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An interview with:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: It was a tough loss over the weekend. Just like we do after victories, we move on and we'll get started today, so that process has begun. Medically, obviously, Rick Stanzi will be out this week and most likely next week. Then we'll go from there.

I think Brett Greenwood and Colin Sandeman have fair chances of making it back. We plan on seeing both of them out on the practice field today. We'll wait to see how that proceeds. Captains are the same guys, Pat Angerer, A.J. Edds defensively, Tony Moeaki and Rick Stanzi on offense.

And as far as Ohio State goes, it's really pretty simple. They're an excellent football team. Very, very talented. Extremely well coached. And I think, most importantly, they're really playing well the last three games. They seem to have hit their stride and hit a rhythm. They're playing really well right now.

It will be a great challenge for our football team. We're kicking off at 2:30 central, 3:30 their time. So we've got from now until then to get ready for a tough game, and that's our plan.

Q. How's Ricky doing?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, he's disappointed. But other than that, he's doing fine. I saw him this morning. He's on the comeback trail, so we'll push forward.

Q. Did he have surgery?

COACH FERENTZ: Uh-huh. Had surgery yesterday and everything went well. So, it's a matter of rehab.

Q. Everybody wonders about James Vandenberg. What have you seen about him through practice and that's allowed him to get to this point?

COACH FERENTZ: They've had good competition for two years, basically. As the season got going, we had to make a decision one way or the other. We've been pleased with both guys, James and John. I think they've both done a nice job.

We first got good exposure of them last year during the bowl preparation, and certainly in spring practice and throwing camp. So I think both guys are doing well. They both throw the ball well. They're both students of the game. The big thing they lack is experience, and right now James has a huge edge on John since he got in the game the other day. We really like everything about him. I think he'll respond well this week and next.

Q. Do your players normally travel?

COACH FERENTZ: We don't have a set policy either way. But we'll take Rick, and we've been carrying Jamie Murphy, I think, since Wisconsin. It just depends on usually the seniority of the player what his role was. That type of thing.

Certainly Rick's role, now this week besides his rehab, turns into helping him be a tutor. Another guy that can talk with James and John. He started that process Sunday night. So he's been active already. I think that's his plan. It will help him keep involved, too.

Q. This is probably a crazy thought, but who is number three?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if we have one right now. Got Marvin McNutt. Maybe we'll put the wildcat in.

Q. You talked previously about how difficult it is to keep the injured players involved with the team. Is that different with a

quarterback than it is for a lineman?

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, because Rick can jump in there. Especially in this situation he can be a tutor on, if you will, or a big brother, however you want to look at it. Those guys meet more than other players. They watch tape together anyway routinely, so we're not going to break up that party. I think it's a nice way to keep them involved. The other guys do it, too, but it's not quite the same. Not quite the same.

Q. I understand you're not ruling Rick out for next week?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see what happens next week. It's possible, it's possible. I don't think likely, but it's possible. You're really looking at a situation pretty much like Robinson or Moeaki where these things are typically three or four weeks. But everybody's different. We'll see where he's at the end of the week.

Q. Bowl game now?

COACH FERENTZ: I think realistic. If there's a positive here it's that we have a break after the 12 days from now. It's a week for everybody to get healthy, and certainly in Rick's case, it will be beneficial.

Q. What does James Vandenberg bring from the skill set perspective?

COACH FERENTZ: We go through this one. We're talking about quarterback interviews and all that stuff. The guy's a good quarterback. He throws the ball well. Probably the biggest flaw he had when he came here, when we recruited him was he weighed about 170 pounds. That scared me a little bit the first time I saw him.

You know at basketball practice, he had his basketball jersey on. It was a little hard to envision him playing Division-1 football. He looked pretty thin. But Chuck Long looked like that when he got here, and James has worked really hard physically. He's a whole different guy than he was a few years ago. The biggest issue now is getting him experience, getting him caught up to speed and bringing him along.

Q. Is Marvin getting emergency quarterback reps?

COACH FERENTZ: We haven't talked so much about that. But there are only so many reps. The biggest thing will be to take an exchange. I remember vividly, you know, I should know the year, too.

