

**November 12, 2007**



An interview with:

## **COACH KIRK FERENTZ**

**COACH KIRK FERENTZ:** On the injury front here, it looks like the one injury from Saturday, Jacody Coleman, I think he's really down. We don't expect him to play this week. And the two guys that have been out, Adam Shada and -- oh, who else -- I'm leaving somebody else out, Chad Geary. Chad Geary, we're waiting to see on those guys. Both of them ran a little bit Sunday, and I think Adam has probably got the most ground to cover.

Chad, it's just a matter of -- he's been cleared; it's a matter of whether or not he can play his position effectively. So we'll have to see what happens. But those two guys have a chance, and I expect everybody else to be back. And Pat Angerer was a surprise. I thought he was out last week and I guess he was the Humpal of last week; he ended up being okay and playing and it looks like he's out of the woods and that's good news certainly.

Captains this week, we'll go with the same four guys: Bush and Albert offensively and Bryan Mattison and Mike Humpal on the defensive side. Those guys have done a great job.

Just a couple words about last week. Obviously we're thrilled to get the win, thrilled to finish up 4-4 in the Big Ten, and it was great, also, to get another victory, and that's been significant for us and we're really happy about that.

Moving forward to this week, I think we've got an excellent challenge in front of us, a tough challenge. You look at Western Michigan, it seems to be a recurring theme this year. A lot of teams that we've played have a lot of guys back, and they returned 17 guys that started last year, an excellent football team last year. This year, I'm

sure they are not pleased with their record, but if you look at it pretty closely, I think they have lost to teams that are ranked pretty high. I looked at the rankings but I guess West Virginia and Missouri are way up there and I believe they lost to Indiana by ten points. That's a team that beat us pretty handily.

So those are three of the losses, three of the other losses they have had by a total of eight points total. I think these guys are better than their record certainly indicates, and if you watch them, they are playing hard and playing well and have a lot of outstanding performers. We're going to have some challenges on both sides of the football.

So that's what we're looking at there. In regards to them coming in here, I don't think it's anything they will be intimidated by certainly. They finished up last year, eight-point loss at Florida State and that's a tough environment and one on the road at Virginia, as well. So they are used to that. They have played on the road in some BCS Conference stadiums this year, so I don't think it's going to be a huge factor. It's going to come down to the two teams playing, and that's our job is to try to make sure we get ready for this challenge.

The last thing, our fans have been great all year long. We are extremely appreciative of that. Have been on the road and certainly been at home; the crowds have been great. They have been enthusiastic. You know, it would be great this weekend to see the streak stay alive; so I'll put a plea out for that one if people want to respond to that.

I think more importantly, it's our seniors' last game at home and these guys have done a fantastic job, not only this year, but their entire careers, and most importantly, this is a very big football game for our football team. So, you know, we are hopeful and confident that our fans will turn out and be enthusiastic, and we will realize they have to give them something to be enthusiastic about and we are working on that right now.

Overall we know it's going to be an exciting game and we know we have a lot of work to do to get ready.

**Q. What is it about those four guys that they have been captains for most of the season?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: It seems like it's been pretty steady now, Damian Sims has been involved, also, and Klinkenberg, and I think Tom has really emerged and he's a guy that everybody respects. And Mike obviously missed some time with injuries.

You look at the whole senior class, they have done a great job. Certainly these four guys have been there week-in and week-out and played a prominent role, not only offensively but you look at guys like Humpal and Bush, you know, they both play significantly on special teams, as well. They have just done a great job. It's no big surprise that these guys have done an outstanding job of giving us great leadership.

**Q. How much can you point to the senior class for sort of keeping the season afloat and making the charge that they have?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: One thing that's been constant, I've said this repeatedly, it's just the attitude of the football team and it starts with the guys at the front. It didn't just start in August. They really accepted the challenge, I think, back in December. Our seniors from last year, as well, they did the same thing.

No, these guys took it over in January and they have been constant all the way through. Couldn't ask for much more out of them in terms of what they are doing on the field, and more importantly, the intangibles. They are the guys that provide leadership and provide an example for younger players. We have a lot of younger guys on the team and a lot of younger guys in prominent roles. The older guys are showing the way and doing a great job through thick and thin. It's easy to do it when things are going well; everybody is a good winner. But when the road gets a little bumpy, that's really when you find out who is who and what's what. These guys have been great all the way through.

**Q. That bumpy road last year, what's different about this year and how you were able to turn it?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know, maybe we worked a little more proactively, just in

terms of keeping everybody aware of what we need to be doing, starting, again, back in January.

But you know, that's part of my responsibility. Last year, we didn't do a good enough job of that, and I think we paid for it during the course of the season. And this year we tried to be more proactive, and maybe that's paid off. But it still really gets down to the players doing it, and I think that's what they have done.

