

September 7, 2010



An Interview With:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome, it's good to get started here.

Injury-wise, first of all, we came out of the game fairly healthy and are hopeful that the guys sat out last week will have a chance to play this week. We'll see how that goes during the week, but I think they will have an opportunity at least.

Captain-wise, we have the same four guys selected. We have Adrian Clayborn, Karl Klug, Ricky Stanzi and Julian Vandervelde will be the captains.

And just wrapping up last week, certainly appreciate the crowd support. It was outstanding. It was great to have the '60 and '85 teams back to be honored and also the Evashevski dedication was tremendous. It was all good and very happy for Paki O'Meara to be recognized by the Big Ten Special Teams Player of the Week. Those were all certainly positives.

Moving forward, this is obviously a big game for both teams. You look back at the series, they have been tough games, competitive games, and I would expect this weekend to be the same. Iowa State certainly has a lot of returning players back, a lot of experienced, confident players and I think most importantly, they have made great strides in the program. You go back to our game we played last year, and the progress that they have made - going to a Bowl game, winning the Bowl game, and now in the second year of Coach Rhoads's tenure there, with he and his staff, I think everybody is a lot more comfortable and they are operating at a lot higher pace.

So we can look at this game as a very challenging game. It's going to be a tough game, and we are going to have to really do our part to make sure that we improve this week and get ready to play this it Saturday afternoon.

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Q. How is Josh Koeppel doing and do you have an estimate on how many snaps he might be able to see on Saturday?

COACH FERENTZ: He was clear to play last week. He had been out prior to the injury -- or the accident. He had missed a little time. So he's playing catch-up that way but he worked on Sunday, and we expect him to be full speed all week. So I don't know how many snaps he'll play, but he's ready to go.

I didn't watch it, but I saw the last 30 seconds. But I got very good reports. Sounds like he has a future maybe on TV. Said he did a nice job. He got bumped last week for a hurricane, I'm guessing. He was supposed to be on Wednesday. I told him, "Welcome to life with the media. They moved on to a better story, put you on the second page." That's how it goes.

Q. You've been around the Iowa/Iowa State rivalry for a long time. Talk about what the rivalry means to you, and as a follow-up to that, could you ever imagine not having this game on your schedule.

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, I think everybody is hopeful this series continues for a long time. It probably was established back in the 70s and obviously there's a lot of interest in it when it began. It's been a great series. My involvement wasn't so much fun on the front end back in the early 80s. And when I got back here in '99, really struggling. It's been one of those series where both teams have been very competitive. They have had some excellent football teams. I think they have got an excellent football team this year, so we are going to have to be at our best.

Q. With the Big Ten reshuffling rivalries and things like that, could you see maybe the Iowa State game being one that you would want to play at the end of the season?

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COACH FERENTZ: I don't think that's going to be possible unless we back off the post-Thanksgiving. I guess we could play middle of December. Other teams in our conference are trying that, but I doubt that's realistic. So it will probably be up at the front end, and just kind of go from there.

Q. You finally get Jewel Hampton back after a year off, how excited are you to sort of see what he can do on Saturdays?

COACH FERENTZ: You hate to see any player miss time because of injuries. It's just an unfortunate part of the game but it's a reality, also. Just really pleased that he's able to come back. He's worked extremely hard, and now you just hope that he can move forward without any issues. There's no reason to think that he wasn't.

So, unfortunately, season-ending injuries can be part of a player's career. We have seen that numerous times. You deal with it and do all you can. So, yeah, we are really happy for him, happy for the way he's worked and it will be good to have him back on the field with us.

Q. Is the plan just series by series?

COACH FERENTZ: We have not really talked about it as a staff. Certainly Adam played an excellent game the other day. That was a real highlight. Last time Jewel was on the field, he was really doing well, too. We are really optimistic. I think they are both similar in that we expect both of the guys to play better this year than they had last time they played. Hopefully at some point we'll have a good one, two combination.

Q. Iowa State's defense, does it look quite a bit better than last year?

COACH FERENTZ: I think they have got a lot of players back, a lot of guys with a lot of good experience. Probably the biggest change for them is the linebacker position. They graduated five guys at that spot. So they are a little bit like us in that regard, in that they lost some good players. Jesse Smith was a little bit like Pat Angerer for us I think, not only the middle linebacker but kind of the leader of the defense. But they have got a lot of other guys that have done a good job assuming that leadership role and they looked really good their opening game.

Q. Then they get Sims back?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he certainly makes a difference. He really emerged in a very

positive way for them last year and he's a good player and I think they are probably -- I'm just guessing, looking to him to take some of that leadership role that maybe they lost from last year.

Q. Did Ricky have any precautionary tests or anything on the knee after the game?

COACH FERENTZ: No, he's fine. He road the bike on Sunday instead of running, but he's fine. Yesterday he checked in and did fine with the trainers, so we are good to go.

