

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

### Reese Morgan



REESE MORGAN: I hope everyone is doing well. First of all, I want to thank you for a great season. You have a hard job to do and we appreciate it and value it, but, anyhow thank you for your part there.

We just had our fourth practice today. We have a lot of work to do on the both sides of the football but really we have a great group of guys. Love our energy in the defensive line room, we have some experienced guys inside at the tackle position, we have semi experience on the outside, with a couple of younger guys and then we've got a good nucleus of guys that are doing well. The good thing you feel about it is you see guys helping each other in the room, trying to do things the way they're supposed to be doing them.

#### **Q. Talk about Anthony Nelson?**

REESE MORGAN: Anthony Nelson is a freshman, true freshman. This is his first spring he's been on campus, eight and a half months, excellent student, really has an upside, athletic, a little bit of a burst. His dad was a great defensive lineman here at the University of Iowa and he's off to a pretty good start. He's just learning things. He's got to be -- he's very good in the pass/rush game, he's got to get better at the point of attack, so forth.

But he's right now working in the two-deep. He's working with the second group. We have all our defensive ends sit together and all the defensive tackles sit together. So there is a lot of cooperative learning going on. They're communicating with each other, in addition to what Coach Bell and I work together, and that brings me to the next point. We really are fortunate to have Kelvin Bell working with us. He played here as a defensive lineman under a great defensive line coach, Ron Aiken, and he's had an opportunity to go out and work at other programs as a line coach. Then back here as an on-campus recruiting coordinator, and he's been a huge asset.

#### **Q. Does Drew's situation complicate things for you this spring or is it business as usual?**

REESE MORGAN: The thing you feel bad for is Drew. He has no control over it. We don't have any control over it so we can't worry about it. Even if he was healthy he wouldn't be practicing this spring. So it provides an opportunity for some of our younger guys to get some reps. I feel bad for him because it's been

denied several times. He has an appeal in again and the process just seems to be extremely frustrating because no one from the NCAA has talked to anybody in this building about it or him, which seems to be unusual.

#### **Q. What was his involvement at this point?**

REESE MORGAN: He's written appeals. He has communicated. Our compliance people are going back and forth trying to help out. But, yeah, it's -- you know, it's hard and you feel for him, because he just wants to know. He just wants to know, can I get an agent, can I continue to play, do I -- what am I able to do? He was able to go to the combine. He got special permission to do that.

#### **Q. What's he doing with you guys, sitting in the meetings?**

REESE MORGAN: No, he's not with us at all. Right now he's treated as a graduate. He works out with Coach Doyle. He hasn't been granted that year so can't participate with us.

#### **Q. Is Jaleel the anchor on the line?**

REESE MORGAN: I tell you what, anchor might not be the right word. I would hesitate using that word because sometimes that anchor goes over here or over there, but Jaleel is an excellent player and he has great ability and the if Jaleel was up here right now he would say, I have a lot of work to do to get better. The good thing about it is he's playing with a lot of energy. He's playing hard. He's playing fast. He's our most experienced defensive linemen and he's got a chance to be good.

That being said, he has so much to get better at and the run and the pass so much going on. Nate Bazata who plays next to him, solid tough, had a whole years of experience. He was a rookie last year, so Nate has an opportunity to be a leader for us.

And Faith Ekakitie, Faith came on probably the last three games of the year. Faith probably played his best football of his career toward the end of the year. So those three guys are getting some rep and our other guy in there is Jake Hulett. Jake is a nonscholarship player from Springville, Iowa, that just gets better and better and better, and I don't know what it is about 8-man football and the D-line but they always seem to

gravitate toward us.

**Q. Question about Parker. When he had to fill in for Drew, he's an undersized guy, but it seemed like he rose to the challenge?**

REESE MORGAN: The great thing about Parker Hesse has to do with what his parents did with him when he was a young man. They did a great job of instilling values in him. He's a great competitor. He's very tough. He is very detailed, very intelligent. He has a lot of pride. You have that. Plus he has got some ability, he was a high school quarterback as many of you know. Played all over the field, but he hates to lose. It was very competitive. He had a chance to go out and he had some help from -- Drew was helping to give him advice and help him out during the course of the season, but, you know, he's -- he's out there right now and he's kinda -- he's getting better but it's a work in progress. He is a redshirt sophomore, so that's not a lot of experience, especially in the line position.

