

**November 9, 2010**



An Interview With:

## **COACH FERENTZ**

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome. I think in the future we'll just move this thing officially to 12:35 or 12:37 so that way I'm only be a couple minutes late, I apologize.

Captains are the same captains we have had. We are locked in there and that's probably a good thing. We have Adrian Clayborn, Karl Klug and Ricky Stanzi, Julian Vandervelde as captains.

Looking backwards, it was good certainly to get a win on the road in the conference and something we'll have to try to do again this week. Obviously I think we are very fortunate to come out with a victory. So that's kind of the end of that thing.

We move on now and face a tough challenge at Northwestern and just in a nutshell, you know, they are a very good football team. Extremely well coached. They have got good players that really compete hard and play good football. So it's going to be a tough challenge for us. We have a lot of work to do this week and hopefully we'll be ready to go on Saturday.

**Q. You said Saturday you expected Adam Robinson to play; is everything a go with that?**

COACH FERENTZ: As far as I know, he's practicing today and he's training; ran on Sunday, lifted and all that stuff. So he's fine to go.

**Q. Saw Norm Parker outside, back with you guys then on a limited basis?**

COACH FERENTZ: The good news is we passed on 380 on Friday. He was coming down from Cedar Rapids as we were going up to the airport, and so he got home Friday. He's been in this week, on a very limited basis right now and

he's going through therapy, he's over doing that right now.

I don't know if he'll make the trip or not. There's a chance of that and it's very limited but it's a great first step, certainly. And I think like anybody in that situation, he's got a lot of ground to cover right now from endurance and strength, that type of thing. But it's a huge step for him. It's just good to have him. I know he feels good about being home.

**Q. How much of a lift would it be to have him, even for a few hours or minutes?**

COACH FERENTZ: Sunday was his first day in the office and it was great seeing him, great to hear his voice. He had a few comments to make about things in general, so that was good. Got a good sense of humor about everything. I think he's excited to be back.

It was great to have him at the end of the table, we told him we had to move LeVar out of that seat, because as soon as Norm vacated, LeVar is sitting there within 20 seconds, so we had to bump him back out. So Norm had his place to sit again. I'm joking. But anyway it was great having him back in the office.

**Q. Clarify on Adam Robinson; was that a concussion that he suffered?**

COACH FERENTZ: He was injured. He was injured. He's fine. He's ready to go.

**Q. How do you guys proceed forward now? What can you guys do to balance the workload?**

COACH FERENTZ: Norm is not doing an awful lot as you might imagine, and so you know, I guess we are on the honor system, whatever, but I don't think we are getting any competitive advantage out of this. LeVar is basically just helping out in the field and helping out a little bit in the office, and if Norm is on duty, LeVar won't be.

We'll kind of see how it goes.

**Q. One of the best positives that came out of Saturday is that a number of freshmen really stepped up for you. Are you surprised that these guys have been able to perform the way they have when they have been thrust into duty?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if I'm surprised but I'm certainly pleased that they have done it. And quite frankly, it's a little bit like our '04 team, if you look back, we won a Big Ten championship that year. And I can think of three walk-ons that we had starting for us: Considine, Tyler Luebke and Pete McMahon; we would have been sunk without those three guys.

And Saturday, if you look at the three freshmen, they played a pretty prominent role. Fair to say the same thing, we would be in serious trouble without those three guys on the field. Maybe somebody would have filled in their spot, but I think all three of these guys are doing a good job, and they are good young players, most of all just pleased with how they have handled things. They have handled the circumstances really well, so that's a real positive for us.

**Q. When you look at a team like Northwestern which has struggled a little bit defending the pass, but you have what you guys want to do, how do you balance a little bit of a perceived weakness versus what your own philosophy is?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, if you go off that stuff, on paper we should have matched up a lot better and scored more than 18 last Saturday; I think, looking at the stats. But we came out with 18, which I think is the lowest we've been, right? Is that fair to say? Two losses, right? Okay. So I don't think we've scored less than 18 in a game, I don't think. You know, on paper, we were -- I don't think anybody ever projected that.

All I know is we need to play better. We need to execute a little bit better and we need to coach better.

