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An Interview With:

IOWA COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, our captains are the same four guys. We've got Louis Trinca-Pasat, Quinton Alston, Brandon Scherff, and Mark Weisman on the offensive side

Just looking back, it was a great crowd Saturday. We really appreciate it. The black and gold deal is always neat to see, so it was a really a high-energy crowd. Appreciate that.

Moving forward now. Macon Plewa will not be able to go this week. I don't foresee that happening, and the bye week coming up here will probably help us out that way.

Got a handful of guys that are nicked up. We're mid-season right now, so we'll learn more here as we go along, but I think everybody else has a chance to make it Saturday. We'll just have to see how the week plays out and go from there.

Moving on to Saturday, we're playing a really good football team in Maryland. They're a veteran team, first and foremost. Just about everybody back from last year offensively and defensively. And then they're a very good team, very veteran team, well coached.

I think the other thing I'd mention about them that is significant is their special teams. This will be as tough a challenge as we'll have. Placekicker is outstanding, doing a great, great job. And they've probably got as good return people. We've faced some good return people this year.

But we're looking at punt or kickoff, both these guys are really dynamic returners. So we're going to have to be at our best on special teams to have a chance to get this thing done.

Q. When you look at William Likely, both at corner, undersized cornerback, but really active, leads the Big Ten in passes, and then he also returns punts at a 22-yard clip, is he like Jarvis or is he better than that?

COACH FERENTZ: He's just a really good player. Got done reading something about him, an article about him. He sounds like a tremendous young man as well. Not just as a football player, but everything he does.

That's kind of -- because he's probably not tall enough, quote/unquote, for the experts, but he's playing really good football. He's tough to complete passes against them on special teams. He does a great job. Sounds like it fit in really well here undersized but an excellent player, and they did a great job identifying him, obviously.

Q. We've talked about dual quarterbacks now for 20 years, but you're going to face one Saturday. How have you seen that position develop in the sense of are the guys better throwers now than maybe they were?

COACH FERENTZ: It depends who you're talking about. I guess it depends on who you're talking about. This quarterback, in particular, does both very well, so they're going to make you defend both the run and pass. There are guys that are more one dimensional. It kind of depends on who you're talking about, but this guy can do both.

Q. What makes him so dangerous?

COACH FERENTZ: He's a really good athlete, and he knows how to play football, so he's got basically everything you'd want. He's a big recruit, and we knew about him. Probably everybody knew about him, huh?

Q. Did you try to get him?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, but he didn't

consider us at all. I don't know who it boiled down to outside of Maryland, but I know everybody in the world tried to recruit him. He's just one of those guys that everybody knew about when he was in eighth grade. He's just a really good player.

Q. When you go back and look at the three long runs that Coleman had, was there a common theme, a common breakdown among those?

COACH FERENTZ: No, not really, other than he can finish them. That's for sure. You know, the one I'm still not sure how he got through there. I think that was the last one or the one to our left. The first one was a great executed play. Great execution on their part, not as good on our part, but boy he hit it clean and fast, and he's a really good player. We knew that going in.

As I said Saturday, when you're on the field with a player who is really good, your appreciation is even deeper, and that's how I felt leaving the field Saturday.

Q. Coach, you were 2-0 in the Big Ten two years ago and obviously things didn't finish well. How does this team feel different to you right now at this stage?

COACH FERENTZ: Time will tell. We've been in this position. We're at the midway point right now and two games into the league, we've been in this position, we've been in positions really close to this, and, yeah, typically I sound like a broken record sometimes, but really it's the second half of the season that determines typically who we are.

Some exceptions, 2007 was a different story. But it's what we do moving forward, so that's going to be the key right now. The one thing that's been constant, our guys have had a good attitude. They've worked hard going back to January, so that's good. We haven't always played as well as we need to, and the big thing is how much improvement can we make here in the next seven weeks? That's really what it's going to come down to. Health factors into that too. But as much as anything it's just how much can we improve?

Q. They have Rowe and the other kid. When you have a situation like that, how do you divvy up the preparation time? We know he's a starter, but they could use him.

COACH FERENTZ: They're not dramatically different, so in this case, it's not a big deal. In some cases if you had a runner and a

thrower, that would be a little different scenario, but both guys run the ball really well, and both of them throw it pretty well.

Q. What did Jake show you coming out of an injury, coming out of being down and out? Saturday's performance, did that show growth and maturity? The kind of things you need to see there?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if it was titanic. He's grown and getting better. I wouldn't describe it as like a Kodak moment. I thought he played really well. We expect Jake to play well, and we expect C.J. to play well. I thought he played well while he was in there.

