

**February 1, 2012**



An interview with:

## **COACH FERENTZ**

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome. It's always a really good day. Certainly a day when everybody's happy and has a lot to celebrate. First of all, just start with my staff. Thought they did a great job throughout the process. This process is more of a year round process.

Last January kind of kicked off this year's recruiting officially before we had finished last year's class. So it's a long process, and certainly evaluation is a key part of things. Then beyond that is the actual recruitment of the prospects. So a lot of work goes into it, and I just think the staff did a great job.

Certainly, want to give the players thanks and appreciation. They did a wonderful job hosting our prospects feel comfortable; the prospects and their families. Our support staff does a wonderful job giving a lot of their free time to come in and help us in the recruiting process. Certainly our faculty and academic advisors come in and spend time as well, all of those people pitch in, so there is a lot of team work involved in the recruitment of players and we appreciate that.

Really pleased with the class overall. We certainly felt like we had some needs to meet and tried to address, and I think we did a good job with that. I think overall the entire class, all 24 guys signed right now, we feel really good about them having a role in the future with us, most importantly, I think they're good fits with our program. I think that is the number one thing that we look for.

One other thing really quickly. Signing day is always a happy day, and it's certainly a happy day for the prospects and their families. To me, it's a real celebration of having a good high school career. And all the careers are different just like each and every one of the signees is different, but nonetheless, it's a great celebration.

I've always thought that scholarships are earned. Nobody gives scholarships out. They're earned. It's the result of a player doing a great job during his high school career, and also getting a lot of support from family members. Support from people, teachers, coaches, things like that. It's a really special day for everybody involved that way.

Obviously, it's a turning of the page as well. End of their high school football careers, if you will, and the start of the next step. I think that's going to be the most important step.

And we encourage our prospects to enjoy the rest of their senior year. Certainly a lot of times we all kind of wish our lives away to get to that, and I don't think they should do that in high school. So we encourage them to enjoy the rest of their high school experience, and when it's time to start with us, we'll look forward to that as well.

We're just hopeful that they'll do as good a job with the University of Iowa as they did in their high school careers. That's really what this is all about.

It's a happy day. We're looking forward to the months and years ahead once the other players transition into the program with us. With that, I'll throw it out to questions.

**Q. Can you talk about the two quarterbacks and what you see for them this fall?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think in Cody's case, it's a little bit like recruiting Brad Banks. We weren't intentionally looking for a junior college player at that position, necessarily. But we did screen as many quarterbacks as we could.

We really felt good about Cody as a football player. Research led us to find out he has some roots in Iowa. He was born here. Moved out of here in elementary school, but his mom grew up here and he has a lot of family members back here, so it was a good fit that way.

One thing that was critical to us, we were

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hoping he would be hopeful to red shirting next year, if he is. That doesn't mean he will. He'll compete just like James and Jake and John. But that was part of the understanding. We wanted to make sure he was open to that. He was. I think he's looking at the big picture as well. So that worked out beautifully.

C.J. is a little different story. He kind of happened late. Just a matter of sometimes when there are staff changes, fits aren't as comfortable as they maybe were at one point. We benefited quite frankly from the staff change in that case. Things happen pretty quick.

Ken O'Keefe went down and spent the day with C.J., and was really impressed with his football intellect, just his way of answering questions on the board and that type of thing.

We already knew he was a tremendous player, and he turns out to be a tremendous young man. He came up this weekend, and fortunately he and his dad were really comfortable with what they saw in the program, and school and community, and it worked out really well.

So we didn't necessarily start out looking for two quarterbacks, but that's the way it ended up. I think as a result of that, we'll be in pretty good shape at that position for a while. That is certainly important on any football team.

**Q. Could you give us a thumbnail sketch of Greg Garmon?**

COACH FERENTZ: Greg's very talented. He's an explosive running back, really elusive. Many of you are familiar with his history, his life history. He's been through some trials and tribulations health-wise, and otherwise. He's weathered those things in tremendous fashion.

He's got a tremendous demeanor and outlook and attitude. He's a very positive young man, very talented young man. We're fortunate, I think that we haven't had much luck in the state of Pennsylvania overall, but Erie, Pennsylvania has been really good to us. We are thrilled to get him on the team.

He's playing in his eighth All-Star Game today. He's got a game at 6:00 tonight, as I understand it. So he's certainly a champion playing in All-Star Games. But just a delightful young guy, and the other three players that we've had from Erie, that would be fantastic. So we'll keep our fingers crossed.

