

**November 5, 2013**



An Interview With:

## **COACH KIRK FERENTZ**

**COACH FERENTZ:** Welcome. Congratulations to James Morris again on that award. It's obviously a very prestigious award, National Football Foundation, and I think he's one of four Big 10 players, if I'm not mistaken. They're all excellent players and excellent people. So that's really a prestigious thing.

It's a real tribute to the work that James has done as a player, leader, and obviously an outstanding job in the classroom, as well. Just really pleased for him and his family. It's a great award. They'll have a nice time in New York. It's a very nice occasion to be involved in.

Captain-wise, got the same four guys. We've got James Morris and then Chris Kirksey defensively; Brett Van Sloten and Mark Weisman offensively.

And the other real news is Dom Alvis will be out again, so we'll see how he does in the next two weeks, and maybe get him back for the last couple games here. That's kind of where we're at now, so we'll go back to work today and get ready for Purdue.

### **Q. Is Jake ready to go?**

**COACH FERENTZ:** We expect everybody to be ready to go today. There's a couple guys who are sore, as you might imagine, but the news on Sunday was a lot better than I thought, really, than it might be. That was good news.

### **Q. Do you expect Jake to be at all limited?**

**COACH FERENTZ:** Not really. I think he'll be sore maybe, but I think everybody is going to be good to go.

### **Q. Would you say your red zone offense has been maybe the most disappointing or frustrating thing about the last month of the season?**

**COACH FERENTZ:** I don't know. It was Saturday. It was just frustrating we couldn't get touchdowns. You play a team like that, a team that's as good as they are offensively, and you get down there, you need to make due with your opportunities, and we just didn't have any luck there.

Three trips down there and you come away with three field goals, certainly a touchdown would have made a big difference, and then if you can convert a couple of them, it would have been really good.

But the first two really just we kind of had some self-inflicted wounds that made it tougher, and that part is disappointing.

### **Q. When you look at the rushing game, since Minnesota you've really struggled. Is that a reflection of the defense or is it an execution thing?**

**COACH FERENTZ:** You know, correct me, go back and look, I haven't looked in a while, but I think we were like a yard per carry better than Ohio State. I might be wrong on that, but we have a pretty healthy average over there running the ball, or maybe it was a yard over what they've been giving up. But anyway, I thought we ran the ball fairly successfully there.

I'm saying Ohio State. They're a pretty good football team, and we did okay running the ball there. I think we were 4.8 a carry, but you'd have to look it up.

Every game is a certain individual circumstance. We clearly didn't run very well against Michigan State. Other people have had the same problem. And Saturday was a tough day. But again, going into it, I understand why so much focus was on Wisconsin's offense, for good

reason. If you look at their statistics, they're awfully impressive. And then on the flipside, very quietly their defense has been playing pretty good. I think they're giving up 190 a game rushing, and they made it tough for us to run the ball. We play better if we can run it, that's for sure.

I'm not overly thrilled with what we're doing right now. We need to amp that up a little bit.

**Q. What can you reasonably expect to get out of Mark Weisman? It seems like when he's working right, carry No. 30 is just as strong as carry No. 1. He's having a hard time getting to 10 the last couple weeks.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, we'll play it by ear.

**Q. You've gone by committee the last couple games, especially the last game. Do you expect to do that into the future when you have a young back like Daniels, a guy like Canzeri?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, we'll take it a game at a time, but Jordan came in and gave us a spark the other day, and there were two things on that. Obviously Mark had an injury that took him out of the game, and we expect him to be back okay. But the other part, Jordan gave us a little bit of a change-up in there and hit that one nice run and did a good job. As I said, he's been practicing really well.

We'll just play it a game at a time, try to do what's best. Again, it's a little tricky trying to get four guys in, but we have no problem with all four of them. We think they're all pretty capable guys.

