

**November 18, 2008**



An interview with:

## **COACH FERENTZ**

COACH FERENTZ: I apologize for being late. I hate players that make excuses, but I'll pass the buck. Phil forgot to wake me up from my nap. Apologize on that one.

Injury front real quickly. Andy Kuempel, I don't think, is going to make it. Looks like he'll have to rehab over the holidays, hopefully be back when we get back here in December.

The only other thing of note, Tony Moeaki, 50/50. We'll see how that goes this week, but there's no guarantees. Wes is doing just fine. You saw him walk out on Saturday. That's progressing. Good news.

Captains this week are the same four guys we've had for however many weeks it's been now. Mitch and Matt on the defensive side, then Bruggeman and Shonn on the offensive side. Those same four guys, we've settled in with them. They've done a great job.

Congratulations to Shonn Greene on Big-10 Offensive Player of the Week. Just saw that last night or this morning. Certainly happy. Not surprised, but certainly happy for him.

Just a comment on that. I can't say enough about what he's done on the football field. I think it's pretty obvious, if you watch our team at all, what he means to our football team.

Really two things have impressed me - his consistency and production. He's pretty much been the same player every week out there. Been extremely productive. To have the amount of carries that he's had, against the competition he's played against, to be averaging six yards a carry, six plus a carry, which I think is a big measuring stick for any back, it's pretty phenomenal. Just really happy for him.

The other thing I'm really impressed by and really happy about is just the way he's handled his newfound success. We've had a lot of great stories in our program. You go back to 2002, you look at a guy like Brad Banks, first year on the scene, taking off like he did. There have been some other players in that same category. Brad handled it beautifully. I think Shonn is doing the same thing. It's all about the team. He's not one for attention. I think his actions and his play speak for themselves. I'm just really happy the way he's handling things.

Next item on the list, you know, not to spoil everybody's fun, but I'd really appreciate it if you would honor this request for myself and for our players. We really don't need to deal with questions right now, I think we've kind of exhausted what will Shonn do today, tomorrow, in the future questions. The other one is just about Bowls. There's really not much to talk about in either category at this point. We've put that aside. We're actually just going to think about this week's game. That's where we're thinking right now.

On that topic, Minnesota is an excellent football team. They're having a tremendous year. I just said on the teleconference, I don't think it should be a huge surprise. If you look at the team that we played last year in our next-to-the-last ballgame, they came in with one victory and played us right to the end and played the heck out of us. We were fortunate to win. Not that anybody would mistake us with the New York Giants last year, but we were very fortunate to win the football game. They played a great football game in all regards.

I think that's exactly what we're seeing right now. If you look at their season they're having right now, they've had a very successful year. Even in defeat last Saturday, I think that's a good snapshot of the kind of football team they have. They battled and competed in that game. It was a hard-fought game by both teams. A great Big-10 football game. They had every chance to

win the football game, like they have in most of their games this year.

It's a real tribute to Coach Brewster, his staff, the players, everybody involved in their program, they've really done a good job. They're having a tremendous year.

So that being said, obviously we're looking at a real tough ballgame Saturday. We've got some work to do this week to get ready.

**Q. 7-4, fourth in the Big-10. Have you had a chance to step back, a lot of crazy twists and turns to get to this point.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we've had crazy twists in our losses and crazy twists in our wins. That's usually how it goes. I'll step back sometime Sunday next week, reflect about everything.

But the obvious thing is every game's been close and competitive. I say every game. Just about every game. We've had disappointments and we've had some real moments of feeling pretty good about things, too.

The overriding thing, and I've said this pretty much from day one, this team has really been enjoyable to work with. That's the thing that strikes me. The attitude's been great, the work ethic. We're getting great leadership from our seniors. Others, as well. But it's just been a delightful team to work with. To me that's where it all starts.