So that's one position where I feel pretty good about knowing what we're going to get. I felt good about fullback coming into this season too. So much for that equation. So you just never know. Things are always changing.

Q. C.J.'s option play. It was kind of a wrinkle. You talked about him being nimble and such in the off-season. Is that evidence of that, I guess?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, Rudock ran pretty much the same play earlier for a touchdown. Wasn't exactly the same, but similar. It's something we have in our pocket. It's not a big part of what we do, but it's something we can utilize every now and then.

Q. How do you keep walk-ons with three, four, five years, how do you keep them enthused to the point where they could help you sometime when they haven't had the chance to in the past?

COACH FERENTZ: The obvious answer there probably is it just takes a really special young guy. That's Tommy Gaul. I've said this before, I think, and especially for walk-ons. For all we ask our guys to do, because they don't get a hall pass, they do the same thing as anybody else does. So the 105 guys that come to camp, and the other guys on the team were typically in the 115, 117 range once we get going.

We ask an awful lot of our guys, and for them to do it four years, five years into the program, it really says a lot about their make-up and the caliber of young people they are. I've got tremendous respect. I'm not sure I could do what our guys do. When I played, it wasn't even

remotely close to this.

So for them to stay with it and have great attitudes and add to the team, you go back to Will Lack and guys like that back in the early 2000s, awful lot of respect.

And in Tommy's case, he got called upon. It wasn't like anybody had advance notice on that one. He jumped in. That was a tough assignment because he had big, physical guys and had a guy on his nose every snap of the game.

It's just really gratifying when you see a guy like that who has worked so hard and done things well so many days in a row and go out there and be rewarded. Nobody was happier than his teammates. It was really a good moment afterwards. They really kind of prompted him to get up in front of the group and be recognized, and that's a good part about coaching.

Q. When you talk about what you ask guys to do, what is that?

COACH FERENTZ: It's just a lot of hard work. A lot of times it's getting up early in the morning, earlier than most college students. It's probably true of all athletes, not just football players. I don't mean to suggest that we're unique, but it's a long, hard year that these guys put time in. If a guy's getting a scholarship, that's one case. But for guys that walk-on, it's kind of like the Division III thing, they're doing it for the pure love of it.

I'll never forget asking Will Lack why he did it, because I was curious. You're talking about a Harvard Medical School guy. For him he just said being part of the team was important. That's what he wanted was just to be part of the team. I remember him walking out and thinking to myself, wow, that's a pretty strong commitment there.

But that's what it's all about. You have people like that that what they add to a football team is really hard to measure because it's really significant when you have guys like that on your football team.

Q. You shortened up the defensive bench quite a bit this week. Is that just a factor of the game?

COACH FERENTZ: Kept closer count. Yeah, probably. We didn't get a lead at all. Well, I guess we did have a lead, but it sure didn't feel like it at any point. Part of that is a little health related to. We had a couple guys nicked up, but we're still planning on playing guys in there.

Q. You're 9-12 on fourth downs, all 9 had led to points. Are you finding yourself in better situations this year? Are you confident? What is led to it?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, and some of it is by design, some of it is by feel. The guys are doing a good job, they really are. We're trying to be smart about when we calculate and pull the trigger and go ahead and go forward or try to take a field goal or whatever it may be.

But the bottom line is our players are doing a good job of executing. I think if you combine that with third down, we're a little bit of mature numbers last year, but it feels a little better right now for sure.

Q. Does Mark get enough credit for what he does on fourth down?

COACH FERENTZ: Probably not. I'm not big on stats, but I did peek at his stats yesterday. I believe it was just under 4 a carry, and the thought entered my mind, I wonder how many those were nitty-gritty, 4th and 1st, first and goal on the 1, that type of stuff. He does a lot of the hard dirty work for us, and really does a good job there. So you probably should get some bonus points for that. Those don't show up in the stat column too often.

Q. Can you see him making a living in the NFL?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah. I think he'll end up on somebody's team. People dig fullbacks in the NFL. He'll have a hard time finding a job in college, but people in the NFL will really appreciate I think what he does.

Q. Talk about issues with autographs, the kid from Georgia, and I know Winston's answering these questions again. Do you have a specific policy with the guys? Do you speak to them about it or is it just common sense?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, they're called the NCAA rules. We have a lot of people on campus that do a great job of educating our players what the rules are on a routine basis. We try to address current events frequently with our football team regardless what it may be. I think the important thing I try to convey to our players is you may agree or disagree with our rules. It's kind of the laws in society. Everybody's allowed to have an opinion. It's a great country. We all signed up for this activity. We're members of the NCAA. You

might think it's a dumb rule. You might think it's a good rule. You have to abide by the rules.