**Q. It looked like Wisconsin was getting Jake to hesitate a little bit. Did you see that on film or how do you rate his performance before he got hurt?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, we didn't get wide open. We weren't in sync. They played a good defensive game. For 52 minutes, it was a heck of a pitchers' duel. Both teams were playing good defense. That didn't come as a real surprise to me. I think both teams are very capable defensively. We made it tough on them, too, other than the one drive. They got a nice drive, hit two runs on us and hit that pass right before the half. But other than that, for 52 minutes, it was a great defensive ballgame, and sometimes you get in those, and other times it goes the other way, too.

**Q. What did you think of CJ when he did come in?**

COACH FERENTZ: I thought he did an admirable job. It's a tough circumstance to enter into because they were playing well. But he did some good things, but he's been practicing well. It wasn't a big surprise to us. We feel confident in him.

**Q. Are you concerned about the running game or is this more just the course of the season, these ups and downs?**

COACH FERENTZ: I was concerned Saturday because we didn't have the kind of productivity you want to have, but they had a lot to do with that. They're a good football team. You know, every week is a different challenge. I think we're capable of doing better, and I think we probably could have done a little bit better last week, and that would have helped the cause certainly, but we didn't get it done.

**Q. Seems like you maybe dominate average opponents. Is the next step trying to be more effective against the really elite defenses?**

COACH FERENTZ: I thought we ran the ball fairly decently against Ohio State, relative to the way other people have run the ball. They're a pretty good team. I think it's a week to week thing personally.

**Q. What have you seen out of Purdue's offense? Statistically it's not very good, but what are the keys you're looking for?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, they made the move to a freshman quarterback, who's a very good player. We were very interested in him during the recruiting process. He's a quality person, a really good player, and they've got an outstanding back who starts there. He's a really dangerous runner. He's, I believe, the second leading receiver or leading receiver. He's very active in the pass game, as well.

You know, that's kind of where the focal point is. They've had some injuries and some illnesses up front, moving some guys around, but you know, it's going to be a game on the road. We're going to have to be at our best. We've played well the last couple weeks defensively, but we're going to need to play well again this weekend. Anything can happen. It's a new week.

**Q. I know six wins isn't the ultimate goal, but what would it mean after missing out on bowl eligibility last year to see this team become bowl eligible?**

COACH FERENTZ: Really all we're worried about is winning this week, which would be six, and to become bowl eligible is certainly a plus compared to a year ago. We had six the year we didn't go, last time, so that's not the end all, but it's the best we can do this week, so it certainly would be a great outcome for us if we can get that done.

**Q. When you're looking for a hot hand at running back, how can you reasonably sort through guys and see who's working, what's working?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's what I was saying earlier; it's tough to get a four-man rotation going. So you just kind of play it as you go. I don't know if anybody has got that mastered, but we'll kind of play it by ear and go through there.

**Q. Is it figuring out who can do what?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think we've got a pretty good handle on who's who and what's what on our team. You never know how it's going to be going on a certain day, either. You just never know. We'll just try to figure that out.

**Q. Where would establishing the running game be on your to-do list for this week?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, ultimately we play best when we do both. When you can't run the ball, it's difficult, and unless you're just a team that intends on throwing it 65 or times a game, and there are some people built that way. But in a perfect world we'd like to be balanced. Sometimes you've got to throw it better to get the running game going. They work both ways, and every game is a little bit different there.

At the end of the day, we're better if we're balanced and able to dictate to the defense what we're going to do. It kind of ties right in with third down situations. In our stats we were way down Saturday, and we did better on the third-and-short stuff than we did the third-and-long, and that's pretty typical, so again, if you can keep it in that manageable range, third down wise, it helps you, and the running game is usually tied into that.

**Q. As many freshmen as Purdue is playing this season, does that make it harder to**

**find game film of that, to learn their tendencies?**

COACH FERENTZ: No, I don't think so. They have a new staff, and their situation is a little bit like ours when we came here in that a lot of their guys came from different areas. Some of them were with Coach Hazell at Kent but not all of them. There's a real feeling-out process in terms of your roster and what it is you're trying to do and then you what you would like to do versus what your players can do.