**Q. Talk about why Parker stepped up. He was the only redshirt freshman, he was the next man up?**

REESE MORGAN: Yep.

**Q. Do you feel like that depth exists this season?**

REESE MORGAN: Hopefully he will be better and he will be available to provide some experience for us there. You've got Anthony Nelson who I have referenced and Matt Nelson on the other side. Matt is a very -- he's really starting to come on. You saw him in the bowl game and in the Big Ten Championship. He played some valuable reps and provided us with some depth. He's a very smart kid. He's a perfectionist so we've gotta kinda get a little bit of Nate Meier in him, go in and go hard. If you make a mistake that's okay once in a while but just go! He's off to a good start right now.

**Q. I think you have four or five incoming linemen, do you see any of them chipping in or is it too early to tell?**

REESE MORGAN: Yes and no. Yes, it's too early to tell which is the obvious thing. It's hard to come in as a defensive lineman. However, the situation is unique. We're experienced inside. We're younger on the outside, so we're going to need some depth. I think there are a couple of guys, one, maybe two guys that I think might have an opportunity to possibly be in that two-deep, you know, but you never know. We've got 14 guys out there right now and our goal -- our goal as a coach is to make each and every one of them the best player they can be by providing positive feedback, doing a great job of teaching, letting them understand the defense and teaching the technique and fundamentals, so it's still -- it's ambiguous, but, you

know, we'll see. We'll see.

**Q. Last year you played Jaleel and Nathan, you know, I think 80% of the time. How difficult is it to find that right mix with the rotation?**

REESE MORGAN: I tell you that's a great point. We would love to play eight guys. We would love to. Last year we played six. We played six guys, and, you know, the year before we probably played six. But you want your best players on the field and the only way for them to demonstrate they can successfully do it is in a practice situation.

So they have to go out and practice and be able to do what you're asking them to do in practice on a consistent basis and the trust has to be earned. The trust is on that take that they're out there, are they doing it on tape what we're trying to do, the corrections, are they applying correction and is it showing up?

I think we've got some guys that have played a little bit, and hopefully we can develop some depth.

**Q. With the amount of TV timeouts that you guys deal with is fatigue as big of a factor that it was 20 years ago?**

REESE MORGAN: I tell you what, if they can figure out how to have a commercial during the sixth or seventh play of a tempo set that would be excellent because what happens is they're going and going and going and they put the rule in if they sub you can sub, so that's different. But certainly the game right now favors the offense and favors teams that are run tempo so there are a lot of rules in that help them out an awful lot and what we have to do is do the very best we can.

I think it's got to be a mind-set, one where you have to be mentally tough and you have to embrace the fact that you're going to be fatigued and fatigue is just an -- it's another obstacle that you have to overcome in football and you're going to have to overcome fatigue, mental fatigue in life, too.

**Q. Michael Slater appeared on the depth chart. I don't know if that was the next name on the list. What have you seen from him to be in that eight-guy group?**

REESE MORGAN: Michael is a talented kid, good kid, really talented. Got off to a tough start and he's working his way back in. He's got a lot of ability, really like him and he's got to continue to grow, you know, as a student -- a college student-athlete.

**Q. The sour part of the Rose Bowl, the losing part, isn't what people want to talk about, but what experience did your group get facing someone like Christian McCaffrey?**

REESE MORGAN: I think we know where we want to go. I know we know where the bar has been set. We know what we have to do. Interesting thing, the five guys that played a lot last year. I went and made a cut-up of every single play in the run game that they did, both good and bad. I went through every snap and we put it in their locker. Their goal in the off-season was to study that, come into spring ball with goals, what do you have to get better at, what are you good at? What are your objectives?

So we talk about that every day and that's been helpful. They all understand they have work to do, especially if you watch that game or any of our games or our practices. We're trying to build on that. It's been something that has been a motivating thing for our entire football team.