We're really excited about getting Greg here and looking forward to getting him on the team.

**Q. How realistic would it be for him or Barkley Hill to be a starter by the time you start the Big Ten season?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think anything's possible. We're equally as excited about getting Barkley. Barkley's a guy that we think is a tremendous young person. Outstanding football player. Had a tremendous career up at Cedar Falls on a successful team.

That was one of the obvious positions of need for us. We really thought it was critical to the point where we were considering signing three running backs, and we gave that thought. Once we had commitments from Greg and Barkley, we felt comfortable moving forward with those two guys.

And Jason White's decided to come back to our team, so that gives us a little help there too, rather than graduating. So I think the combination of those two guys plus what we have on campus, we feel pretty good about that.

We told Barkley and Greg we're going to let them compete. And that's true of every guy that we've signed.

**Q. When Barkley initially committed to Iowa State and then changed his mind?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's probably a good question for Barkley and his family. But we continued to recruit him respectfully, if you will. Just kept the line in the water. Came back and visited with him on occasion. Not frequent, but on occasion. I think over a period of time, maybe he just felt -- I don't want to speak for him -- but maybe he felt this style of offense might be better suited for him. I think that's probably as big a factor as anything.

But I'd let him answer that. We're just thrilled that he chose to come here. We're very excited about that.

**Q. Based on the attrition you've had on the defensive line this year with graduates and before, how realistic is it that one or more of your recruits could see playing time or compete for a starting position this year?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think playing time is realistic. Starting hopefully won't be the case. I

think that's a tough challenge on either side of the ball up front. But that, you know, clearly is a big concern for us. We had three seniors a year ago go to the NFL, and all three of those guys did really well as rookies.

Five seniors on this year's ballclub, so you lose eight quality players. It's a little bit like we went through with the offensive line in '08, '09. You lose eight quality players in a two-year span, that really leaves you a little thin in terms of experience.

I think it's really paramount the guys on campus have the best chance to develop into starters for us, and that's going to be a real focal point. We can talk more about that next week moving forward. That's going to be really critical.

Right now we have four guys that are defensive line guys. Two of them are a little bigger and more developed than the other two. But I think all four have great upside. And I think the two bigger guys, certainly Jaleel and Faith have a better opportunity to come in and contribute next year because of physical maturity. But I think all four guys are guys that we're excited about. You know, it's going to be fun to see how that develops.

**Q. You had some success in Chicago this year getting those guys, Faith and Jaleel. How big of a role did a guy like Maurice Fleming have in helping you guys recruit?**

COACH FERENTZ: Maurice, as you probably well know is a really charismatic young guy. He's got a really special personality to him. If you meet his mom and his grandmother, you get a little clue and insight in terms of where that comes from.

We were very impressed with Maurice. He came to one of our one-day camps back in June, and he won all of us over that way, offense and defense. Then we got to know Maurice, and it was even more we felt better about everything. It was really exciting for us. That's important.

A nice sidebar or a nice benefit we enjoyed is that Maurice is pretty active, and players seem to know players. He was really active on the recruiting front. He's got a great personality. He's pretty persuasive. I don't think there's any question he helped us a little bit with some of the other guys and we appreciate that.

**Q. You have two junior college guys, and you seem to have developed a relationship**

**with Iowa Western, can you talk about how beneficial that is to have that here in Iowa?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it worked out well. Last time we all visited, I thought it was a 50-50 shot on Reilly. I really thought there was more than, you know, probably an even chance that he was going to stay in college so we weren't sure where that was going to go and what was going to happen.

He made a decision, and I don't think he could have made a bad one, quite frankly. He was in good shape either way. So he made a decision, and it just so happens that Eric Simmons was a guy we knew a little about from a year ago. He was an excellent student, a presidential scholar out of Madrid, and went to Western.

He had a little bit of an association, talk about connections. He and Austin Blake knew each other a little bit through their high school days.

So we talked to Eric about coming in and starting school in January. He was excited about that opportunity. From all reports right now he's off to a really good start. We're two weeks into this thing right now, so we're just really happy to get him. It's nice to have that option available to us. So we're really excited about having him join.

**Q. We haven't had a chance to speak with you in person since Marcus Coker left. I wondered if you could tell us your thoughts on that whole situation?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, obviously, he's left school. We wish him all the best. Again, I said it before and I'll say it again, I think Marcus is a tremendous young guy. We wish him all the best moving forward. Anything else we'll be happy to talk about that next week.

