or are you pretty much set?

COACH WILSON: We have not really changed much. We may tweak a few things here and there. We may play a different technique here and there but for the most part the terminology and the system is the same.

Q. Do you see a more aggressive style, or does the style change in some way?

COACH WILSON: What we have done in the back end, early on in spring, we real will be focused on footwork and man techniques and those things. So we are really working hard and we'll stretch that more this spring so we are more comfortable with it, and we'll get a feel with whether or not we can play that type of defense or not.

Q. Perhaps more press?

COACH WILSON: If they like it -- they like it. And again, what we are doing is trying to teach them. I'm a firm believer in teaching them every technique and let them play the technique that they feel the most comfortable with.

Q. If they did that, what could that do for your defense --

COACH WILSON: Probably do a lot of things up front -- more so, as I mentioned we have four solid corners that can do a few different things. Some guys like to press and some like to play off. We are giving them an opportunity to do those things. Right now they are enjoying it and it allows us as a coaching staff to sit back and say, hey, maybe we can do this, maybe we can do that, those type of things.

Q. Torrey Campbell is a two-sport athlete. What adjustments do you have to make to accommodate an athlete that makes the decision to do two sports?

COACH WILSON: He understands when it's spring practice, he's with spring practice. During the winter it's easier for him to go on the indoor track because it's not, spring or football-wise, not much of a commitment. But right now he's involved with spring football and when that's over he'll get more involved with track.

Q. More speed at linebacker, does that give you more flexibility?

COACH WILSON: Yes, that's kind of been our philosophy the last couple of years, as you noticed, in their body types and at that time we are looking for maybe a big safety that couldn't play on the hash, but was physical, physical enough and big enough; Chris Kirk, most people would not have taken Chris at 195 but he's a tremendous athlete and explosive and physical.

That allows us to keep those guys in at certain times but again we are starting to see that young secondary that, that young talent where we may be able to do a couple of things in that back end.

Q. B.J. Lowery was able to play with the cast; what do you see out of him?

COACH WILSON: He's tremendous, he has great feet, great hips and with that hand healing, he's able to use it a lot more in our press technique. B.J. is -- I'm really excited about him.

He's going to be a tremendous football player for us. He's that guy who can press a guy and run with him and break all of the different routes. I'm excited about B.J.

Q. He didn't have a lot of offers coming out of Ohio. How do you explain that?

COACH WILSON: Sometimes you get caught in the numbers game. Coming from that State of Ohio is a lot of good football players and he may have been lost in the shuffle. Thank goodness; because he really can play the game of football.

Q. The last two years, the strength and return on this defense has been up front on the line and now it looks like the returners are more experienced linebackers and defensive back positions. How does that change the makeup of the defense and what you hope to do?

COACH WILSON: Again we are going to stick with our base defense but we will, again, for those young guys, we are going to have to do some things a little differently, as having the talent we have in the back end and especially with the back seven. I think we'll be able to do those type of things to take some of the heat off some of those guys up front.

Q. Does it make this transition easier with Phil as the D-Coordinator because you don't have to get a new guy?

COACH WILSON: Probably more so for the young men than it is us. Again in this business, you never know who you are going to be dealing with or where you end up. So for the young men, again, we talk about the youth we have in our defense, it's good that they see familiar faces and the same system pretty much.

Q. Micah entering his third year as a starter at corner; what do you see out of him?

COACH WILSON: Micah is kind of a quiet leader. He doesn't say much, leads by example. But the old commercial with E.F. Hutton, when he speaks, they listen. I'm excited about Micah, again, because he knows -- he's smart. Very intelligent young man. Does a great job. It may be -- probably his best asset are his feet. He has really good feet. Studies the game. Has a lot of respect from his teammates.

Q. As far as special teams goes, I know the last couple of years haven't been as strong as you want them, what do you look for this year as you put together the units?

COACH WILSON: Again, the last couple of years, we have had to pull a lot of young guys in, and that's really not an excuse. We as a staff have to continue to do a better job of preparation and getting these guys ready to play. That's the bottom line.