You can pretty much write this down, I think it was 1977. Pitt was beating Notre Dame at home, opening game. They got down to the third quarterback and they couldn't take a center exchange and ended up losing the game because they fumbled one or two. I can't remember if it was one or two, but the third quarterback couldn't take a snap. Otherwise all he had to do was fall on it, punt it, and they won the game. Realistically that's about all a third guy can do.

I'll throw this out there because one of my friends called me over the weekend. He had heard it in one of those meetings rooms on the websites or talk shows or whatever the hell it is. And the word out there is about Vandenberg not getting snaps.

I don't know how long I've been coaching, but I've been here for a while. I worked under Jackie Sherill, Hayden Fry, Bill Belichick, and Ted Marchibroda. I've seen a lot of practices including Chuck Noles, Bill Cowher. I've never seen a number three quarterback get as many reps as the ones. I've never heard of that. So supposedly that was out there this weekend. Just a little one for the record to educate the crowd. But, yeah, wow, that's kind of bizarre.

Q. Are you confident that you might see a different James Vandenberg this week with the reps he's gotten?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, he'll be better prepared, I guess. But you know, our twos get a lot of work. I think he was prepared the other day. His first pass eight weeks ago was a ground ball. His second one was a bullet. It was a perfect bullet. I think that's young players.

That happens at other positions, too. Young players struggle initially. It's just not as evident. And I tease James about that first pass he threw of his career. But like I said, he came back and threw a bullet.

I think that's what we're going to see this guy do. James is a good football player. He's walking into a tough, excellent defense. It might as well be an NFL defense we're playing. So it's going to be a tough order there. The crowd noise is going to be hard. All of those things.

You couldn't ask for a tougher starting contest for him. He'll get good support. He'll be prepared. I'm not going to measure him over the next 60 minutes of play. He'll continue to improve. He's a quality football player, and he works hard. I

have total confidence in him.

Q. Does he work well in the shotgun?

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't asked him. I don't know. I don't care.

Q. Does the playbook change?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah. I mean Rick's more experienced now than he was 20 games ago. So things are a little bit different. It will be the same for James. Ohio State will do a good job of changing our playbook, too. We haven't seen a lot of open plays on the tape. We're still looking back somewhere in 1983 right now looking for some stuff. We'll find something somewhere.

Q. Does he have a list of safe plays that he can go to?

COACH FERENTZ: He's been around our offense. He knows our offense. He made a great run check the other day. It wasn't like it was a total catastrophe out there. I thought he did a lot of good things. The throws he didn't make to me, that's experience. That's being a little bit excited, what have you. He'll be better.

This is a tough contest for him. A tough draw. But, I play our football team. You measure people over the course of the race, not just every lap.

Q. The defense on both teams is a takeaway sort of thing?

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, they're extremely aggressive. It starts up front. They're very good up front. It's not just their front four. It's their front eight. They roll guys in and out of there. They're very imposing that way. We'll have to be at our absolute best. Our linebackers are active. Their safeties and corners are very good.

I said that jokingly, I can't remember many Ohio State teams that weren't really good on defense, and this is no exception. They've got excellent players. Very well coached. They're impressive. They're fun to watch on film if you're not playing against them.

So our margin for error will be very thin. We'll have to do a good job. And to your point, Bob, we'll have to protect the football. We'll have to do a good job of that. If you turn it over, it's not going to be much of a game in the second half, I know that.

Q. What have you seen in Terrelle Pryor. Really criticized three or four weeks ago after the Purdue game. What have you seen that he's doing better?

COACH FERENTZ: I like their offense with him. He's found a rhythm. He's more comfortable now. He's more experienced, certainly. He's always been a phenomenal athlete and now he's becoming a better quarterback. More comfortable quarterback, and it takes time. It takes time.

So he's done an excellent job. And, they're playing as good. They're putting a good plan together where he can run and throw. He's very effective at doing both.

Q. What is the likelihood we'll see Adam Robinson in this game?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, you know, I can't tell you that. That would be nice, but we're not banking on it. We'll just see what the week brings.

Q. Like most teams in the Big Ten you haven't had a bye week. How does that affect the team going nine, ten, 11 straight weeks as opposed to others in the country who get one of those?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think it's a huge factor, personally. It might help with some minor injuries, that type of thing, or it certainly gives you another week to get guys healed in the process. But that's the upside.