Q. What about Jeff Tarpinian, what's his prognosis?

COACH FERENTZ: He's gaining grounds. The thing with him is the strength of his grip and it's tough to play effectively with a bulb on there. They have taken that off so it's now just him getting confidence in it.

He's progressing faster than I would have thought, and we'll see how he looks this week. Hopefully it's going to be a good week for him.

Q. You talked after the game highly of Adam Robinson and his ability to pass block and obviously he can catch balls in the backfield. Is Jewel Hampton at that point where Adam is in those two areas?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think so. They are both good players and they are both physical players. They don't mind blocking which is an important job for a back, so they both do a good job. They have got a little natural pop in that regard.

So they are not the same guys, but they are comparable probably in a lot of ways, and again, just that parallel. They are both one-year players that we expect to play better this year. That's what we are hoping to see.

Q. Is there any conclusion with Brandon Wegher at this point?

COACH FERENTZ: No, I think it's just an open book --

Q. Talk about Bert Jones. I know you guys recruited him and he's entering his final season and what you've seen out of him so far.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, seems like he's been there for a long, long time and I guess he has. He's played an awful lot for them. It's a one-game exposure but he improved last year as

the year went on as their whole team did.

He looked extremely comfortable the other night. Looked like he had great command of what he was doing. Again I go back to the fact that this is the second year of the staff, and that impacts how players are. Certainly when you change offenses or change defenses, there's a transition for everybody involved, and it's not just as easy as turning the page. There's a lot of learning that goes on. And a position like his, especially, he looked really comfortable the other day, he's a good runner and a good thrower and he's a big, strong guy.

I would venture to say he's the leader of that group offensively and he's been around and he's been through an awful lot.

Q. Their offense has not had very much success getting into the end zone the last few years against you guys; is that just circumstance or what do you attribute to that streak that's going on?

COACH FERENTZ: Probably as much as anything, the one thing I do know, they had a lot of success running the football. We couldn't stop the run last year, and it's going to be tough to win if we give up 190 yards on the ground. That's going to make it a little tough.

Q. How big of a role do you expect Jewel to play in his first week back?

COACH FERENTZ: We expect both those guys to play, he and Adam Robinson. We haven't come up with any menu or formula at this point. But we have confidence in both guys and we plan on playing them both and we'll just see how it goes.

Q. What's your impression, from an outsider's perspective of what Paul Rhoads has been able to do with that program over there. Seems like he's brought a lot of energy to the program in the short time he's been there.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, first thing is, he's excited to be there, for obvious reasons. He grew up just down the road and he had coached there so there are two links right there from the get-go.

I know he was very enthused about coming back, so I think that's really shown, and seems like they put a good staff together, first and foremost, I'm an outsider looking in.

But looks like they have really gelled and worked well together, and then most importantly the players have responded to them; and I think that's what we saw last year, as the season went on, they won some big games.

Certainly to travel over to Nebraska and win in that environment, that says it all right there, and you've got a victory like that early in your tenure. That's really a real positive. Certainly didn't happen to us in our first year, that's for sure.

So that gets everybody believing a lot faster and then you get a little bit of momentum and then win a bowl game in your first year, too, says an awful lot. As we know, we didn't cross that bridge until three years down the road, so I think they are off to a great, great start. They looked good and played well the other night. They should have a great year.

Q. Is Shaun Prater any closer?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think all those guys are close, and he's doing well. Hopefully we can keep getting them to climb the ladder.

Q. Same with Adam Gettis?

COACH FERENTZ: He's doing okay, and Murray. We'll know more by Thursday or Friday but hoping we can get them back.

Q. How did Nolan MacMillan come out in the film room?

COACH FERENTZ: If there was a highlight for us last week, it was probably Nolan. But a lot of the guys that haven't played, made a good showing I think in their initial games. So nobody's perfect. And it's probably never going to happen but at least I think they got off to a positive start. Thought he was aggressive, and a Tyler Nielsen did a nice job in there, too. We have had pretty good play at that position for a couple years. Those are some of the positives, new guys getting on the field and doing a pretty decent job.

Q. That included special teams?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, for the most part, and you know, Mike Meyer did a nice job back there certainly. It was good to see. He had the one kick into the wind that got up there a little bit high, but other than that, he did a real nice job. Made the adjustment the second time into the wind and did a good job coming back from that.

It's something to be enthused about.

Q. I take it you're going to emphasize with your team the 190 rushing yards and that maybe you can't count on -- there was the turnover sequence with Iowa State that really opened up last year.

COACH FERENTZ: Exactly. You take last year's game, that, and there's a play where we had a penalty, they had a penalty against us, and Stanzi, where we threw a pick. So that could be a different game real fast.

Any time you get the turnovers involved, that kind of skews things a little bit in any game. And then no matter who we are playing, if we are giving up 190 on the ground, that's just we had better be scoring about 50 points a game. I don't think we can count on that right now. So it's just not a good way to be living.

