

October 27, 2009



An Interview With:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: We were thrilled to get the win the other night. That was a great defensive football game, went 58 minutes without a touchdown getting scored and each team scored in the last two minutes. An exciting football game. We were thrilled to get the victory.

On the flipside of it, we suffered some losses injury-wise and that's tough to deal with. Dace Richardson was injured early in the ballgame and then Adam Robinson had a significant ankle problem coming out of the game. Dace will be out four to six weeks before he can even get back to doing anything significant. I think it's safe to say we'll have him for the Bowl game. Adam Robinson could be the same situation. Probably something like what Tony Moeaki had and those are significant injuries.

Right now we just have to plan like they are not going to be with us and take that approach mentally. Our captains this week will be the same four guys, Pat Angerer, A.J. Edds on the defensive side, Tony Moeaki and Ricky Stanzi over on the offense. The same four guys will be leading us. We move on to Indiana now this week. It's another challenge for us. Indiana caught our attention, at least my attention. We were playing a night game somewhere when they played Michigan, and they played a very, very competitive, tough game there. It was a tough loss for them, and that got my attention, clearly, just watching them play that day. They really played a good football game. They had a couple losses but came back the last two weeks, beat Illinois and a heartbreaker last week against Northwestern in a great football game. They come in here as a team that we have a lot of respect for. The fact is they have beaten us two out of the last three ballgames so we have to be at our best and we certainly have our cause for

concerns on the home base here. We have a lot of work to do to get ready for Saturday's kickoff. That's the job that we have got this week. It will be great to be back home. We knew it was going to be a tough two-week segment the last two weeks. It was a tough month overall, games that we played this past month were all hard-fought, competitive ballgames and the flipside is now we have a month with three home games and we have to hope our fans will do their part and we have to do our part there, also. Nothing automatic there but that said, it's just nice to be being at home.

And the last thing, just special on this side, an announcement was made on Ronnie Lester's gift to the Carver-Hawkeye Project, which is fantastic but more outstanding is the fact that he recognized John Streif the way he did. All of the things that John does behind the scenes, hospital visits to countless people, this guy is just absolutely amazing. You know, just a very, very nice gesture on Ronnie's part and so deserved. And John, when you talk about a great Hawkeye, that's John Streif. It was great to hear about that. Just want to congratulate Ronnie on doing that. So I'll throw it out to questions.

Q. Do you have any more specifics on Adam Robinson?

COACH FERENTZ: As far as the bad ankle? That's a bad injury for a running back. I don't know. I mean, you guys saw him on crutches. It was the one that had the big ice bag on it. You need two ankles to run, I know that.

Q. Do you think he will the rest of the regular season, but be ready for a bowl game?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think a Bowl game is very realistic but I think the rest of the season, unless we can find some pixie dust, flip him around, if anybody's got any, we'll take it. Realistically, my experience is it's not going to

work out, so that's the way it goes. You'll have to move on.

Q. And Marques Simmons --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I can't even remember that far back. He had an ankle I guess, right? Yeah, Tony had one this year, and for any football player, it's a tough injury. You're better off having a broken bone sometimes. Not that that's a pleasant thought but it's just not a good deal.

Q. What about Greenwood and Colin Sandeman?

COACH FERENTZ: Brett Greenwood should be fine. He's a little sore right now but we expect him to be full speed. Colin is probably going to take the week to determine. I'm not overly optimistic right now. But he's fine. Everything has checked out fine. They examined him with CT scans and all that stuff. He's clear there. So that's all good news.

Q. He won't play then on Saturday?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see. We'll see what happens. He's not practicing today and tomorrow, so that's not a good thing.

Q. Pulled the redshirt off Mike Jones in game seven, in 03 I think it was, do you look at that? Do you look at all possibilities?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah, we are running out of bodies. In the backfield it's not a real crowded room right now. We are down two tailbacks, and so I mean, we are open to anything right now. It's just we don't have a lot of guys in the room. So it's not like we have got a lot of directions to turn right now.