The other part is it's nice to have the week off, too. In a perfect world I'd still rather go 12 straight. If I had to choose, 12 straight, then taking the week of Thanksgiving -- which is still an American holiday, I think -- taking that week off. I'd take that as opposed to taking a bye week and then playing over Thanksgiving weekend. If I had the choice, I'd rather go 12 straight.

Some years you have injuries. This has been one of those years. Others you don't. 2002 we weren't affected at all. In 2002 it never broke our momentum. Once we got something going, it never broke our momentum. That's how I look at it, I guess. I don't mind it.

Q. Talk about bowl games being big rewards the end of the season. How about the biggest reward, the Rose Bowl, being on the line just in this one game this week as opposed to going back to maybe Florida?

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, I mean, my kid's in tenth grade now, so he's figured it out. But if he's still in second grade, which is eight years ago -- I better check my math, huh. But you go back eight years ago he probably would have figured it out then, too.

We all know what's at stake. It's going to be important we win the next week, too. Tiebreakers and all that stuff. There are still two more games for everybody in the conference. These are all important games. Last week is important. This one's important. Our last one's important.

I think what we need to do is just worry about our performance. That's all we can worry about. Try to do our best this week and we'll move on to the next one.

Q. Is there any kind of communication as a defense that more pressure we put on them this week to perform even though they've performed well?

COACH FERENTZ: Pressure is your word, not my word. For us to win right now given our injury situation. Common sense would say we have to play good defense. And we're going to have to. Because I'll bet you -- I shouldn't use that word bet either. You said pressure I said bet -- I would predict that Ohio State's going to play good defense. If we have every guy healthy and every guy ready, it will still be a challenge to put points on the board.

Nobody's done it. I shouldn't say nobody, but they've given up 11 points a game. So that's going to be imperative. We're going to have to play well on special teams. That's what it's going to take, and we're going to have to make some plays offensively. We'll have to rise to the challenge and be opportunistic knowing that it's going to be difficult.

But I think if you just go off statistics and then the statistics really match the film, that's what it's going to take. So, if we don't come up with a stellar defensive effort, it's going to be tough to be successful. But, hey, we're a good defensive team. We'll be all right.

Q. Do you worry about the balance this week trying to achieve the balance that you guys have had?

COACH FERENTZ: What balance are you talking about?

Q. The balance you've had.



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COACH FERENTZ: Yes and no. We've had some challenges in the running game, injury-wise, and we've got some in the passing game now too. So, we're just going to worry about trying to move and scratch out some first downs and try to move the ball and scratch out some point Penguins. But that will be the goal right now.

Q. How's Daniel doing kicking-wise? It looks like he had some good kicks but he's also struggled a little bit. Is it anything he's doing or just position on the field maybe?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. I mean, it's just, overall he's been pretty consistent. But it can improve just like everybody's performance.

Q. Does it actually show a break or just why the surgery for the sprain?

COACH FERENTZ: It's a procedure that just gives you more predictable outcome. And for a severe ankle issue like he had, our medical staff feels that's the most prudent way to go. The best way to predict an outcome.

We've had other players have it in the past. Just a little more attention on this one, I suppose. We've had good success with them, so I think that's the game plan all wait there.

Q. Any torn tendons or anything?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not very good on all the specifics. But he's got a bad ankle sprain, I know that. When it happened, I thought it could be worse, so there is the good news here at least after Thanksgiving he's got a chance to be back with us. So, that's good.

Q. In all your years of coaching can you remember a team you've been on where such a young quarterback is making a career start in such a hostile environment?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, you know you guys can help me out. Freshmen quarterbacks? Poholsky was he a freshman that year? What were you thinking? Michigan State? Was that Michigan State? Yeah, that was a tough one. He was the ABC player of the game. That was 1986, right? I like that. Let's talk more about that subject. So he was a red shirt freshman, huh? I think he might have been.

Q. Was that Nebraska in '82?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, '82? Oh, that's

not good. That's not good. We got a standing-O. We got a first down in the second half. Remember that? They cheered. So did I (smiling). I'm staying on this side of the room; okay. Wow.

Q. Will you talk to James about that aspect that this may be the most hostile environment for you?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's kind of what's at stake. I think he's figured that out already. I think he watches TV and all this stuff, so, he knows what he's going to do. James is a quality guy.

