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An interview with:

COACH DAVIS

COACH DAVIS: If we played today, Jake is about 80%, so we'd start C.J. if we played today. We don't play today. We play in ten days or 11 days, whatever it is. We feel like we have two good quarterbacks, and we'll look at it in these next 11 days and then we'll go from there. What you can expect is that we'll probably play two with no set series, numbers or whatever. But we do feel like we have two guys that have earned the right to play and have played pretty well. So that's the way we'll approach it as we get closer.

Part of it, obviously, will be how Jake responds to his injury. He would have been available the other day in a limited role if C.J.'s helmet would have come off or he had lost his breath Jake, could have gone in and functioned. The biggest concern we have right now is he just can't run, and that's the way you can protect yourself. So we'll see how that plays out over the next week and a half.

Q. Is that a 50-50 split you're talking about?

COACH DAVIS: No, I'm not talking about any kind of sequence or numbers. We're just -- part of it will be a feel. Part of it will be we definitely want to play two guys. At some point, hopefully that will clean itself up.

Q. Is that awkward though? You have two guys. One guy is maybe playing a little better than the other in one game versus another?

COACH DAVIS: Well, I think they have earned that right so that's what we're going to do.

Q. How about the package for each one? Like if you bring in C.J. off the bench, you can throw a whole different package for the defense, which makes them have to prepare it a little different?

COACH DAVIS: Their packages are very -- they're more similar than dissimilar. But there is no question there are things that we have in the package for C.J. that we did not do the other day because we wanted to try to be smart with him that he feels very comfortable with that we don't do with Jake.

Q. The zone read stuff?

COACH DAVIS: There is some of that, and some other quarterback situations where, not that Jake couldn't do them, just C.J. is very comfortable with that stuff.

Q. Did you ever have this situation in Texas?

COACH DAVIS: Sure, I've done this 41 years. I've had it with my brother and the head coach's son in 1975, if y'all would like me to explain that one. It's unusual. My daddy still doesn't talk to me about my decision there. Yeah, we had Colt McCoy and Jevan Snead were two freshmen guys that took over after Vince (Young), and we played those two guys for three and a half ballgames, I think, and then we felt like Colt had won the job. It's hard for a quarterback to do things in practice because you don't tackle them.

So here comes a blitz, and even though you tell them you've got to play like you're fixing to get hit, one does, and one doesn't, so it's hard to evaluate. Did he get it off? Did he not get it off? Did he sit in time or whatever? So a lot of their evaluation has to come in a ball game.

Q. Coach, are you in anyway disappointed or frustrated with the way the offense hasn't seemed to move forward from

last year statistically? It's even taken a step back in some areas.

COACH DAVIS: I'm excited that we're 4-1. There are some things, sure, that we feel like we were really slow getting the running game started. I don't have a great answer as to why that was. I think the last two weeks we've picked that up. I think we're throwing and catching the ball, if you take the first half away the other day, I think we're throwing and catching the ball better than we had. We're not scoring enough points.

So, you know, I think we've done a better job overall in some areas in the red zone, but we've got to do a better job in that area. I think we have to do a better job in the first half.

Q. You guys are running a lot of plays still. Are you getting the points you want out of the amount of plays you're running? I can't imagine you are.

COACH DAVIS: No, we're not scoring as many points as we need to score. I think we ran 88 snaps the other day. We did have 12 explosives in the ballgame the other day which is something that we keep track of that we think are important. And typically, those lead, a 12 explosive game, would typically lead to more points than we had the other day.

Q. What is your definition of explosive?

COACH DAVIS: A run of 12-plus and a pass of 16-plus.

Q. So those numbers increased the last couple weeks? Because it seems like you have been throwing vertically more and that's maybe why the running game has picked up a little bit?

COACH DAVIS: Could be. We had 12 against Purdue.

Q. Back to the quarterbacks. You play two, and then it seems like it's going to be a hot-hand-type deal. It seems that it will probably run into that. Am I reading too much into that?

COACH DAVIS: No, I think that's probably right. We want to see who is playing better on that particular day.

Q. How do they differentiate themselves? It seems like your offense really didn't change under C.J. Is there any differentiation?