That's just part of being involved in the activity. None of us are being forced to coach or play in college. It's just the way it goes. If you have opinions, that's good. Voice them in the right arena.

Q. What led you to start recruiting recently in Maryland? Can that help at all?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I hope it does. I think it's us, expanding eastward is probably maybe hopefully it will make it easier for prospects out in that region to be enthused about playing in the Big Ten. We're always looking at places. Does it make sense for us to try here and try there, and that felt like a place where we have some connections out there, and that's good football out there.

There are good players everywhere, not just in the south. But there are good players everywhere, it's just a matter of where you're going to have a chance to have some production. I think realistic production based on your program and your staff.

Q. Jordan Walsh?

COACH FERENTZ: He's one of those guys I was alluding to. We have a bunch of guys that are nicked up right now. I don't think it was a crippling injury, so I think he's got a chance. We'll see what he looks like today and see how it goes during the week.

Q. Had Myers not been injured, would he have gone into right guard or maybe you would have thought about that?

COACH FERENTZ: No, I think we pretty much settled on Thursday. We talked Thursday and pretty much have an idea where we're at. I think our thought was Tommy would be the first guy in in the interior. Austin could have slid left, right, and that's just the way he's been practicing, we felt like he was the best option.

Q. What does it say about Austin? I know you guys coach it where the center should be able to play the guard, but going out there and actually doing it is probably different?

COACH FERENTZ: Not everybody can do it, but he has done it so that helps, I think. The bigger trick is can a guy play center? Not always, but usually centers can move outside and survive,

even if they haven't played a lot out there. But it's a little tougher to get a guy going in there and snapping the ball and blocking somebody. That's a tricky deal.

Q. Why do you think you guys have in the last couple years had such success on the road? Is it routine? Why have you been able?

COACH FERENTZ: To me, it's mostly mindset, and I can't tell. I wish I could why one team's better at it than another. But to me it's probably about 98% mindset. It's how you look at it. You have to play good, but it's your mental approach.

Q. Can you sense that with a group of players? Playing a team five or six years ago versus today, can you see by attitude they have?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, typically if you've got a bad team, you're going to play poorly on the road, typically. They'll flip it around. Like if you want to have a good team in college or in the NFL, you better be able to do something on the road and get it done knowing that it's a little bit tougher. But sometimes it's even better because you're more -- everything's a little tighter and closer and all that type of thing or less distractions.

So it just -- I think it's a mental approach you take. If you want to use that as a crutch for not playing well, you can do it. But that being said, it can be challenging playing on the road, especially if you get crowd noise and all that stuff going, it's tough playing in domes. That's not much fun.

Q. Is it more challenging going to Maryland for the first time where coaches don't have the familiarity of what this is going to be like?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I asked this morning how many guys on our staff have been there for a game and played in the stadium as coaches or players? And we actually had a couple of three of them. So interesting there.

I guess the parallel I will draw to our team is it's probably like a lot of the guys going to Pitt. None of the guys on our team right now played there in '08. So that was new. This will be the same thing. Look around a little bit. Yep, okay. It's a stadium. Let's go play. That's really what it gets down to.

Q. Is it going to feel like a Big Ten game?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, because it counts. They all feel the same to me.

Q. You guys had some pretty crisp blocking from your outside players, wide receivers, tight end on Jonathan's touchdown run. I know it happens that wide receivers block, but do you ever have players that that's like the last thing for them to drop before they're actually able to see the field?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you don't want to make general statements, but that's usually not number one. The further away you get from the ball, it seems like that's less of a priority. At all levels, so it's just one of those things that you've got to try to work at and we can still get better there. To that point, Hillyer did an outstanding job on that play, really good job. And I think it was Jake Duzey at tight end too, really nice job.

Q. Jake Duzey has been talking about the process.

COACH FERENTZ: He was a finesse guy in high school.

Q. Can you see that growth with these guys? When they get here, they know they have to --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, if the guys are the right guys and they really -- his future is playing tight end, so he bought into that and believed that. Part of being a tight end is blocking as well as receiving and all that type of thing. So, yeah, he understood that coming in. He's got a great attitude. He's a tremendous young guy and he's really developed into a good football player.

So I think as long as you're clear up front. And then flip it around, like Dallas Clark was a defensive guy, but same thing. Dallas has a great attitude, so that is kind of the common denominator there.