In a lot of ways if you look at this team, it's a mix between the 2000-2001 group and the seniors you could probably say the same about them. You look back at some of the guys, we had Kevin Casper on campus last weekend, and just some of the guys that played back in time, I think there are a lot of parallels here.

**Q. The possibility of a Bowl game – is that not a motivation, or will human nature take over a little bit in helping get up for a team?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I think certainly, to think that we can go to a Bowl with six wins, I think that would be short-sighted. That will serve as motivation for a lot of people, I'm sure.

More importantly, I think we have an opportunity to finish this year on a real positive note. And to me, that requires playing our best this weekend and that's going to be imperative.

I think most fundamental of all things right now, I'm looking at this as an even game going into it, and I think what we really need to do is realize we can improve in a lot of areas. Obviously we can on offense but there are things we can do better in all three areas right now, we've got three days right now to try to address those things and see if we can't improve, and that's the attitude we need to take right now.

You know, if we're going to expect to win this week, that's what we are going to have to do, because Western has had a little extra time to get ready for us, and I'm sure they are going to come in here confident. They look at tape, too. I don't think they are looking at us like we are the Green Bay Packers or the New England Patriots or the Cowboys, the teams that are winning. We are not putting fear in anybody's heart, I'm sure so we need to worry about playing better and giving it our best.

**Q. How confident are you, I know you don't want to get ahead of yourself, but the Hawkeyes travel well, are you confident --**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: All I know is we can end up with seven. But what we have to do this week to get that done, that's the best we can do, and that's all we can worry about. After that, things will play themselves out. So all we can worry about right now is doing our best and hopefully coming up with seven. If we come up with six, it's going to be disappointing Saturday and it will be disappointing with the ramifications, too.

So, you want to look at it short-term, long-term, that's just the way it goes. The Bowl stuff works itself out like it always has. And what we need to do right now is worry about doing the best we can do and that's hopefully finishing up with seven.

**Q. Your secondary, had them pretty well covered, didn't they?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I thought those guys played well as a unit overall. How do I want to say this -- you know, it was a game where the players were allowed to play a little more freely and aggressively. That was good to see.

I thought our guys played aggressively and really did a good job. For the most part we played pretty good defense and that was a real positive.

**Q. Kind of toward that, with Shada having a chance to get healthy, we've gone through this maybe way back when when guys got hurt, do they have a free ride back to their spot? I can't remember.**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Every situation is independent, you know, but that ought to be a great problem to have and hope we have to make it this week. And it would really be a good thing, and to follow up on your observation, Chaney has played well and he's done a nice job. We thought Adam was playing pretty well until his injury. If we get into a situation where we have three guys that are capable of starting, that would be a great problem to have. I guess we came close to that with Johnson at backup, that's probably about the closest. Maybe something's happened since then but probably the best one I could give you. That's a healthy situation, pardon the pun, but hopefully we can get there.

**Q. Going back five or six weeks to where this team was, were you doubtful or optimistic it would get to the point it is right now?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: You know, I tend to be optimistic about everything if the signs

are right. But that being said, we've won four out of five, I believe. So to put a number on it, a tangible number, I don't do that in my mind.

As you've seen, I guess it goes back to the question about this week, and how we're going to approach this thing. All we have to do is look at the last five weeks, and there is nothing that's come easy for us. I mean, if it has, I can't remember, other than, again, our butts kicked over at Purdue, that came pretty easy for them.

But, you know, anything good we've had happen, you know, we've really had to work for it and earn it. And even if it looked like maybe, boy, this is the week it did end up being that way, we saw that last Saturday -- that's just the way it is right now. As I say, all of us in our camp, we have to understand that, and we have to appreciate that.

You know, if we can get through this one, you know, we ought to feel pretty good about what we've done. And you know, even if we don't get through it, we can feel kind of good but you obviously feel a lot better if you finish stronger and that's the goal right now.

**Q. Have you had an offense anywhere in your career as a head coach that the system has been as disappointed?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Are you kidding me? Yeah, yeah, in recent history, recently in the last decade, yeah. I've been around some bad offenses and I promise you -- most people who have been in coaching have, though. It's just part of the game. Things ebb and flow.

But again, I think the big thing you can do is look at our -- if you look at us objectively, which we'll try to start that process next week, it's understandable what our challenges have been. And I think the good news is we've been working through some situations and we'll continue.

So I'm optimistic about where we're heading, but are we getting there fast enough right now? You never do. We would rather be over 400 a game, no doubt about it. More points, no doubt about it. And right now, it's just not -- it's not out there for us, and so we have to do the best we can the way we're operating and hope that we can improve upon it, and that will be the goal this week.

**Q. Is there a substantial gap at quarterback in practice?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I guess, you know, it's fair to say, enough to let us proceed the

way we've proceeded, I think so.

And it's not insurmountable. It's just I think what you do at any position is you look at it and say, you know, we're looking at it as our best chance to win at this present moment and that's what we've done, and in our minds, Jake is the guy.