**Q. What about Nate? You've got offense, defense?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he's an interesting guy. If you've seen him on tape or seen him play, he's really an interesting guy. It's eight-man football, and I think Chad was nine-man football, Chad Greenway, I'm not suggesting they're the same player, but they are a little bit the same in that they play both ways. Really are dominant players and guys that watch the film.

The thing that jumped out at you is they really enjoyed playing. That was pretty evident. He really competed. I was a little confused there

for a minute, you know. He was running the ball to the right, and everybody stopped. I was trying to figure out what the heck happened because the white line was over there.

It's a smaller field, and it took me a while to figure that out. But he's a really high energy guy. He's a guy that I think has a chance to play a couple different positions for us. I think he'd like to start at running back. We'll put him there and see what happens and kind of go from there.

**Q. You signed the sons of a couple of former Hawkeyes. Talk about Keppy and Kittle.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it just kind of worked out that way. Myron was here back, gosh, in the mid '80s, I guess it would have been, and came from Durant. Hometown of Jon Roehlk. Had a nice career here. We got on Mitch a little bit. Picked him up on the radar screen from the wrestling, first and foremost.

I think we were one of his first offers last spring. He came out to spring ball one day with his dad, and just really impressed us. Obviously, his tape impressed us. So we're really thrilled about him. And with George Kittle. You know, Bruce played here. I didn't hold that against him.

Bruce, his wife is a much better athlete. Jan was an All-American basketball player, and I think held records at Drake. She and her sister beat up on Bruce and I in 1983-84. They beat the crap out of us.

That was the deciding factor. I think George is a guy that's really, if you watch his tape he's an in between player, not sure what positions he's going to play. But I certainly like his competitiveness. He's an intelligent young guy, and again, that comes from his mom.

We think he's a guy that has a chance in our program to blossom and develop. So we're really excited. He's got good ball skills. He's about 6'4", 205, and might be a tight end, outside linebacker.

We're not sure where he's going to fit, but we think he's a good football player and we're really happy to get him. And I know playing here is important to him. That certainly counts, too.

**Q. Talk about the recruiting rankings?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I just predict if you come back 10 years from now, it's probably the same. Lot of those schools in the preseason are Top 10 for next fall too. So, I don't really pay

too close attention. Not amused, but entertained is a better choice of words.

I got the back up on ESPNU, and it's amazing. It's really becoming to look like draft coverage in some ways, and there are a lot of similarities. To me, the NFL draft is a celebration of what a player did in college, and today all the TV coverage is really of what players have done in high school.

So those are neat things, neat to report and all that. Just like our guys that are moving on. They're going up for the NFL draft. But wherever they end up, he's got work to do when he gets there. And if he plays that way, I'm sure he'll play very, very well, and it will be easy to convey that to the people that come in and ask about him.

Those are the kind of reports and feedback we got from the players, coaches, support staff that we visited with that we recruited. All we can do is try to project what you think a player's going to do once they get to your school and into your program. We tried to do an intelligent job of that.

So as far as the rankings go, they really don't mean a lot at this point. I think what's really important is where the players are in their last two, three years of their career. I think that's really what's paramount and are they on track to get their degrees. They are on track to have the kind of careers they hope to have when they get there.

After the celebration's over, I think it's really important at some point that really the focus is on all the hard work that has to go into earning their degree at a Big Ten school, playing high level competition and competing successfully. That gets left out of the equation a lot, you know? And that's okay. Today's a day of celebration, but at some point that's what you have to move on to.

**Q. How active was LeVar?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's active. He's in learning. Once we had an opening whatever day that was, Monday, Tuesday, he was full speed. I'm laughing because I think he missed the plane by three or four minutes out on the west coast, and ended up in Chicago at 5:30 the next morning. He was on a couple of goose chases. It was a way for him to break in. Welcome to recruiting and welcome to coaching.

**Q. Would it be presumptuous . . . ?**

COACH FERENTZ: Nothing's official right now. But he got his feet wet, for sure. When I

talked to Bruce Kittle last night and this is Bruce's first year as a full-time college coach. It's about a good way to sum it up, so don't worry about the past because it will probably be more of the same.

**Q. Does Conner come in as your No. 1 punter?**

COACH FERENTZ: John Wienke and Jonny Mullings competed for that position. Both guys made improvement during the fall. So we'll go through 15 days, and somebody's going to come out number one. And I think Conner's going to have a chance to come in, and compete. So we're all for it. It's whatever's best. That's what it comes down to. But he'll have an opportunity to compete in camp.