**Q. You said that quite a few times this year. What does that mean exactly? Can you give some examples?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it just means a couple things. It means some years are more enjoyable than others. Some weeks or months are more enjoyable than others. Again, it's not always the tangible measurements that make it that way. It's like comparing your kids. You hate to say this one compared to this one. But this has been one of the most enjoyable years I've had. It gets back to the people I'm with. I'll give you two quick illustrations, if I remember the ones really easy. For example, one of the guys volunteered his hotel spot. We were only allowed to travel 70 to the hotel on Friday night. One of the guys that's been traveling just volunteered his spot for Austin Postler to be there. We didn't have to sacrifice either, but we had a chance to take all of the 16 seniors up last week. Showed them a video that was put together by all the seniors. Then you get a guy like Mitch King, who unbeknownst to me is

trying to get Rick to convince him he ought to start, and giving Anton an opportunity to start in the last ballgame. That's not for Hollywood and stuff like that. I mean, these are guys just doing things because that's how they feel.

The camaraderie, the concern about teammates, things like that, has really been really exemplary. You know, that makes it enjoyable. Those are the things you can just kind of sense when you're around this group.

**Q. I believe if you beat Minnesota, Northwestern loses to Illinois, it will be a fourth-place finish. Do you think you'll be watching that game at all?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's the first I've heard of it. I haven't even looked at our standings. I have a good idea who is in first place in the conference. I think there's two teams tied, maybe three. But I know who's up at the top. Otherwise, we really haven't looked at it or thought about it, quite honestly. That's the stuff we'll do next week.

**Q. Is Mossbrucker in a bit of slump right now?**

COACH FERENTZ: He had a tough day Saturday. That was pretty well-documented. I think the answer's real simple. You go back. I just told him the other day what he needs to do this week, in my opinion, is have a great week of practice and go out and kick the ball Saturday. That's all he's got to do. He's been kicking a long time. He knows a lot more about it than I do or anybody here does. Yeah, just get back to what's made you a successful player. He'll be fine.

**Q. Is he going to be kicking extra points?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see how the week goes. If he doesn't have a good week of practice, he won't be out there. But I anticipate him doing very well. We'll get him back on his feet. That's my plan.

**Q. In the college football landscape, talk about the difference of an eight-win season versus a 7-1 season.**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, it's just how you feel. I guess I'll just go back to 2001. Going into that Alamo Bowl, we were 6-5. It just feels better to be 7-5 than 6-6. It's about as simple as that.

We're not going to win the national championship this year. That's obvious. So, the whole idea for us has been to improve, put a good effort out there every Saturday. And that's first and foremost. But then try to improve and play cleaner and give yourself a chance to win. That's what we're going to try to do this week.

I just know this, it will feel a lot better if we win than if we lose. It's about as simple as that for us right now.

**Q. What are some of your good memories about the Metrodome?**

COACH FERENTZ: A good one would be Rob Houghtlin's second field goal in '86 I think that was. That was pretty good. You talk about, you know, the agony and the ecstasy. That was pretty good. 2002 wasn't bad. 2004. The win's have been good. The first loss that sticks in my mind, '84. Right behind it would be, really go ahead of it, would be 2006. Talk about feeling bad after a season.

**Q. 2002 you got a great ride on the field.**

COACH FERENTZ: That was pretty good. That was pretty good. Pretty special.

**Q. Murray had a kick to beat Penn State. He's been improving all year. Overcame an injury early on. Has he done enough to get a scholarship?**

COACH FERENTZ: I can't give him one right now. But I think he sure has probably helped his chances a couple weeks ago. He really enhanced things.

**Q. In your mind, do you have two scholarship kickers?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's how I'm looking at it right now. I think we've got two guys. Not that anybody gave up on Daniel, 'cause we didn't. He's played a prominent role all season long. We had to make a decision a couple weeks ago, at least I felt like we did. You know, more than a couple weeks ago. And he got his opportunity, stepped up and did a great job, did a great job Saturday. I think we feel about our kickers probably like we do about our quarterbacks.