You know, so there's a lot of give-and-take there, so I'm sure they're going through that, too. But we have to be ready for their best football, that's for sure.

**Q. I think your first game as a line coach you guys snapped a 20-game losing streak to Purdue as I recall. Do you remember anything about that situation leading up to it, and was it hard for you to believe you could lose to a team 20 times?**

COACH FERENTZ: That is hard to believe. It's hard to believe you don't have a winning season for 19 years, too, but it happened.

If I remember, we were up against it pretty good. I think we were coming off two losses. Give me a little license here, but I think it was Minnesota then Illinois, came home, and probably the biggest thing I remember is we created a new formation, we just moved our backs up a little bit, really didn't change the offense at all, and the fans went crazy. Everybody thought it was something new; it really wasn't, but Coach Fry was the master of disguise again. But the big thing is we played well enough to get it done. Nothing came easy then, and it doesn't come easy now.

It's like this thing. Purdue has had a couple losses that were a little bit one-sided, yet they lost to a pretty good Notre Dame team by seven points, and Michigan State is playing really good football this year and Purdue gave up one touchdown to Michigan State and one defensive touchdown, if you will, Michigan State's offense. That's what we've got to be ready for. We've got to be ready for a team that's playing at that level. There are no easy days here in this conference, that's for sure.

**Q. Last week, last Friday you had a player that you had to dismiss from your team and you mentioned in the statement that he**

**ASAP**sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at [asapsports.com](http://asapsports.com)

Coach Ferentz - 11 5 13 (2)

**was serving a three-game suspension at the time. What was the suspension for?**

COACH FERENTZ: As you might imagine, he broke team policy, and it wasn't public. He wasn't dressed for the Northwestern game. Amazed, I thought everybody on the sidelines -- you guys are slipping a little bit. I guess that's just for spring scrimmages. But he wasn't dressed out that game, and he just violated team policy.

**Q. Is that when the suspension started, that first game?**

COACH FERENTZ: That was his first of three games.

**Q. And the next-man-in philosophy, you've had Reggie Spearman in the last couple weeks. How would you assess his progress?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's growing and doing a good job on special teams, and then we're carving out a little something for him on that 3rd down package, and two weeks in a row now he's done a good job there, too. We're starting to bring him along, yeah.

**Q. Keeping with the quarterback theme, Cody Sokol, we talked about him all spring. He's off the radar obviously.**

COACH FERENTZ: I think I said it last week, we're pleased with all three of the guys, but it's tough to get four running backs in and it's tough to get three quarterbacks in, too. If Jake is down then he's No. 2. He was when Jake was down the other day. But it's hard to have a three-man rotation.

**Q. When you look at what's going on with the Miami Dolphins right now, how do you as a head coach stay aware of the day-to-day interactions among players in the locker room?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think you just try to encourage people to come forward with any concerns that they have. I know Joe Philbin personally and professionally, and Joe is a very caring, compassionate human being. And there are things that happen in pro football. I've been there. But I don't know the facts of the case. I've read some stuff. I don't know if it's accurate or not. I'm not suggesting that things that are out there might not be accurate, but the things I read, it's inexcusable. One thing about football: You have to be respectful of other people's lifestyles. It's not a team of 15 guys or 10 guys or even 20. College you've got over 100 plus players, and then the NFL

you've got 60 plus players from all kinds of backgrounds. Everybody has got to be respectful of everybody's lifestyle, and that's a good rule in life anyway.

The Joe Philbin I know certainly stands for all those things, and I'm sure it'll all get worked out.