Q. So how much was that loss to Purdue an aberration when you look at it?

COACH FERENTZ: It was an upset for sure. They did some things to open the door. That being said, Purdue played an excellent football game. They were really opportunistic.

To me when "upsets" take place, that's usually the case. I can take a couple from the last couple of weeks. But that's usually what it takes. So, if they'd be kind enough to open the door, we still have to be good enough to go in it. That's what Purdue did with this their opportunity. They played well aggressively and did a nice job.

Q. Seems some teams are taking away Tony?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, if you're playing us, that's what you do. You start right there. Me and my big mouth saying he's a pretty good football player. But I think everybody's figured that out. Tony is an excellent player. So, he's going to draw attention. We just have to find ways to do a better job of maybe getting him open and also maybe go to other spots on the field if they're giving him some attention.

Q. You guys are like 16, 17-1 underdogs. Nobody is giving you a chance. Is that a position you like to be in?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know that we've been underdogs by this much, but that seems to be our lot in life at least when we go on the road. So we're on the road. We're underdogs. We've got them right where we want them, that's the way I'm looking at it. So it's perfect.

Q. You talk about this being such a hostile environment. Do you see it being beneficial in terms of having so many guys from Ohio?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know about Ohio. But we played in three or four actually challenging situations, so it's not our first road trip this year. We've gone on the road. We've handled it. We haven't let it be a distraction.

From that standpoint I think that's certainly a positive. But I don't know if it's going to be enough for us. We're going to have to do everything right to win this football game.

Q. I guess I was getting at having 13 guys on the team that are from Ohio that at least have an understanding of what to expect just going up there?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it won't be anymore, you know invigorated in that environment than Penn State. We don't know if we have anybody from Pennsylvania right now. Probably Jeremiha is the only guy.

So, I don't know if that's a huge factor. But we've been in tough stadiums. It was tough up there in East Lansing. Certainly tough in Madison. So, we're not strangers to that environment.

Q. Over the last decade have you changed how you recruited in Ohio?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah. Not just Ohio, but I think we've focused a little bit more and invested more time, probably, on Big Ten area schools or Big Ten area states, I should say.

On one hand it's a little bit more regional, but if you include the Big Ten, which Ohio is a Big Ten area, obviously. I guess from that Ohio border we've done okay, I think. We've had some good players from those areas. Bradley Fletcher popped to mind right there being on the eastern border. So, yeah, it's worked out okay.

Q. Some of the guys from some of the other road games have said the kind of seclusion of the road has helped them focus a little more. Would you agree with that?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's the attitude you take. That is one advantage of when you're home, we've got a parade of people coming through. We had a who's who here last Saturday. But it's a different routine. You go on the road and things are pretty isolated.

You can make it an advantage for you if you choose to. When you walk into the stadium, it's a pretty closed group of people that are going in there and have to be supportive of each other. I

think everybody's mindful of that when you're traveling to visiting territory.

Q. Talk about Keenan Davis. He played like a freshman at times, but he's also shown the talent that he has at other times. Kind of your impressions of him?

COACH FERENTZ: He's coming along. He's getting a lot of good work in. Of he's playing on a limited basis on the field. I think he's coming along just fine. We're really pleased with Keenan and think he's making good progress.

Q. Will you go back to Tyler?

COACH FERENTZ: Either or. Yeah, it will be either or. I thought Tyler did a good job. That was a bright spot. Did a nice job fielding the punts, looked confident and decisive. And Colin's demonstrated an ability to do that, too. So on more bad news. These guys have pretty good coverage teams. They're very, very good in their coverage.

Q. Reflect on the game there '87. One of the wins there seemed to burn a little brighter?

COACH FERENTZ: That was tough. Obviously, it came right down to the last play. I think it was the last play. It sure seemed like it. 4th and 22 or something like that. I think we could have made a first down. We didn't have enough time to make a first down, so it was basically do or die. And just a tremendous, tremendous effort.

Chuck threw it up there where Marv could make a fantastic play. It was a great catch, first of all. And they've done a great effort to get in the end zone. If he hadn't gotten in, the game was over.

That's one of the great plays of Iowa football history. That's a had happy memory right there certainly. I wasn't here for the '91, that was a whole different set of circumstances. But that bowl game was certainly memorable, too, I know.

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