**Q. Do you expect Minnesota to try to take away Shonn?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, there's no doubt about it. And Purdue did a great job. They really played well defensively. You know, Shonn had a couple phenomenal efforts. The yards were tough to get last Saturday. They're going to be tough this Saturday. No question about it. And Minnesota's done a good job. Just look to last Saturday's game, the job they did up at Wisconsin, a team that runs the ball very well. We're going to have to try to be balanced. I think that's how you have to play good offense anyway. So we're going to have to try to do a little better job of that.

**Q. Defensively they're quite a bit better statistically than they were last year. Is that obvious from the film?**

COACH FERENTZ: It is. But, again, the first thing that jumps out at you is the effort their team plays with. That's the first thing. They were playing with pretty good effort last year, too, as I alluded to a minute ago. But, I think they've got a lot of experienced players back, and they've added some newcomers, three junior college players I believe it is, that have given them a bit more octane. Yeah, I think we've seen improvement there.

The other place that really impresses you is what they're doing on special teams. They're doing a great job on all special teams. A lot of defensive guys are involved in that, too. And, they've got a strong coaching staff. They unfortunately lost a good coach last year, then picked up an excellent coach in Ted Roof. They minimized the damage, so that was a good move there. And, it's shown on film. They're playing well. You can see them making that next step.

**Q. All three traveling trophies are in your possession right now, do you get a sense of pride from the players, knowing they have a chance to keep it that way through the off-season this week?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's like the buildings, I'm not too attached to buildings, tried not to be. You can't if you're a coach, I guess. I don't get too attached to objects typically. But, what the objects stand for, that's what's more. And that's what's trophies are all about, it means you won the last contest.

So, yeah, we're thrilled to have all three of them right now. But realize it's short-term parking. Obviously if we don't do our job Saturday, we're

going to lose one of them. It's as simple as us playing well Saturday. We're going to have to play at our best.

**Q. Is it tough to go to another school's senior day event?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, if you don't play well, it is, yeah. I think that's kind of it's bad luck not to play well. But, you know, it can -- I've seen it go both ways, I guess. As we know, we've seen it go both ways here. It was good to get that thing reversed a little bit Saturday.

**Q. Can you talk about Stanzi's improvements.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think he's making improvement weekly, like you'd hope. You know, feeling more comfortable with things that we're doing, what we're asking him to do. I think he's doing a good job. He's been running the team, leading the team. The guys respond to him. I don't know if he was at his sharpest throwing the football the other day, and hopefully we'll take a step forward this week.

**Q Is he wearing gloves?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think he was. I guess he was. I don't know. Doesn't do anything for me. I don't know. I guess he must feel like it's better, I guess. He's been practicing with them. So, you know, I don't know how big a deal that is.

**Q. Tim Brewster is very emotional. They kind of put all their chips in the center on the emotions poker table against Wisconsin and lost. They just seemed really down. You don't get real emotional during the week, at least with us. How do you balance an emotional scale so you don't go really high or really low?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it just gets back to everything you do, it depends on your personality. I really believe that. I've been with coaches that were extremely emotional, extremely successful, and I've been with others that are maybe more the other direction.

I think, at the end of the day, you just got to do what comes naturally for you. It seems to be working for them. They're having a good year. And Coach Brewster's done a great job in less than two years now with the team.

My guess is they'll be more than ready to play again this Saturday. It's the last game for both teams. We all get to sit around next week. I

think both teams will be selling out. On that topic I guess we're going to be playing after Thanksgiving one of these days, I guess. You guys probably know better than I do. Is it next year? Wonderful, good. That's a great idea. Who had that idea (laughter)?

**Q. You did.**

COACH FERENTZ: No, it wasn't me. I promise you, it wasn't me (laughter).