Q. What are you going to do on the return game?

COACH FERENTZ: That's a good question. I was wondering that in the fourth quarter the other night. Thank God they didn't punt to us because we ran out of options there, too, so we'll figure something out on Saturday, but that's a big concern.

Q. Is Brandon Wegher ready to -- can you give him the ball 20, 25 times a game?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll find out. He's the next guy in. He's done a real nice job. I say that jokingly; I'm really impressed with him and based on the limited exposure we have had so far, my guess is he'll rise to the challenge. I think he's

that kind of football player - very tough-minded. That's just how it goes and that's one thing we have done well this year. We have weathered the bumps, if you will, and guys have stepped up and gotten the job done. That's probably as good a thing as we ever done this year. It's really been impressive and I think we will do the same this week.

Q. Are Brad Rogers and Josh Brown in the mix?

COACH FERENTZ: Everybody is in the mix. If they are out there they are in the mix right now. I would say Rogers is ahead of Brown right now.

Q. What about Jeff Brinson?

COACH FERENTZ: He's not -- I think that probably could be the rest of the season he'll be out, too.

Q. Nine games into a season, you would still take off a redshirt?

COACH FERENTZ: We traveled there last week, could not have foreseen that kind of complication, but we traveled him and told him he may be going in the ballgame so be ready. Probably because he's from Toledo, got four tickets to the game, so worked out perfectly.

But you know, if he's got to go in, he'll go in and do a good job. Really he's impressed us over the last eight weeks. He came in a little heavy and a little out of shape but that's not unusual for first-year players. He's really worked hard and he looks 100% better than did he two months ago, so I'm really impressed with his attitude and his work ethics.

Q. Why does your team seem so well-grounded and poised?

COACH FERENTZ: Because they know what we know. Our margin for error is really thin, and I think our players understand that. Thus far, at least, they really haven't seemed to be very affected by anything going on outside, which is really a good thing. And it's a tribute to our leadership. We are getting really good leadership, not just from our seniors but from our older guys, and I'll credit all of them for paying attention to last year's group because I thought last year's group did an outstanding job. We talked about that coming out of East Lansing a year ago 3-3, that

leadership we got from the older guys last year, I think it's been passed on to this team. So I'm really please about that, too.

Q. Would you say this team is fragile?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know that our team is fragile. We are just getting it done, but that's the bottom line. That's what you get measured on. You wonder how many cracks in the dike you can handle, one of those types of things. But the players keep playing. They are doing a great job. They can compete.

Q. How would you say the offensive line played after Richardson went out?

COACH FERENTZ: I thought they did fine. They did a good job, and was a good defensive football game. I thought both defenses, it's amazing how -- and I think I said this last week, I think the programs mirror each other a little bit. We are different but there are some similarities that make sense.

We play a different scheme, but what they do, they believe in, and there are so many parallels during the course of the game ironically or interestingly, goal line stands, big, huge parts of the ballgame both ways, and you know, you can question this or that but I thought it was just great defense on both goal line stands by both teams.

And so I guess where I'm getting to, the yards were tough to come by the other day, they really were but our tailback ended up with a 100 plus and he did a nice job, they ran well and our guys ran well up front and they certainly protected Rick in that last drive. Those guys brought some heat. They brought some pressure. They really rose to the occasion.

Q. Is that kind of the style or catalyst on the last drive?

COACH FERENTZ: I think everybody did a great job and was really working together and that's what it takes to get it done in a series like that. The line starts up front. If you don't protect, you are going to have some problems and Rick made great decisions. I thought he did throughout the game. Trey's play was a huge one, taking that ball and advancing it up the field like he did.

And right down to the end, you know, Marvin talking to Ken and saying, "I think I can beat this guy inside." And Ken came up with a great call. Everything worked just really well and those are the moments you remember.