**Q. Now that Marcus Coker is proving himself a little bit, shown ball security and stuff, how do you see divvying up the carries?**

COACH FERENTZ: In the off-season, we are worried about how to handle three backs and then we were worried about having one back, and now we have two. So we'll figure it out.

But it was a good first step, certainly for Marcus. He got hit in that Michigan State game, too. So I thought that's really the first time the varsity was whacking at him, and you know, he's a lot better player than he was back in August.

So I thought he showed us a lot of things he did behind the scenes, too, more subtle on Saturday, that I think all of us feel a lot better and just like we feel better about James Morris now, we certainly feel better about Mike Meyer, too.

**Q. What about his Dan Persa and his operation?**

COACH FERENTZ: I can't say enough about him and I don't want to say he's -- Mike Kafka was a great story. Last year he was not a four-year starter, but you know, just played extremely well. He's playing in the NFL now and look at his last outing. I think he was involved in 98 touches, if I read that correct. He threw 70 passes and ran, what's that leave you 28 carries or something like that, it was a ridiculous performance he had.

This quarterback did a great job last year against us. A lot of the focus last year was us losing our quarterback which we did, but Kafka was hurt against us.

They did a great job with Persa playing a very prominent role. First thing I would say about him is he's a tremendous competitor. He's not in awe of anything. He just plays very well and he's a guy that throws the football well, but also can run it and that's going to be the difference from last week in terms of attack.

Northwestern, they are going to run the ball more. They are going to end up with probably 35, 40 carries in the game, so it's a little different than what we saw last week.

**Q. I think you played nine true freshmen this year; can you remember any year playing that many?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think so. It wasn't necessarily by design, but it's just things have worked that way and we have had some injuries that have forced us maybe to open our eyes a little bit and just consider some other options.

**Q. Is that a good gauge that this was a good recruiting class?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I guess that's

one positive that's come out of it. I guess some of these guys are just being called into action a little bit by necessity. But we are pleased with all of the guys, what they are doing, the contributions they are making.

In a perfect world, I probably wish we were a little healthier at some other spots or maybe had some other guys contributing where we didn't have to call on these guys. But I'll give you the linebacker situation is an example. We came into the season with very veteran -- we had a lot of guys in that senior class and I think one junior. So it's really not a bad thing that it's worked out this way.

But I'm not sure as our master plan, we thought would get those guys started on special teams, James and Christian Kirksey, in particular. But James has really done a good job. He doesn't seem to be overwhelmed by any of this, and it's been really impressive what he's done. He's done a great job in the classroom on top of it. And really, can say the same thing about Marcus and Mike Meyer, as well. Marcus had a little detour there. He had that six-week roadblock where he was hurt and that really impeded his progress, but he's shown us a lot the last two weeks.

**Q. Has Morris become your best middle linebacker?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not yet. Not yet. You mean overall?

**Q. Right now.**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, yeah, right now, he's playing better than anybody. We get Jeff Tarpinian back full speed, looks like maybe we'll slide him in where Tyler was. Tyler was really playing well. So that was a big loss for us a week ago. So maybe there's a little bit of a blessing there, maybe it's working out okay. But James is really doing a good job. He's off to a good start.

**Q. How has Adrian performed this year?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think well. I think well. He's getting a lot of attention. And you know, that comes with being a good player but I think he's playing well.

**Q. Is he dinged up at all or is he still --**

COACH FERENTZ: Not that I know of. I think he's okay. I think he's playing well.

**Q. Does the quick passing game, has that been used effectively to neutralize -- coming into the season on paper, you guys looked like you would have had X amount of sacks and seems like in games that have --**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I mean, a lot of people throw the ball pretty quickly. Just because a team passes a lot doesn't mean they are throwing the ball down the field. A lot of those bubble screens or the little quick passes, that type of thing, and that is really kind of what we were doing in 1999. We couldn't block anybody. Ladell Betts might be the toughest back ever in school history, to gain the yards he got, '99. But I don't mean that in a disrespectful way, we had Steinbach at 248; we had Nelson at 250, and whatever the other guys we had, but that's what we were playing with.