**Q. One of the dynamics of that, though, was so much of the communication was via text. It wasn't as though a coach or anyone in the locker room could observe it. How has that changed, that guys can be communicating and affecting a player's performance and it's not something overt?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, and it's never been. Things happen out of a building you're not aware of, and it just gets back, you just hope everybody in the organization, not just players but everybody in the organization, feels comfortable and if they're concerned about something to bring it to your attention. It's hard to act on things you're not aware of. I think that's true in any family, any organization, anything bigger than one person. There's got to be communication. And then the key thing is what happens once the communication is made, what action is taken, what steps are taken.

That's kind of the way it has to work. But I'll tell you, as you know, you can't know about everything. If you've been a parent you know that. It's just part of the deal.

**Q. Have you ever had an instance of any kind of hazing or initiation or anything like that on a team of yours?**

COACH FERENTZ: It was very minor, very minor, and I guess my experience there's not a lot of upside with hazing. Silly little traditions. We make our first-year guys sing the fight song as a group so really nobody is out there on the spot or anything like that, but that's about as far as it goes here. It's healthy, it's funny, all that kind of stuff. But there's not a lot of upside with hazing. That's my experience at least.

**Q. Purdue had a punter that punted quite a few times but he actually led the Big 10 in punting yards. He seems to be a weapon for that team.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, he's doing a really good job, and then the flipside of that they've got two returners that are just good. We had a lot

of respect for No. 3 last week, kicking and punt returning, and they've got two separate guys doing it here. The running back happens to be one of the corners at punt returner, but when they get the ball in their hands they're both running back-type guys. We're going to have to really amp it up here special teams-wise, and I thought that was one of the things we did well Saturday. Our special teams were pretty good, but they're going to have to amp it up another step here.

**Q. What can a bowl game do in terms of a launching pad into the next season for success?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I'm not really thinking much about next season right now, but I'd be thrilled to become bowl eligible this week because that's the best we can do.

**Q. Last Saturday you had a pretty decent game from Don Shumpert, caught a couple passes at critical times. Do you see him as that guy that can emerge as that number three receiver for you down the stretch?**

COACH FERENTZ: Time will tell. Shump was kind of hobbled a little bit for a couple weeks there, but last week he was able to practice full speed again and did a really nice job, made a couple grabs there, so that was good to see. We need everybody right now; we need seniors, freshmen. We need everybody to help out because every game is really important for us right now.

**Q. When you guys were recruiting Brandon Scherff, did you make any trips out West, anything stand out to you, see him play basketball, anything like that?**

COACH FERENTZ: No, I never saw him play basketball, but I went out and made a visit. We just thought he was a really good prospect, and the thing about him, he just kind of morphed in front of our eyes. We started to get to know him in 10th grade, and every time he would show up here it seemed like he was 10 pounds bigger. He went from being a quarterback, which I'm still not buying that, to a tight end, a big tight end, and then obviously we projected him inside.

**Q. Always checked him as an offensive lineman?**

COACH FERENTZ: That was our thought process, yeah, it sure was.

**Q. Guard? Did you say inside?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, just inside. I mean, yeah, inside. The tackle spot was occupied when he showed up, so he got to play guard.

**Q. Ike Boettger now an offensive lineman?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he slid in a couple weeks ago, and doing a good job.

**Q. Does Krieger Coble have the ability to slide in there?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, last week he had to be a tight end. We actually played somebody that uses tight ends so we had to use him out there. Normally the tight ends just stand around and look at each other when we're doing look-team stuff. We put him to work, put him inside there.

**Q. Does Henry Krieger Coble have that kind of ability to slide in, as well?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I really haven't thought much about that. It's not in our thought process. Maybe he could, but right now we kind of like him at tight end.

**Q. The second half hasn't always been your best half, especially this season. Have you seen commonalities, tendencies as to why that is?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's game to game, and we've played some good defensive football teams. We want to do better, obviously.

**Q. Is it a matter of not executing adjustments correctly?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think that adjustment stuff gets overplayed sometimes. That's just my personal opinion. But the bottom line is we're not getting enough done in that second half. We didn't get enough done in the first half last week, either, so it's just one field goal versus two.

**FastScripts by ASAP Sports**