Q. There was a lot of talking in the last huddle. Is there a filtering process? Just curious.

COACH FERENTZ: You talking about over in the sideline during the time out? Ultimately, Ken is going to make the call, but we have talked about this, and I've read some articles after I got home Saturday night. A chronic thing. We practice some democracy, not total democracy but it's a democracy. Player input is really big and players always give input and it's nice when it's accurate and these guys have done a good job all season long, in all phases.

We are getting a lot of good information from the guys. They are thinking football, they are studying football, and you know, winning teams have that kind of attitude, and this group's really been good.

Q. It's Marvin's first year on the field. When do you get to the point you trust what he's seen?

COACH FERENTZ: Think about how far he's come in a year's time, less than a year's time. It's amazing. It's a real credit to him. He's worked extremely hard and I wouldn't have envisioned, certainly that wouldn't have happened a year ago. It's a fun story there to see him come on like he has.

Q. What is it going to take to get the offense to focus as well as they did in the last minute the rest of the time?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, it's football. It's football and if Michigan State had not been quite so stingy defensively, we might have done better, but that was a good defensive football team we played the other night. You're going to have games where -- we go 58 minutes the other night with neither team getting in the end zone and both teams scored, take it right down the field and execute. So that's the ebb and flow of the game.

That's going to happen with -- nothing good is going to happen if you don't keep pressing and that's a credit to our players, they keep pressing.

Q. Do you feel superstitious during this winning streak?

COACH FERENTZ: Again, if there's one good thing, all that stuff, I've kind of gotten over that.

Q. Just looking at this week's game, what kind of challenges does Indiana present for your offense that's going to be moving the ball and not having an --

COACH FERENTZ: Our veteran guys match up on their veteran guys. We are a little more veteran at tackle right now and they have got two outstanding defensive ends and then they are very young inside and we are not -- you know, we are kind of running. Reiff, he's a five, six, seven-game veteran now, so Julian is working back from his injury, trying to get to back to where he was in January, and Reiff is playing good football for us, he's helping stabilize things. But they are very young on the inside and very experienced on the outside. Both guys were 52 -- excuse me, 57 and 91 it wore us out a few years ago in our stadium. We couldn't block them all day long. It's still kind of vivid in my mind right now. We need to be ready to go.

Q. Inaudible.

COACH FERENTZ: You know, we are better than we were two years ago and I think they probably are, too. Those guys have got two years of experience since that time but they are really playing well, so we couldn't match their tempo out there. So Brian was playing inside that year, I think he was injured in that game if I remember correctly. In fact, I'm sure he wasn't in the game, but, in fact, Dace was our left tackle in that ballgame and Kyle was on the right side.

So I mean, that was -- we got worn out. We did a little better job last year, so hopefully we can hold the line there.

Q. Do the backs have the same efficiency rating, same size? They are both jumpers.

COACH FERENTZ: He's done a nice job, really has. He made that commitment a year ago and I think it's paid off for him and they have some big guys, the running back and receiver. Fisher has moved over to the defensive side now but he's done a great job in the returning game so they are still taking advantage of his explosiveness. Their kick return team is just outstanding. It seems like they have been that way for a while. When Dickner (ph) was back there he had it going pretty good, too, and now they are doing the same thing right now.

Q. How do you keep your players as part of the team -- like Richardson?

COACH FERENTZ: It's hard. You can say things, you can do things, but the bottom line is, it's just a lousy feeling. Anybody misses time with injuries, it's not that they are not part of the team, but you have that feeling when you're that individual, like I'm removed from things.

So there's not much we can do. We try to keep the injured guys close, certainly. They missed time playing because of injuries, so I think at least the guys have gone down that road or are sensitive to it. They try to keep the guys spirits up. Tony had brought Dace a bag of fruit Sunday night, by the time I got over there. So they look out for each other and they do a good job over at their apartments and at their dorm and that type of thing. Too.

It's tough. It's a sad part about the game. It would be a great game if guys never got injured. It wouldn't be football I guess, but it would be a great game.