We were throwing the ball out -- getting it out quick, and so -- but I guess my point is, that's what you do sometimes to neutralize, if you can't block those guys, and I'm not saying other people can't block us. But the quick blocking or quick throw game is as effective -- or keeping seven guys in and doubling up here and there, that's a good way to do things, too.

If we are playing a team that's got a real strong front, we are going to utilize some of that same strategy hopefully so you are not getting your quarterback knocked out. But a lot of teams, that's what they do, they throw the ball on the perimeter and throw it quick and run screens, things of that nature to neutralize.

Sacks are important, but they don't tell the whole story. Hitting the quarterback or getting them disrupted, that type of thing is really what it's all about. This week we have a challenge because this guy is going to pull it and run with it; whereas Indiana's quarterback is a tremendous quarterback, he's been playing hurt, it looks like all season to me. It has not affected his throwing but he's not a big running threat right now.

So you're never going to get that ball out last week and then putting him in danger; that's good coaching, too. He sure throws the ball well.

**Q. This week the depth chart was different, I don't know how much input you have in the depth chart, actually --**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm the head coach, I usually -- I don't vote on Player of the Week, but I do -- In fact, that brings up -- (laughter). I still don't

vote for Player of the Week. Did we nominate Mike Meyer? Because he got the award. I was remiss in not citing that.

I'm hoping, what is it, 15 years I get a vote on that, I have to be here 15? So three years from now -- but right now I do approve the depth chart.

What was your question? Sorry to have interrupted you.

**Q. I forgot what I was going to ask.**

COACH FERENTZ: Mike Daniels.

**Q. He's punched his way in.**

COACH FERENTZ: Mike's playing pretty well right now. It's not a knock on Broderick at all. He's still an excellent football player. But Mike is just, you know, he's really -- so now I'll have to go rip him this afternoon so he doesn't get big-headed. But he's playing pretty well.

**Q. What is it about Northwestern that's made it such a tough game for Iowa?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'll go back to what I said earlier, I think they have a tremendous coaching staff. And Randy (Walker) and I came in the league the same time, I had great respect for Randy, as a person, most importantly. But he was a tremendous coach. And Pat was on his staff, and really handled a very difficult circumstance, tremendously well. And boy, he's done nothing but -- he and his staff have done a great job coaching that team ever since he's taken over.

But they are a good football team. They have got good players that make plays, they are productive. Quarterback from last year is playing in the NFL. We have not had one -- I don't think we have had an NFL quarterback in 12 years, just to put it in perspective. And I don't think we have -- have we? You guys know that.

The thing about it is, I think people, I'm now just speaking from a vantage point, there's been a couple different Northwesterns. They were great in 2000. The next two years, you know, down a little bit. In '02, you know, I mean, it was a one-sided game out there. But if you look at recent history, Missouri was fortunate to beat them two years ago in a bowl game. And last year, Auburn in national title contention talk right now, beat them in overtime, two overtimes in the Outback Bowl. They have had good football teams and the last two years at least, they have out-played us.

'06, we came in here with a sense of entitlement, and they came in here without a win in

the league and they ran it down our throats and we couldn't move the ball running or throwing against them. But the last two years I think they have been two even games, two very good teams playing. We have had the home-field advantage and couldn't make anything out of it.

The bottom line is, we turned it over. They have done a good job of playing the way you're supposed to play and we haven't. I think we had nine turnovers and they had two in two years. You do the math in an even game like that, you're not going to win. On top of that, we screwed up on special teams, several times, a couple years ago.

So to me, that's been the story of it. You've got two even teams. One team played clean, played really well and the other team didn't and it's pretty academic who is going to win or lose.

**Q. I think most people would suggest that that's not an easy job, certainly. What's he done -- but what has Fitzgerald done from this distance in your eyes?**

COACH FERENTZ: I was thinking about that yesterday coming into work. I think they were talking about Stanford being sixth or seventh, I was going to give Bob (Bowsby) a call; it's unfair now, they need to drop their academic standards some at Stanford. They have got an unfair advantage. You know, maybe if I get some time, maybe I'll give Bob a call later on.