Q. When you were up on the second quarter in the last game, you had a series where you threw the ball every down, was that a matter of working on the things that you wanted to see out of your team, because you were far enough ahead, I think it was in the second quarter and it was fourth and two and you went for it.

COACH FERENTZ: Okay. We just thought we had a shot to make that and it was a makeable play, and it was one of the lowlights of the game, quite frankly, last Saturday. It was a play we could have executed or should have executed and didn't.

I wasn't aware that we had thrown the ball four straight times, but there was no method behind the madness there other than we just chose to go for it on fourth. But we thought we had a good chance to make it, and we didn't.

Q. How does Iowa State's offensive line, from what you've seen, stack up?

COACH FERENTZ: Very big. The smallest guy is 290, our biggest guy I think is 290. Actually, might be a bit more than that but he's looking pretty good right now. So I mean they have got some big guys and they have done a great job, they have really done a nice job. They executed very well last week and played well against us last year. You don't stumble into 190 yards rushing, and Robinson is an excellent football player, good back. So, we're going to have to do a little better.

Q. What challenges does the zone -- they really rely on that zone read/run. What's the challenge there for you guys?

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, you have to get off blocks and we didn't do very well at that.

Secondly, you have got to honor -- everybody has a position or responsibility they have to honor and you have to be disciplined in that regard. If you're not, good backs are going to find a way and then Arnaud is a good ball carrier, too, so a little bit of a double-threat.

Q. Do you think your defensive line, first two games they were kinds of lethargic maybe and then they took off; does that put a chip on their shoulder for this game, do you think?

COACH FERENTZ: We will see. I hope so. We'll see. We really didn't get tested, but there's a lot of perimeter stuff this past Saturday. So it wasn't like we really -- it wasn't the kind of game we are going to have this week; so we are going to have to rise to the occasion, that's for sure.

Q. Do you have a favorite moment from the Iowa State series?

COACH FERENTZ: In any game we have won, in my first moment as, any game we lost, pretty simple. Isn't that awful. That's kind of what a coach's life gets relegated down to. It's about as simple as that.

Q. What are some of Alexander Robinson's intangibles that you notice?

COACH FERENTZ: He's a good, tough back. He's a good, tough back. You'd better tackle him, and if you leave him a seam, he's going to find it. And then if you don't tackle him, he's a very determined runner, a little bit like our guy. Our guy is a good back, too. So they are probably a little bit alike.

Q. Coach Rhoads said he sent you a text message last week asking for spending money; do you remember getting that text?

COACH FERENTZ: I do. He should have sent it to my wife. That's simple. I'm like everybody else. (Laughter) Asking the wrong guy on that one. (Laughter) I'm up to 20 a week right now. That's my allowance. That's pretty good.

Q. Last week you signed a contract extension through 2020, if you could just talk a little about that decision, and you know, if this finally ends all the speculation about you ever --

COACH FERENTZ: Probably not, based on history, recent history. I just feel extremely fortunate, and I always have, I felt very fortunate to come here in 1981. I've enjoyed a lot more days than I haven't coaching here, and both as an assistant and as a head coach. I'm just thrilled to death. And very appreciative, the support that Gary Barta and President Mason have shown in our entire staff is very much appreciated. We are going to do our best to fulfill that obligation. But we are excited to be here.

Q. Do you view that as a lifetime deal of sorts?

COACH FERENTZ: I remember first thing that comes to mind is Coach Fry's which he reminded me the other day; that he had a lifetime contract at SMU, and they pronounced him legally dead and moved him right out of there. (Laughter).

Lifetime in coaching is a season, really, but I hope to make it to the end of the year. That's one of my goals.

I've been telling people for a long time, I really like it here, but nobody wants to believe you sometimes. We have enjoyed our life here, a lot, on two levels, professional and Perth, and those are both important. If you can have both, that's a pretty good deal.

Q. How meaningful is that that you're enriching lives yourself, too, with the excellence that you guys have had two --

COACH FERENTZ: Well, we are trying. That's one of the goals we have, certainly, and there's certainly an obligation from our end, a very strong obligation. Any time you work with young people and represent a university, there's some obligation that comes with that. I think we all try to do a good job and we are certainly not perfect and there are a lot of things you can go back and say we could have done better, or you would like to do over again, but at least we try to learn and move forward. We'll continue to do that. Again, we don't take anything for granted and we are very, very appreciative of the opportunities we have been given.

Q. We have seen a lot of great catches by the start of the collegiate football season, is

the football this year a little more tacky and easier to handle?

COACH FERENTZ: That's a good question. I don't know. I'd probably be the wrong guy to ask. I never touch one. But I don't know, there are a lot of good players out there. I haven't got to see much football yet this year. But there are a lot of good players out there. I did see a grab somewhere -- but anyway, I don't know.

Okay, thank you.

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