Q. James Hardy was there and it was like forever and ever; what does he bring and what can you tell about him?

COACH FERENTZ: He's not the same as No. 50 two weeks ago. He's very active. He used to be undersized. I won't call him undersized now. He's matured. He's a senior now. He's very active and he's got more than one trick in his bag of pass rushes, those types of things. He plays with a high motor, good effort, so gives you a chance. Good D-Linemen are guys that keep coming and keep working on you.

Q. Chris, Kyle?

COACH FERENTZ: They will move their guys around a little bit. They have done a little bit of that on third down. They will show up on both sides of the ball.

Q. Talk about it being a tough month, I don't think anybody would argue that, but how impressed have you been, I know it's been a theme, but just the last four games in October, the variety of ways in which this team has won.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we are not the most gifted team, and as far as I know, winning track meets and the Combine and that type of things. But the guys have played well and played together through tough situations, whether it be

injuries or other younger players stepping up and then through tough situations. We seem to find ourselves in those every now and then, like every Saturday.

But it doesn't seem to matter what the situation is. The guys, they stick together, they play hard and they finish the game. When you do that, you have a chance. There's no guarantees, but at least you give yourself a chance to have success and I think our guys understand that. And they played pretty clean football. We haven't done a lot to really just make it insurmountable and the chances insurmountable for us, and that's a big part of winning, especially the way we are not one of those Oklahoma teams from the 70s where they had six-deep at running back and all that kind of stuff. I remember growing up, some of those teams just had so much talent it was ridiculous.

We are not endowed that way but we have good players, I'm not complaining. I like our players a lot, but you know, it gets a little scary when you start dipping down a little bit.

Q. You talked about the craziness of the Michigan week and how on the road sometimes it's good just to get away. Now back at home for three of the four, what are the challenges of that?

COACH FERENTZ: That's a downside. It's easy to find us now.

But, we just have to be proactive and try to keep everybody filtered a little bit and just be smart about what we do, don't do, that type of thing. If we continue to win, I can tell from your experience, it creates more chaos. We went through that in 2002, so that's the downside of winning, but if that's the downside we'll hopefully have to deal with it, we'll see.

Q. Is it possible to be a starter, on any football team, at any level, and not be athletic or an athlete?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. It's not a great thing, but yeah, I think to be an athlete -- you've got to be an athlete. You are not going to find me on a good team, a guy like me.

But there's levels of, and I think that's like, you know, you get back in the speed. There's football speed and then there's speed-speed. You always would rather have a guy that has good football speed. And there's so much that goes involved with that. Instinct is part of it. I think that's maybe not the best word because I think how you react to situations, you can really improve

that ability as a player if you put yourself in those situations and study film and give yourself an edge.

I think all of our -- I've read articles written from some of the guys that have really played well and come through here, Shawn Cumson (ph) comes to mind. The old are guys learned maybe how to neutralize some things so you're playing one of those guys from, the first round draft picks from Michigan, the receivers that they have had. You learn to neutralize some of the advantages that they have physically. Smart players will do that. They will try to get the edge that way and experience, those are important things and usually something that younger players have to learn.

Q. I've read a lot nationally about how unathletic this Iowa team is. Would you agree with that?

COACH FERENTZ: By relative to some people, we are, but we have had had a couple players go on and play okay after they came through here. We have had our share of guys. We just don't have -- it takes longer for our guys to get to that level typically. We don't have a lot of guys walk in here out of high school that are ready to go. Our guys tend to get there, it takes a little longer, but we have had some guys make it, certainly.

Q. You guys are No. 1 in the computers and the humans are ranking you behind everybody. What do you make of the lack of respect?

COACH FERENTZ: Computers have not seen us play. If they had eyes and could see us play, they would say, are you kidding me?

The idea is to be there at the end. Like the other night, we were still standing after the whistle went off and took it right down to the last two seconds. If you can make it to the end and be standing, that's the idea. That's all we are really worried about. I don't understand any of that stuff. I swear to God, it seems like the last two or three years this has all become -- they have been talking about the formulas and reshaping them and all that. And like two years ago, as you might well imagine, I might care less about what was going on way at the top. But last year we were trying to win every game and we are in the same mode right now.