COACH DAVIS: Well, I think there are some things that if you've got two guys that are both healthy, I think there are some things that C.J. can do that are a little bit different.

Q. Talk about Jonathan Parker and what he brings to the table? He seems to be really explosive.

COACH DAVIS: Jonathan Parker is an exciting guy that we want to continue to have a package for him. The other day he affected the ball game with the ball, and he affected the ball game without the ball just faking to him twice created some opportunities for Mark and Jordan to run up inside. So we want to continue to do some things with him in various places.

Q. You ran 14 plays out of the 22 grouping, all rushes, what's going on there were you're not getting yards?

COACH DAVIS: Because it made 17 yards, that's what's wrong with it. We have to do a better job. One thing that grouping will be and has been is a lot of short yardage. So there is some short yardage situations that if you make two yards on 3rd and 1, then your yardage looks really poor, but your consistency is pretty good. So there is some of that situation, but I think we do have to have more production out of 22.

Q. Is there a tipping point? Because some of the safeties when they were in the 22 seemed to crouch closer to the line of scrimmage, and when you're running the whole time, do you feel like there is a tip or something?

COACH DAVIS: Again, I think situational football is part of that. I think the personnel grouping is part of that. If you're asking do we have some passes out of 22, the answer is yes, we do.

Q. Do you have some personnel groups that it seems like you guys went back to the three tight ends, it seemed to work for you pretty nicely. Are there any personnel groups you're thinking about expanding or scrapping? Is there anything you bang your head against and it's like okay, that's enough of that one?

COACH DAVIS: No, not really. The 13 personnel grouping is a good grouping because

your offense is broad on both sides. I think we ran three empty snaps out of that personnel grouping the other day which means the defense needs to play normal. They can't put a goal line defense in, and it fits our people pretty good. We have three tight ends that we feel like deserve to be on the field some. So that is a personnel grouping that we'll continue to use.

Twenty-one personnel is a personnel we haven't done quite as much. We've been limited at fullback with two fullbacks down. Even though John Kenny has done a really nice job. So we've tried to be smart as to how much we've asked him to do in that personnel grouping. I think as the season goes on, you'll see more 21 in and out of 21. What we haven't done a whole lot of is played much 11 personnel on first down.

It's basically been a third-down situational personnel grouping for us. We have more runs in that personnel grouping than we've actually used.

Q. When you made improvement in your second year rather than your first. Did you just expect things to get better with the third year? Are you puzzled or mystified it hasn't improved statistically?

COACH DAVIS: I'm happy we're 4-1. I'm disappointed we haven't scored more points. I think we are trying to do what our players are best suited for? I don't know if that answers your question or not?

Q. How much better off are you now? When you got here you said there was a noticeable void at receiver speed.

COACH DAVIS: I think we're much better at receiver now than we were three years ago. I think we're much better. We have more guys that we feel like understand what we're trying to do where they're trying to get. I think there is more speed than there was three years ago. You would always want more.

Q. Has there been a feeling-out-type process over the season where you threw 55 passes at Ball State and ran it the next week? Was there an effort to reestablish what Iowa traditionally is or was it a matter of match-up or a little bit of both?

COACH DAVIS: It was a little bit of both. We felt like we didn't go in to the Ball State game with the idea we were going to throw it 55 times. Nor did we go into many ballgames with the idea we're going to throw it 15. Each game takes on a

life of its own once you get in there, but we did make a conscious effort after Ball State that we wanted to improve the run game. We wanted to get back and play more personnel groupings that lended if self to us being able to run the ball if we wanted to.

Q. Kirk had said Saturday he felt like Jake would be a hundred percent to play the game. If that's the case, is he the starter?

COACH DAVIS: I'll let Kirk answer that. He's the head coach. What I will say is we feel like we have two really good players, really good players.

Q. Does it matter who starts?

COACH DAVIS: It matters a whole lot more to you than me.

Q. No, I mean, that is the question I think fans have?

COACH DAVIS: I think it matters more to them than us. Right now we're planning on playing two.

Q. So it doesn't matter who starts; it matters who plays better when they're in there?

COACH DAVIS: Right.