Q. Were there any memorable moments from when Jake Duzey first had to really block? Did he have some educational moments, I imagine?

COACH FERENTZ: Now my mind's flashing over to Ike Boettger who was a quarterback, you know, which is even worse than being a receiver. So when he came down to camp that first time, we liked the way he caught the ball. We asked him to bring some pads and said why

don't you try blocking on Monday. He got slaughtered, but he threw himself in there. Drew Ott did the same thing in camp. He was here, and he got slaughtered too in our camp. He was trying. He had never played with his hand on the ground.

So if you get a guy who is eager and has good ability and good attitude, you've got a chance. You talk about those guys, and that's really what the common denominator is.

Q. Parker was committed to Tulsa and I think you guys got a late run. What was it that tipped the scales and made you guys make another run at him? Do you recall?

COACH FERENTZ: I really liked what he did in high school. He's not the biggest guy in the world, but he was a very productive and hard-charging kind of guy. You know, we don't have enough guys running around here to make plays, so that was kind of the way he was playing, plus our need really kind of, I think, encouraged us to try to keep recruiting him. Fortunately he bought into it.

Q. After he had that tough game against Ball State, I don't think he played the next two games. Was that a way for you to let him get his confidence back?

COACH FERENTZ: It's probably just the way it shook up. But at some point he's going to have to get back up on the bike and ride it. But as I've said, we've never -- there was never any talk about, hey, we're going to put him on the shelf here for a month or come to him next spring and give him another try, only because of what he's done behind the scenes. He's really worked hard and he's bought in. He's trying his hardest.

You know, when you're in a position where you're touching the football, some bad things could happen, might happen. It's like a young quarterback throws interceptions, they're going to do that. If they're going to take a chance, they're going to make some mistakes, but you have to give them a chance to grow a little bit. So he's done all the things that we hoped he would do.

Q. Maryland's defense is one of the best in the red zone. They force a lot of turnovers. Play makers maybe of unusual size. Monroe is only like 5'11. What is it about their defense that they're able to do so many different things when they get close to the goal

line?

COACH FERENTZ: They're a good defensive football team. They're a physical group. Their linebackers, they've got a bunch of them and they're all kind of the same size, but they're all strong, physical guys. They're disruptive up front. The one guy, the linebacker is really more of a defensive end, but he's made a lot of tackles for losses and sacks.

So they're not -- I wouldn't call them overly fancy. They do some things on third down. They've got a good package. Their guys really know the package, and they play hard within the scheme, and that's what good defenses do. They know what they're doing, and they're pretty aggressive. They're a tough match-up for us.

Q. With the shorter defensive end, what kind of challenges does he present? He's pretty big despite his size?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I've always felt like that's overstated, the height thing. Sometimes it can work. There is a guy that played at Michigan State back in the '80s, I'll give you his name, but I think I'll get it wrong. I think I know what his name is. It doesn't matter. Anyway, he was roughly 6', 6'1" defensive end, and we had a pretty tall tackle. Ended up being a tough leverage match-up because you're used to blocking guys a little taller.

So it can really work to your advantage. Anything about guys -- Mike Daniels didn't play outside, but Mike did a good job. Mike is not a prototype 34-end, that's what he's playing. He's playing really well. Haven't gotten a chance to see them. The height stuff takes it away.

Q. Does the QB plan remain the same?

COACH FERENTZ: Just kind of a quiet day to day. We're even talking about Maryland. The team we're playing, yeah.

Q. Same plan this week?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. We'll probably play C.J. in there somewhere, but we just feel pretty good about things at that position.

Q. After the performance by John Lowdermilk, is it as bad as he made it sound from your perspective?

COACH FERENTZ: He could have played better, and he's been playing really well. I might have even mentioned that last week. Probably jinxed him. I think our safeties are getting better.

But we came up a little short the other day. Part of that is on angles, and it might have been some miscalculation. That guy was running faster than maybe we gave him credit for on a couple of those. So some of the angles we took weren't really good. We missed a lot of tackles as a defense. You give up that kind of yardage.

You can't 100% predict that, but usually the tape is going to show you missed way too many tackles. Part of that, he's a strong runner too, so he gets credit for that. So we're going to have to tackle better if we want to be a better defense.

Q. Do you like when a player takes ownership like that?

COACH FERENTZ: Absolutely.

Q. Derrick Willies going to be out for a couple weeks maybe?

COACH FERENTZ: I hope not. He's in that group I talked about. He's got a chance. We expect him out there today. How hard they can go and how long they can go is the next question to find out the guys that are hurt right now.