So, yeah, if we end up getting the short

end -- I think Auburn is the only one that really had a real legitimate argument.

Q. Does it show the balance, how close the games are, you beat Michigan State --

COACH FERENTZ: We scratched out a couple of wins against good teams through the years and I'm talking about through the years. The only thing would I say there, I think there's some legitimacy, some perceptions that are out there but I think perceptions really get the percentage of. You get this perception out there that, boy, this is that much better than this.

I think if you really study things, it's probably -- the gap is a little bit narrower than the perception might be. That's really the only observation that I would make. And I guess just the general statement I would make, yeah. I think sometimes perception is really -- once people get on a bandwagon, it just blows out of there, and I think usually the cap is a little bit more narrow than what people give it credit for.

Q. You hear a lot of talk, Indiana runs the pistol off, in layman's terms, what is that?

COACH FERENTZ: Best way I would say, I guess it was invented in Nevada, I played Friday nights a lot and we were up in the hotel usually killing a little time. It's kind of a combination of these shotgun offenses with the downhill running attack; I guess that's probably best way to state it.

But you know, the soup of the day right now is everybody in the gun with backs parallel to the quarterback and this gives you a chance for the running back to be running downhill towards the line yet still you have a shotgun snap so you kind of pleases everybody by doing that I guess. I don't know.

It's really got some good concepts to it. It poses a challenge. I'm making light of it, but it's a good concept.

Q. Wildcat?

COACH FERENTZ: That's kind of become a generic term, too. They have that element in there for the quarterback, conventional quarterback is not the quarterback. Yeah, we have got plenty to prepare for this week.

Q. You mentioned the margin of error is big, do you talk about that with your guys?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we have been living it. We have been living it for eight weeks for the most part. We have tangible examples each

and every week. We have been in tough, tough ballgames and it gets back to the point earlier, just about perceptions and all that. To me, whatever we are ranked right now, the difference between us and a team that might be ranked 20th is probably pretty slim at this time of year.

Again, just the experience, I don't get too hyped up about the ranking. Like I told you last week about the BCS standings but if you look at the Top-10 from last year at this time, a lot of changes out there.

And again, you look around college football, I got home after the trip this weekend, I can't just go right to bed. So I killed a little bit of ice cream and threw the TV on and Florida and Mississippi State are 13-13 in the third quarter. I know Mississippi State has got a new coach, and I don't think the other guy left by his choice, one of those deals. So you have to think Florida has probably got a little better personnel right now. You're looking at a very competitive ballgame there.

If you just look at the Texas Tech, Texas A&M, Kansas State triangle from the last couple of weeks; so anybody to try to predict what's going to happen in a college football game, good luck. Just look at that little triangle there. You would have been just a totally out of it to say this is a guaranteed win.

The other interesting part, coming in yesterday, I guess it was, I'm listening to the radio -- or no, maybe it was after the game Saturday. And everybody is already looking ahead here a couple of weeks and we have two teams coming in this week and next week that were 1 and 2 the last three years. Those are realities. It's easy to start looking here and there, but we had better worry about what's going on this week because we have got our hands full.

Q. Last week, Jasper Howard, is that a difficult situation for a coaching staff?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's a situation everybody would hope they never have to deal with. I went to Connecticut. We were talking in the office last week. If you've ever been there, you would think, and I read afterwards, read or heard, I guess the reason he went to school there was he wanted to get out of south Florida. He wanted to be in a safe environment.

So it's just, No. 1, it's the reality of the way we live today. Nobody is safe anywhere. It's just

unfortunate. Maybe it's always been that way, but I think right now sometimes the way some people, the regard for life maybe is not what it should be or ought to be. That's sobering. It's so, so unfortunate. You know, there's a real human side to what we do and it doesn't get any harder than that one. It's really tragic.

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