**Q. If I'm not mistaken you are offering four-year scholarships?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I'm not sure. I think they received it. I'm not sure. All I know is we have guys that four or five years, and our goal is for them to graduate and have a great career. So the \$2,000 legislation won't be important. It won't matter to our commitments. These guys -- they want to be here. This is not a one-year trial or anything like that.

**Q. So logistically it didn't change anything?**

COACH FERENTZ: I didn't give it any thought, quite frankly. I'm not sure about the rules. It doesn't really matter.

**Q. How many walk-ons do you think you'll take?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'd like to get our roster to 115, 118, somewhere in that ballpark. We'll know more after we get through spring practice to see who sticks with the team, who doesn't. We just had a freshman walk-on lineman retire a couple weeks ago. So those things happen. Hopefully we'll end up around 118, typically.

**Q. Did any recruits express concern that you haven't named a defensive coordinator yet?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think one name came up this past week and maybe one other time. But I don't think it's a big deal. What I told people is we've been here 13 years. We've been really fortunate. One thing I've always appreciated about

coaching here, and I coached here in the '80s, the first guy to leave, Coach Fry was able to bring great coaches in, and we haven't lost many guys since I've been here.

We've had two retire. One at 68, one at 70, but that's going to happen. Couple guys go to the NFL. So you know, guys move around on occasion.

One thing I've always known is we're always going to have good people here and good coaches. So I'm not worried about that, and I think our recruits understood that as well. It really wasn't a big factor. At least it didn't seem to be. There is no way for me to measure that. Maybe they weren't bringing it up, but it didn't seem to be a big issue.

**Q. Coach, this offensive line, is there potential for anybody else to come aboard?**

COACH FERENTZ: We have the potential. We still are waiting on one prospect to make a decision. We'll wait to see what happens there.

**Q. What plans do you have for the Super Bowl? What kind of emotions will it be for you having your son going?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm hoping to be there. Like the fools that we are, we'll be here working on Sunday, hosting another junior day. But when that's completed, I'll be on my way to Indianapolis. Hopefully I'll get there for kickoff and go as a fan and go as a dad. So it's going to be a lot of fun.

**Q. I know you guys continue to recruit. You have to recruit to the finish line. Has it become more difficult? Is it a little bit more combat, I guess, for lack of a better term, as it gets closer to signing day?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's been kind of crazy the last couple years. I think, I don't know if this is any different, but it's just kind of the nature of recruiting. It's interesting. Some of the other schools that were scrambling around a little bit at the end too. Nobody's immune to it.

So it's an interesting process. I'm still a huge believer that early signing would be a good thing for everybody. Again, it wouldn't be mandatory but a voluntary exercise all the way. But I think it would be helpful for the recruits that don't want the attention and all that stuff.

But it doesn't seem to be gaining much traction, so I'm not worried about that too much. But that's in some ways recruiting is a lot saner than it was, but in a lot of ways, it's interesting.

**Q. When something comes up in recruiting and got a little crazy towards the end, do you guys just go in there with the mode of we've got to get back there? We've got to get in there?**

COACH FERENTZ: You just try to reassure people. You never know what kind of smoke screens are being thrown around, and that's part of the game. So it happens. You just try to address the things that might be getting thrown out there and try to take them head on. That's all you can do.

Sometimes you have to use your imagination. After a while it becomes clear what other folks are saying. It's not like it takes Dick Tracy to figure it out. You just try to address it and be proactive.

**Q. Do you get concerned when you have to add a component to say something that may have never been said publicly. But now with social media it gets out there, and you bring the component of fans into it who are reacting to that prospect?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm probably not as in tuned to some of that. The staff kind of keeps me abreast of some of that stuff. That's like our own players. We really try to encourage our players and people involved in recruiting not to get on there. But it's like a moth to a flame a lot of times. Yeah, it's an interesting phenomena, interesting phenomena.

**Q. When did you start looking at Ott from Nebraska?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, Reese gets in his car and starts driving around. Somewhere between here and there, he stops somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, I think. Who knows what state he'll be in. His car dealer deserves combat pay, because Reese puts a lot of miles on his car.

But Reese got on to Drew kind of early, I guess, and we encouraged Drew to come over. Quite frankly, he was in one of our one-day camps and pretty much struggled. We were totally unfair.

He's an outside guy and played tight end and is really a good athlete. We asked him to be a

defensive lineman for a day in camp, and that wasn't very much fun for him and that wasn't fair.