But the bottom line is, they have got guys that play good football. They have got good players that play well. They are very well coached and they compete and they don't beat themselves. When you do that, you have a chance to have a good football team, and the last two years in particular, like I said, they have played Missouri off their feet and Missouri is the team that's been talked about and held in very high regard, for good reason, the last couple of years.

Auburn is in title contention talk right now. I don't think that quarterback played last year -- I don't think he did, but they are a good football team. Everybody talks about the SEC, and it was a heck of a football game in the Outback Bowl. It's not a smoke-and-mirror operation. They are good football players that play well. They are well coached. I mean, you look at our two games, they have done the things you're supposed to do.

Winning starts with not beating yourself, and you know, they sat there while we turned it

over nine times. They got on the bus and giggled all the way back to Chicago, probably just laughing at us, because we turned it over nine times and they turned it over twice. If you can do that, you sure like your odds on a game, and that's what they have done to their credit.

**Q. Does it almost, in a weird way, help that you're coming off a week where you face a team without a win in the league, on the road, and it was a fight till the very last second?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I like facing it -- since we got out of there with a win, I like that better than the other way, that's for sure.

As I said Saturday, when you're in a conference that's competitive, which ours is, chances are during the course of the season you're going to have a game or two like that, and the first thing is to get out of it alive, which we did. And semi-miraculous two years in a row, and the next thing is, what are you going to do next week. Same thing if you win, if we had won by 20 points, what are you going to do next week. And that's kind of where we are at right now. We are facing a team here that we haven't beat in a couple of years.

**Q. Has Northwestern been mentioned much in the off-season, week-to-week?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes and no, but in our mantra or our focus typically is more about us. That's really kind of the way we have operated for 12 years. Not to discredit Northwestern, but in this series, it starts with us. '06, showing up like I said it back then, I'll say it now, we showed up like fat cats in that game, and they showed up like hungry cats, pardon the pun, and just nailed us. We deserved it.

The last two years, we didn't protect the football very well and just you know, so we need to really focus on making sure we play good, clean -- we have to give ourselves a chance to win against a good team.

**Q. Do you play into the notion that maybe this offense is a tough matchup for the way you guys play defense?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know, how many points did they have last year? I don't think it was an exorbitant amount. I don't think that's been our issue. I think when you turn the ball over five times and then four times and give up, I think it was 22 points two years ago, does anybody

remember the score, 22-17, something like that, we have given up the ball nine times and they have had under 40 points.

So that's hard to say our defense has really been the issue, I think. I don't know. The other day, I felt like they threw for 400, and they threw for 222 or whatever it was, we gave up 13 points. But it could have been, you understand that.

**Q. You've had a series of successful linebackers and maybe Jeremiha Hunter in his senior year is quietly overshadowed. What's he meant to the program the last few years?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's been a solid, steady performer. He's done a good job. It was good to get him back in the lineup last week. I think probably the best thing I can say about him, he's been a three-year starter, at least in two years, we had good defenses. We had defenses that gave up very respectable points, and currently we are pretty good there, too. But we have still got three games to go. The jury is still out on this one.

I think he's been a big part of that. You don't do that without a good linebacker playing. He's done a nice job.

**Q. Maybe his best year?**

COACH FERENTZ: I hope so.

**Q. You see his hand deflecting passes.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's like, you know, we have talked about Stanzi. It's the same thing, you hope a guy accumulates knowledge and wisdom as he plays, and I think Jeremiha has certainly done that.

**Q. How is the way that concussions have been treated changed since you've got into coaching?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, a long time ago it was a lot different. Nobody knew they were concussions. They just thought they got dinged or whatever. You know, gave you those ammonia little capsules and you kept playing, and I don't remember it being dramatically different when I was here in the 80s. We didn't have any protocol, that's for sure, at least that I remember; I was an assistant, so I wasn't too aware, anyway. I don't remember many guys having them.

It's kind of ironic because you expect the technology and the gear to be better now. As far

as the protective devices, we have more than ever, but I think part of that is increased knowledge and awareness, certainly. I don't think that the protocol that we are following now is a lot different than it was 20 years ago.

Maybe we were ahead of the norm or whatever, I don't know, but we have been pretty conservative and pretty cautious with people and for a good reason. It's something you really want to treat with. But it is a new field. It's a new field. There are very few places right now in the country that are really specializing in that, and then the data that's been collected, to me, it's in that -- I'm no doctor, I said that before, but in the initial stages right now. I think four or five years from now, we'll know a lot more about what's going on.