Q. You're averaging under 30 penalty yards a game here. Your opponents are averaging 72. That is a striking difference. How do you explain it?

COACH FERENTZ: That was a factor Saturday for sure in our favor. It's not like we make it a huge emphasis point. I think I've said this before. Sometimes you're better off being in that two, three, four slot instead of the number one slot because it might mean you're too timid with the way you're playing. But you don't want to be in the bottom half. I know that.

That's just a bad deal. The thing we try to coach against are the mindless penalties. Hitting guys that are out of bounds. Hitting guys that are on the ground, false starts, substitution issues, things like that. That's the stuff we try to. Defensive offsides is a terrible one. We hit that one Saturday. Just those kinds of things. That's what we try to emphasize.

Q. Back to Lowdermilk, is he the leader in the secondary?

COACH FERENTZ: He leads by example. He's a hard worker. Takes a lot of pride in what he does and how he plays. He practices hard. And

then accountability. You know, when you don't do as well as you need to, he didn't have to be that public. That would have been fine. That's how it is. He's an honest guy. I know he was disappointed. Jonathan Parker, it's not having two game-changing or altering plays necessarily, but it's just the way he does things all the time. I'm very confident he'll play really well down these last six ballgames for us, because that's the way he's built. He's worked so hard, and he's a really good football player. I've got no problem with that, none at all.

Q. Have the teams started to run away from Drew Ott?

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't charted that as close. The one was on his side. I know it was in front of our bench. But Drew's a good player. I tell you, Nate Meier played his best game Saturday. So those two guys are coming on. They're really getting better. Drew has been coming on. All I have to say about Drew is him requesting to go over and line up against Scherff every play in spring ball and in camp. That tells you his mindset. He's a little goofy too, so that's a good thing.

Q. Did he hurt his elbow?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I can't remember when he did that, but he wears that brace, but he's fine. He's 100%.

Q. I know you don't care much for looking back and stacking up what you've done. But you're in the Top 10 as far as coaching wins and Big Ten history, and every other coach on that is legendary. Do you have a thought about that? Is that something you actually look at?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I've still got scar tissue from when I had 100. Going back to -- somebody brought up 2012 a little while ago. I think that was you, Rick. Anyway, I think that was the magic 100 up in East Lansing. I'm pretty sure. It's one of those days that is kind of stuck in my mind. That ball is in the bottom of that closet. Like Mr. Peabody's closet in my office, and it's way at the bottom, so, yeah.

When you get old and retire, you can sit around and take a look at it. Oh, yeah, remember this game and that game. All that stuff.

But right now, we better worry about Maryland.

Q. A chance to catch one of your former assistant mates, Barry Alvarez, with a win.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we'll see. Hope we get there this year.

Q. Louis Trinca-Pasat, what is the difference you've seen between last year and this year?

COACH FERENTZ: To me it's been a process. He's kind of like a poster child for the kind of guys we've had. He pretty much got beat up a couple years ago playing in there. As you know, a linebacker in high school.

But last year I thought he really played well. And Louis, everything he does, he's so -- he works so hard. He's a mentally tough guy. He's done so much for us last year playing well, and it's part of the reason those linebackers run around pretty well. But beyond that, just what he does on the practice field, weight room, all this stuff. That's why he's one of those captains. The way he does things really impacts his teammates, and it's been a great example for some of those younger guys.

Right now it's his senior year, and he should be playing his best if the formula's working. If he's on the right path. It's just good to see him out there having fun. He's really playing well.

Q. How is Darian Cooper doing with his rehab? Is he going to make the trip?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we haven't talked about that. Probably a discussion item for Thursday. But he's doing great. He's really got a great attitude, and he's got one of those little scooter deals. He's got that thing down pretty good. First guy we've had on one of those. It's just you feel bad for him not playing because he's such a good guy and such a positive guy. Excellent monopoly dealer too. He's a professional dealer for monopoly. Not many of those guys left anymore. Or banker.

Q. Pat Angerer announced his retirement today.

COACH FERENTZ: Just saw that this morning. Talk about great guys, and great football players. Talk about Louis Trinca-Pasat, same thing. Pat had one foot out the door. Going back to Mike's question, I don't know if I can do this. I'm hurt, all that stuff that makes it so hard. He obviously stayed on and became one of our best

leaders ever.

I just feel badly he couldn't stay healthy as a pro because he is a tremendous football player. Two years ago he came home on a Sunday night and I think he had picked off Manning the previous week. Was that last year? But late Sunday night or Monday night, you know, and I think he was on our sideline the next weekend. He had a bye week, I believe. So it's one thing you can say he did.

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