But we just kind of went with what we believed in and saw him do in high school film. He was really comfortable playing there, and he's a good basketball player. A quality young guy from a quality family. So we really felt good about the whole package. Take that one day of camp and throw it out.

We think he's got a real high upside. We're really excited about him. He's got some growth to make in the years ahead, as does Daumantas. But if you watch those guys and really do some work on them, they're the guys that we think have great upside.

You go back and look at a guy like Karl Klug who came in under 210, Bryan Mattison and Ken Iwebema, came in at 218 when they were freshmen. All three of those guys played really well for us.

So I think both Drew and Daumantas kind of fit that profile, if you will. They're not going to be out there next year playing, probably. You never know, but I think if they got that right attitude and work ethic that we think they have, I think they've got a chance to grow into the kind of players that we're used to playing with.

**Q. Were you guys regional this year in recruiting or positional as far as coaches?**

COACH FERENTZ: Both. We did both. I think we have to do that. You try to make sure players are really familiar with everybody on the staff. I only get one crack at a home visit, so I think if position coaches get involved, too, that helps.

You try to do every little thing you can. It helps us get to know the players and the prospects a little bit better.

**Q. Is that staying the same future?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's what works for us.

**Q. Did the Aaron Curry recruit, did that get awkward with Rick moving to Nebraska?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think so. I mean to me it became clear in my opinion after December passed, it was time for us to move on for the most part. That's kind of how I saw it. You know, that's recruiting. You just keep moving and worry about the ones you get. There's a lot we don't get.

**Q. The defensive coordinator thing, did you get them or not, the kids?**

COACH FERENTZ: Somebody else threw it out there probably at some point. But maybe it was. I think we got both of them, come to think of it. The most recent was Sean Draper, that was one more question. As you get closer to signing, you'd be amazed, really sometimes it's a fair question. It was easy to answer.

**Q. How'd you answer it?**

COACH FERENTZ: It will be fine. We're going to be fine.

**Q. Do you have any home visit story this is year?**

COACH FERENTZ: Some really good meals, again. You know me. Well, unbelievable. Just what I needed.

**Q. Number 3 son, what is his attitude?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's looking around here. He's looking pretty hard at Iowa, as you might imagine. If that ends up being what he does, that's great. You know, we'll support him, whatever he chooses to do.

**Q. Is it hard not to get too wrapped up in recruits the day before signing period it comes between you and someone else and then they choose someone else? Is that a hard process to get through?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's a lot harder on the prospects, not that it's not hard on us. One thing I try to explain to recruits at the front end is usually -- not for all, but for a lot of them -- what's hard is telling adults that have treated them well, and you develop relationships with people and talk to them a lot, to tell them, no, you're not coming to their school. That's hard.

But do the math. Just to the last point. If a guy can take five visits, you've got an 80% failure rate there. So it's hard for prospects to understand that. We do this every year. We know the rules and how it's going to be. You can only make one school happy.

Football's all about team work and doing the best for the team. But in recruiting, it's the one time a football player has to do what's best for them. They have to get down to what's going to make them happy. For us to pretend like we know, that's being presumptuous.

Figuring out for themselves, relying on their families and their support networks to determine what it is that's going to make them happy as they move forward. Ultimately, they've got to do what's best for them. I get that.

I didn't get that so well in the early '80s. But after you do this for a while, you kind of develop a little understanding that you're not going to win them all.

It's kind of like coaching games. It would be wonderful to win them all, but it probably won't happen. If you can't live with the hard part about this whole stuff, you probably ought to do something else, because it's part of the job. It's really hard on prospects at times. Really hard on them as you can imagine.

**Q. With Marvin leaving and you picking up a couple wide receivers, is it one or more?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'll let all those guys compete. That's a position right now where, we have a lot of positions, and I'll talk more about this next week. Just in general we're a really young team right now moving forward. I don't think we have a lot of returning All-Americans or all Big Ten guys. So for me it's open season where everybody's going to compete and work hard. I think it's exciting.

We told every guy in the selection, if they can come in and help us, we're all for it. That's kind of where we are right now. So I think the players are excited about that. But to the point I made earlier, there is a lot of hard work that goes with that too. If you want to get out on the field next September, you have to really work hard. That's what it takes.

You look at guys like Moeaki and Bulaga, guys that came in and played as freshmen. Look at the work they did before they got here and once they got here. That's really what it takes. But we've got a really open mind to where we're heading here.

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