**Q. What is the answer to stopping Decker?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's a great question. We're working on that one right now. Weber is really playing well, and Decker has been a really good player ever since he started playing a couple years ago. He's really an excellent football player. And Weber, you know, he was good a year ago, in our opinion. You can just see him making that climb. That's the kind of climb that we're hoping to see Rick make here as we move along.

**Q. Who will be Decker in practice?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. We'll see who shows up today. But, yeah, I don't know. If anybody looks a lot like him, we're going to get him at our end and have him working on the offense fast.

**Q. 18 interceptions for your defense this year. What do you see from the linebackers, the safeties, corners, that's allowing them to get to the ball like this?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you know, they're doing a good job. It's just playing smart I guess and being opportunistic. Some of those things have come off pressure at times, which is part of the deal. Then conversely, some of our pressures have come off of, you know, good coverage. So it works both ways. Saturday's a good example. You know, when Mitch got that sack in the last drive, that's because our coverage was really good, gave him that extra count to fight through a couple blocks and, you know, make a sack. That was a good thing to see.

It goes both ways. But we've been a little bit more opportunistic this year, which I think is great. Speaking of that, Minnesota has done a great job, their turnover ratio. That's a major difference from last year to this year. That is a big stat. No matter what kind of offense or defense

you play, that's a key statistic in winning. They're a great illustration of that. I think they're plus 15 right now, top of the league. That's really helped their production on the field.

**Q. You can be demonstrative on the sidelines, but I don't recall it ever resulting in a 15-yard penalty. Bret is getting criticized quite a bit at Wisconsin because he's picked up a few. Is there a line you learn over the years, relationship with the officials?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I don't know how my relationship stuff is. But the closest I came I think was in the NFL. I remember making a comment that was probably inappropriate. Not probably, it was inappropriate. And I appreciate the official because I think it was my first year in Cleveland. And he looked at me and said, you know, would you like to rephrase that? Which I did promptly, then I apologized. So I just appreciated the way he handled that situation. The first thing I'm thinking is, boy, if I get 15 yards on me right now, this could be my last game in Cleveland. That was kind of the situation.

So, I guess from my personal standpoint, I just try to be appreciative. Everybody's got a job to do. I try to save my comments. Hopefully they're justified, and hopefully they're appropriate.

**Q. You have a 6:00 start this Saturday. What does that do for getting your team ready?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I said on the press conference, it probably affects us old guys more than it does young people. Young people don't get bothered by too much anymore. We talked about that back in camp, not knowing exactly what the TV schedule is. But if you're a college football player today, you can't get too rattled. 11:00, 2:30, 3:30, 6:00, 7:00, we've had them all. You play when the game's scheduled. You got a week to get ready for it. So we've talked about that. We'll just adjust our schedule and keep moving.

But, last year we played Wisconsin and Syracuse 7:00 kickoffs I think, not 6:00. We played just fine. I mean, we didn't win both games, but at least we were ready to go. So it's like a lot of things, you don't make a big deal of it. Playing surface, here's what we're doing this week, here's how we'll adjust it. Everybody's got a week to get ready.

**Q. How about the day of?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'll just shift things we do normally Friday night, we'll shift that to Saturday. That will eat up part of the day. Then we just got to fill a void Friday night. So, you know, we might have Norm sit around with the guys at a fireplace, tell them stories, something like that, keep them entertained. I don't know. We'll see.

**Q. What do you think the move to the new stadium is going to mean for the visitors up there?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it will be a little cooler this time of year. That's one thing for sure. I totally understand why they're doing it. I not only speak for everybody in America, but I feel fortunate we've got a stadium that's right in the heart of our campus, and our students can have access to it, as can everybody else. I know the parking's a nightmare. That's a downside. But I think it's probably nice in college football to have a stadium that's, you know, your stadium on your campus, that type of thing. It's got to be the overriding feeling I would imagine, probably the driving force behind it.