Q. How confident are you for lack of a better term hurting Jake and C.J.'s respective psyches that they'll cope well with this game-time decision?

COACH DAVIS: I think they'll be fine. I think they'll totally be fine. They're good guys and they're good players. I think they both know the other guy is pretty good. They're not blind to the fact that the other guy does some pretty good stuff also.

Q. C.J.'s arm, is what he can do and the way the offense has pressed the past couple weeks, he's made some throws that we haven't seen here in a while. Is it that simple for him getting in the lineup?

COACH DAVIS: C.J. has a very quick arm, an extremely quick arm. There are a lot of things that we ask our quarterbacks to do that are pretty much unnoticed until they are noticed. It's kind of like a deep snapper. You pretty much forget about him until there is one over his head. Then you look it up and say, oh, okay. Because

we asked our quarterback to do a lot of things at the line of scrimmage. We ask both of them to do that. So there are all kinds of things that will factor in because it is a football game. We'll try to do what we think is best.

Q. Did C.J. show you some things you didn't expect in the last six quarters of football? What are some of those things that got you from playing him a series or two in a game to being more of an open concept?

COACH DAVIS: I thought he handled the second half of the Pitt game extremely well. He made a third down conversion in that ballgame that was pretty special. They brought a blitz and did a nice job with the hot receiver and he reset his feet and found the second receiver. It was a big time play. There is no denying it. It was a big time play. But he had done some of those things in practice. We like the two quarterbacks. We like both of those guys. We're going to play both of them right now.

Q. You talked about what a quarterback does as far as I imagine you're talking about going up to the line of scrimmage and figuring out what the defense is doing and calling the right play. That seems to be Jake's strength. Am I right or wrong there?

COACH DAVIS: That is one of his strengths, yes.

Q. What else is on the ledger?

COACH DAVIS: I'm not going to enumerate that this guy can play this many balls and this. Y'all can decide that. I think you already have. The truth is as a staff we think we have to and we're going to play two, and at some point it will shake itself up.

Q. Coach, how do you deal with the criticism, and I'm sure you've heard it. You got a lot of mail, and it wasn't all positive. How do you deal with that personally?

COACH DAVIS: I don't really worry about it. I really don't. If you write me a letter and put your name on it, I will respond. If you don't put your name on it, I throw it away. You know, that is the way I do it. I have been doing this a long time, and I played the position. I told Phil Parker when I come back in my next life I'm going to be a defensive coordinator because, let me tell you this, Phil's sitting over here and I've told him this.

If there is a touchdown pass thrown in the ballgame, here's what you say, not you, the fans. I can't believe Johnny got beat. Can you believe that? Nobody says can you believe Parker was in zone on that down? Or was he in man? Is that not fair? So, hey, it is what it is. I've got a job that I love doing, and I don't worry about all the other stuff.

Q. Is it dangerous sometimes for quarterbacks to get too much of a routine of throwing check downs without sometimes scanning the field? Or if you do it over and over again where you can miss those passes down the field?

COACH DAVIS: If you're asking me does Jake checks it down too quickly? You said a quarterback. So, no. In every throw we have, there is usually a deep element to it that is typically covered, then there is an intermediate ball and a check down ball. One thing we tell quarterbacks is you can't go broke making money. So when you drop a ball down to Damon and he makes 16 on 2nd-and-15, that is a pretty good play. If you drop it down to him on 2nd-and-15, and he makes four, it's a bad play because you didn't get enough of it back. At the same time, you have to ask your quarterback to go through a process of progression, and come to the best decision that you feel like is there.

Q. Specifically with Jake, do you think he's checked down too many times?

COACH DAVIS: I do not.

Q. Pre-snap reads aren't just for quarterbacks. When Coach Kennedy came in he said he wanted to simplify that read with the receivers as well. How have they progressed?

COACH DAVIS: I think they are much further along than they've been at any time. There are still situations where you'd like for a receiver to make a decision a little quicker if he has an option route, which a lot of our 3rd and medium situations there is an option route involved. So the quicker they make the decision, the quicker the ball can come out. But I think overall they've made worlds of progress.

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