**Q. Have you ever done that before?**

REESE MORGAN: Yeah. We did it not every snap, but I know with Karl and Louis we had an area two years ago we wanted to get better at. So I put all the double-team blocks, every double-team, whether it's a power play -- and they had to get better at that, so they saw that and referenced it. It's humbling because you've got 160 plays that say "bad" and you're supposed to look at 'em and you got maybe 80 plays that say "good" and you're supposed to look at those and write down comments about it. So I think it's part of the teaching process.

**Q. How big of a difference do you see with the starting guys that before they didn't see a whole lot of playing time? Mark alluded to the number of snaps they did see last year. What's the difference this year with all the snaps that they had last year?**

REESE MORGAN: I think it's helped them understand the concept of the defense and that's important, it's kind of like Algebra 2 and what you might learn in the math sequence so it builds on the other thing. Once you're looking at your man that you're defending now you're looking at the guys next to you; now you're looking at the entire offensive line; now you have to know how the linebacker fits in; where does the safety fit in? You have to know the whole defense, and where you have to be because if you don't get there you're letting your teammates down and that's our responsibility to get there. That's the struggle. Technique and fundamentals will always be something you have to emphasize. You will never perfect it, but if you can master it and get very good at it, that would be our objective.

**Q. You have 6 to 8 men, I think there are probably some obvious hurdles there, getting your butt down and anchoring, but how do you tackle that and build that?**

REESE MORGAN: Matt Nelson has height and we use it to his advantage. The things he does well and he should do well is knock down passes. And he has great length so he can have great leverage and he's really using that well. People would think a guy that's 6-whatever he is, that he would not be able to get low he probably has the best consistent pad level of anybody in the front including your shorter guys. There is no question.

He's really worked at it. He understands it, and he has things that he has to get better at but I think the tempo that he's practicing at is all headed in the right direction and understanding. I tell you, what a great group of young men! I love being in that room! I wish you guys could come in and see that. You got guys that are improving in the classroom, they're improving on the field. We're a long ways away, but it's rewarding.

**Q. What did they need to work on the most?**

REESE MORGAN: Defending the block, getting off the block, reach blocks, everything that you can imagine, double-team blocks and so forth. Everybody has a different thing. Then the tough thing is during the course of spring ball and during preseason and Bowl prep, we are facing our offense most of the time. Our offense does not run 70% of the time. We're seeing something different during the season. We're a zone read team or a -- so the blocks are still the same. They're still somewhat, but now the defensive end has a lot more pressure. He has to know where the back is, all the different calls, does he have the dive, the quarterback?

So it puts a lot of stress on him. So it's a great -- it's a great opportunity to teach. It's a great opportunity for kids to grow and develop. The great thing about it is, the best thing is we have such a good offensive line. Brian Ferentz does a tremendous job with our offensive line. Our offensive line is excellent.

So every day we tell our -- you're going against some of the best guys you're going to see all year and when you get into game season you will be well prepared.

**Q. Is Nathan Bazata on the track that you thought he would be on?**

REESE MORGAN: He grades out probably higher than anybody in our defensive line, so he's doing his job. He a blue collar guy. He's that guy that goes hard. He's a good student, good kid, tough, leader, highly respected, and the thing our guys respect are three things, number one, if you're a hard worker, number two, if you're tough physically and mentally, and number three, if you care about people and help people, that's what guys respect.

**Q. Regarding defensive ends, you saw Shilique**

**Calhoun and what a difference he can make. Doesn't seem like you guys are there yet, but how important is that position in college football and what kind of attack do you have going into this season?**

REESE MORGAN: It's a good question because if you look around the country there's a lot of guys at that position that are really, really special. We go against some of those guys. Right now we have some solid guys that are young and they will have an opportunity to improve and get better. Somebody like Calhoun, we don't have that guy yet. I think as we continue to grow we're going to try to continue to try to get guys that are better. But right now our focus is to work with the guys that are here on campus and develop them the best of our ability. We had a pretty decent team last year and we didn't have Calhoun or Bosa, whatever his name is. We're going to do it with the guys we have and we have to have the guys that are going to fit in our program, guys that have the intangible characters that are important for success over time in this program.

You would like to have guys with great ability that have unbelievable attitudes that are tough and they're great students and all that stuff. We're just going to try to work and develop the guys that we have.