**Q. Is it a hard place to visit for teams?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, if we play well. The games we've played well, it hasn't been a problem. The games we haven't played so well, like 2006, it was a huge problem. I wish I could blame it on the dome, but there were probably some other factors involved.

**Q. Is that maybe your most disappointing game as a coach?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I mean, you can pick a couple that year, I guess. But, you know, as I've said before, the end of that season was really tough. It was a tough year. It was a tough six-week period. It was a tough six-week period. That's coaching. That's football. It's sports. You know, move on.

**Q. How much of a boost has your team gotten from all the Iowa fans that travel up there?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, any time we go on the road and our fans show up, which our fans have been just outstanding all season long, outstanding. So any time they show up on the road, it's always welcomed. It's a help. You know, it's always a help. So we appreciate that.

**Q. When you go to the Bowl poker table and you have the fan thing...**

COACH FERENTZ: Where is that poker table? Where do they keep that thing anyway (laughter)? I haven't been invited.

**Q. What does it mean to have the fan thing catapult you?**

COACH FERENTZ: That much I do know. I know that's a good thing. Just like I know in '83 it was a bad thing that we didn't have a lot of TV sets in our state. We basically got screwed that year. I mean, you know, you could make that argument. You know, they sent Ohio State to the Fiesta Bowl and we went to sunny Jacksonville to play Florida. That was a real reward. Playing Florida, not Jacksonville. Jacksonville's a great place.

But, that was a tough deal. But that was, TV sets, strictly TV sets. I think it was at least. Personal opinion. But on the flipside, you know, the fact that our fans travel so well, I know has always been a helpful thing for us. So I guess my point is, bowl selections aren't always fair, but I don't think bowls are necessarily in the business of being fair, they're in the business to be in business. It's a good thing for us.

**Q. I think you had two wide receiver fumbles last week. How do you go about fixing that?**

COACH FERENTZ: There's no magic formula. It's a matter to me of concentration. Usually it's concentration, fundamentals, technique. That's usually what it is. You've got to have both together. No matter what position, that's really the essence of it. You have those occasional ones that are just going to happen, like Shonn against Northwestern. You know, that's going to happen. That's football. But the uncontested ones, not that those weren't contested, but, judgment factors in there, too. That's part of concentration.

So, we have to be at a sharper level because, if there's a team that's opportunistic on the take-away department, it's Minnesota. We better be ready to go this week.

**Q. Have you seen Erik's impact with the receivers, Coach Campbell?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think all the staff's doing a great job. I tell you, Erik has been a welcome addition. Again, I go back. We lost as fine of a coach I've ever worked with. Two of the

best coaches I ever worked with in my career are Bill Brashier and Carl Jackson. To lose a guy of Carl's magnitude, those are big shoes to fill. Erik has done a fantastic job from a football standpoint. He was here the second day of work and it was like he'd been here 10 years. I've gotten that response from everybody in all interfacing that takes place with coaches. So we're just really lucky to have him join the staff. He's been a great fit and a great addition.

**Q. When you mention that '83 situation with the Bowls, do you like it better now that everything is slotted?**

COACH FERENTZ: I do, yeah. I think we had a better -- you guys remember that better than I do. I know we beat them that year. I they we were 9-2. Weren't they 8-3? I thought so. I used the wrong word choice. We probably got slighted in that bowl game. But that's the way it goes.

So, yeah, I think right now, personally after being gone nine years and being back, I think especially in the Big Ten, I think we've got an unbelievable setup. I think you got to give a lot of credit to Jim Delaney for the work he's done. We've got -- to compare us to any conference in the country, I think we've got a pretty good setup.

**Q. Rather than say play the Peach Bowl, Gator Bowl, you like the setup?**

COACH FERENTZ: I do. All bowls are good Bowls. But I think we've got a great -- you know, the Big-10 has done a great job of organizing that. Just gets back, you have to do your job on the field. If you do that, that's how you get rewarded. That's how the bowls got started in the first place. It's a chance to reward the players and fans.

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