We have a number of young men that are extremely talented that can help us and we are really looking forward, obviously, to having much better units out there on the field.

Q. Who is the fastest defensive back?

COACH WILSON: Torrey can go, Torrey Campbell runs very well. Jordan Lomax was a track star when he was in high school. I would probably say Torrey right now, and B.J.

B.J. is fast but he's so smooth, you don't see how fast, if that makes sense, he's just so fluid, that you don't see how fast he is. But he has very good recovery speed.

Q. Sounds like you have pretty high expectations for B.J. coming into the season?

COACH WILSON: Yeah, and all of them but B.J. especially, because as we mentioned earlier with the injury, it was kind of a setback but he is an extremely talented young man.

Again with his ability, we'll be able to do some things out there where you could possibly lock him down on a guy and do some other things on the back end.

Q. Who is your most physical defender right now?

COACH WILSON: Probably Nico Law. He's extremely physical. Out of control a little bit but he's physical. Collin Sleeper is a very physical young man.

And Tanner has become -- the more confident Tanner Miller has become on that back half. You watch him in the beginning of last year and you watch him towards the end in the run game, that half-safety now, he's showing up in the run game and feeling much better about it. He's becoming more of a physical player. Nico, everything he wants to do, he just wants to rip your head off. We had to tell him, we have to play controlled violence.

Q. Do you think Nico has that attitude that could help develop the defense as a whole?

COACH WILSON: You saw in the kicking game when we first let him run down on kickoffs, he brought that energy. True story, he didn't realize how good he was until he got double teamed a couple of times and he got ear-holed, and he realized, Nico, other people watch film.

He brought that energy to our kicking game, and I think he'll do the same in our defense.

Q. Will Ruben make a defensive back and will he play a special teams role right away?

COACH WILSON: With a body type like that, you hope he does. When I was a linebacker coach, I was going to take him but now that I'm in the secondary, we want to keep him on the hash, if that makes sense.

Q. Sleeper, how is he doing?

COACH WILSON: He's good. We visit once a week. We told him, make sure we get in and visit at least once a week and make sure he's on point, and he is. He's doing well. We have three guys at that strong safety position that you feel comfortable with.

Obviously you like to give Nico a little bit more since he's a younger of the three and give him an opportunity to learn. But there's three good, solid players back there.

Q. You said that the signature is the cushion, and that's why the press coverage; how much will that be there this fall? Is that one of the changes that maybe you see going away?

COACH WILSON: Again, we feel with the talent that we have, we can do -- we can close that cushion down and that's something we have been working on in the winter and right now during spring practice.

We have talked about aligning a little closer; trust the technique; trust yourselves. That's what we talk about, trust yourselves, trust your ability and we'll teach you technique, but trust yourselves. If they can do that, we'll be fine.

Q. Is it more nickel, dime, are these guys physical enough that they can do that?

COACH WILSON: Again, it's still early in

the spring, just watching the last two practices, we'll find out a little bit more today with the pads on. Everybody can run. Everybody looks good when we are not in pads.

But we'll get a little better feel today, but again, we are at that point where if these guys continue to progress like they are, we'll be able to do -- have that nickel package and have a steady nickel package and have a steady dime package because we feel good the guys in coverage.

Q. Returning out of that group?

COACH WILSON: We had B.J. back there, not learning, but refreshing, working on punt returns. We have Torrey back there working a little bit because another track guy. Mike has always been back there. Out of that group, those are the three that we feel have an opportunity to be return guys for us.

Q. Are there some yards in the return game that maybe you didn't get last year?

COACH WILSON: A lot had to do with the punt game, the way it changed; you get these rugby punters and their line driving. What you don't want is the ball rolling, but it's hard to get into a decent return game as much as three or four years ago.

So we are still continuing to work on those techniques and then our main purpose is to keep that ball off the ground, field it and get what we can, or don't get the negative yards with that rolling around.

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