**Q. Seems like the NFL is maybe a step away from game ejection on head-to-head.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah.

**Q. Do you see that, could that ever happen in college?**

COACH FERENTZ: We had similar two weeks ago, three weeks ago; we had two players suspended within a week, two different conferences. So it all trickles down.

I just hope we don't knee-jerk react on some of this stuff, because football is a collision sport. You can't change that. I think all of us are in favor of protecting defenseless players. I think all of us are in favor of players not using the helmet as a weapon. That's why I think everybody tries to teach good technique and all that.

But the flipside of this stuff is, and I'm just watching what's going on above us a little bit, those guys move at a pretty fast rate, and those are pretty good athletes on the field and sometimes you can't avoid getting into that situation.

So to eject the players, suspend them, I think it just really is a slippery slope. Really, you've got to use common sense.

**Q. Does some of this come from the emphasis over the years of trying to deliver the big hit than maybe just wrap a guy up?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. Dick Butkus tried to knock guys out, too. That's football. It's always been that way. We just all know more about concussions now. Nobody wants to see anybody get a concussion, that's for sure. But it is; it's part of the game and always will be. The injuries are, too, and coaches getting fired. That

stuff all comes with the territory. It not pleasant. But it's part. If you're involved in the derby, that's part of the -- it's just part of the territory. I think all of us want to minimize it, believe me, just like coaches want to minimize getting fired.

But that's why you just hope people are coaching properly. I'm all for rules enforcements. You just hope it's not a knee-jerk reaction, which tends to happen when things become a national news item.

**Q. Is Jeff going to start then at the outside linebacker?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see. We'll see how the week goes. He's still working his way back. But there's a chance, yeah.

**Q. He seems to have good speed -- he was slated to be where Jeremiha is --**

COACH FERENTZ: A couple years ago, he had a shot at being there and he got injured and unfortunately, it's not the Tony Moeaki story but there's some similarities and he's really had some injuries, and Pete has progressed in ability to play. And the other part when he got healthy last year, we had Jeremiah established and you've got two really good NFL linebackers. So it's tough to crack the lineup.

If he had stayed healthy, he would be having a great year right now. There's no question in my mind right now. He's a tremendous player. He's one of best players to ever play here consistent right now. Hopefully he can have three games in the next stretch and one more on top of that, would be great.

**Q. Is he more of a natural linebacker?**

COACH FERENTZ: I would have argued or suggested Pat Angerer could have been a great will and ended up being a middle linebacker, and that's just how that worked out. And he actually played Sam I think last week or played outside. When Brackett was hurt, he played middle for the Colts a couple weeks ago and now they have moved him to an outside linebacker.

You get your best guys on the field and that's what they are doing, we do the same thing. But I think Jeff has the versatility to do a lot of things which is nice. It's a good attribute.

**Q. Biggest story in your sport last week involved an elite football player from**

**Auburn and an alleged influence peddler. Has your staff encountered anything like that over the years?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, just knee-jerk, I would have to go back to the 80s. The 80s I remember some things. Not to that -- well, I don't know the whole story on that one. But the 80s, that stuff, you would hear things. You hear things. I don't know about -- how much validity there was.

**Q. What would your people do if someone came to you with a suggestion or an offer like that?**

COACH FERENTZ: I mean that, would be pretty easy. You just keep moving. That's pretty easy there.

**Q. What I meant was, would you go to the NCAA?**

COACH FERENTZ: It depends. Now this is all stuff I just listen on the radio when I go back and forth, it sounds like, at least from what I've heard, this is a third or fourth or fifth party, allegedly, that was involved.

Yeah, if it's appropriate, you notify the NCAA and let them know and investigate it, that type of thing. Haven't had much experience in that.

**Q. There was an incident that ruled minor regarding video use for your program turned in by another institution, how often does that happen where other institutions --**

COACH FERENTZ: I guess occasionally, I don't know. But that was pretty innocuous I think and totally, you know, it wasn't a big deal. Not very often.

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