I think he's done an awful lot of good things and a lot of the problems he's experienced this year, as I've said many times, that are out of his control and he's done some things that he would like to do over again, too. That's part of being a young player. We have other guys at other positions doing the same thing and I could critique them the same way; it's just not as visible to people watching the game.

But you know, when you play with young players or inexperienced players, that's part of the deal. But the challenge is to move forward with each opportunity, and at times, we're doing it, and at times we're not. So the consistency factor you alluded to, that's really where it's at offensively.

**Q. Who is more popular, Herky or the back up quarterback?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: That's a good question, I don't know. Backup quarterbacks are usually a solid, you know -- usually pretty solid on the popularity ranking. You know, if things aren't going real smooth, that's usually universal no matter where you're at, even at Philadelphia. Maybe especially at Philadelphia, there's a little turmoil out there right now, too, if I recall. I'll get caught up on that next week. I haven't been watching a lot of NFL action.

**Q. When you look at the schedule at the beginning of the year, does it look a little strange or anti-climactic to have Western Michigan at the end? As a coach are you glad the chips fell this way because there is so much riding on this game?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: It wouldn't be bad to be sitting here at 11-0. We would have dealt with those problems or challenges. Just the way it worked out, yeah, this is a real big game for us on a couple fronts.

But most importantly, again, all we have to do is look at the film, and if it's going to be a challenge, theirs and ours, and I think you combine those two things, realistically, it's a big game for us and we have a lot of work to do this week.

**Q. Looking at Western Michigan, what are your thoughts on playing a non-conference game at the end? I know you had it once, but that was under unusual circumstances.**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Exactly. And even then, in a perfect world, I think you would rather -- once you get into conference play, my preference would be to stay with conference play. I think everybody probably feels the same in the league. I think last year Wisconsin had this circumstance, if I remember correctly.

It's not a perfect world, so, you deal with it. But in a perfect world, yeah, I think we would all rather end up with conference play.

**Q. I know it's fairly rare for football coaches to get caught up with the big picture during the season, but is it helpful for you or are you excited to look at the team, where it came from and then what the possibilities are, say, one or two years down the road with the year you've had and some of the issues being dealt with?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: And you're right, I haven't spent a lot of time looking at next year, next month, all that stuff. But I think more and more, it's more localized, just that we are acutely aware of our situation, and especially where we were four, five, six weeks ago. To have pulled ourselves out of that, that's gratifying.

To see those snapshot moments like Clayborn and -- Clayborn, Ballard) and Coleman, the Michigan State game, they jumped in there and gave us energy and they gave us some positive signs. And you know, you have some guys graduating and the fact that our two ends are seniors, that type of thing, our linebackers.

But those things, you don't get on them at this time of year. When you're playing a lot of young guys, obviously that's going to bode well. They have improved and they are doing a good job. But I think we've seen enough good things from our young guys to be happy about that.

I think we knew early into the season, you know, a month into it, less than a month into it, we were going to have our challenges this year, just looking at the way the depth chart was shaking out. Yeah, we tried to work through those week-by-week, and sometimes, they say Scotch tape and paper clips; we have done a little of that. We've had practice and I remember doing that in '99 and 2000. So some years are like that and you

deal with them.

**Q. Do you think it's got more consistent as the year has gone by?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Yes and no. We are doing some things pretty consistently, but we are not playing overall to consistency and that sounds like a lot of politician talk, but we're not where we would like to be yet. But we are not that far away, either.

And I think there's some encouraging things and I keep flashing back to in my mind, and our discussions occasionally, and we think back to what some of our good linemen were as first-year guys, a couple years away from being seniors and that puts it in perspective. It really helps temper your thoughts at times. But there are moments where you're like, come on, let's go, we can be a little better here.

**Q. With the exception of last year, your teams always seem to play their best the following November. Can you put a finger on why?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: It's just something that's always been important to us. You know, so I don't know if there's a scientific formula for it, but I think it's important, and that's one of the things that was so disappointing about last year. Unless you just have everybody injured or there's some logical explanation why things are going on, not to be getting better as the year goes on, that's not the sign of a healthy program in my mind.

So, yeah, that's an important thing. It's an important fundamental of a program, I believe, and the players have to be aware of it and they have to think of it in those terms; and they have to realize, it's not only about getting ready for a game, which you have to do every week, but you also have to be focused on self-improvement. That's how you're supposed to live. When that message isn't getting across, it not a good sign.

**Q. Are you surprised you have the longest, current winning streak in the Big Ten?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: First I've heard of it, so I'll say what I'm saying right now, wow. I had no idea. Is that true?

**Q. Three-game streak is longer than any other league in the conference -- (inaudible).**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I didn't know if it was two or three games. Shows where I'm at right

now mentally. I know we won last week and I know we've done okay the last -- that's surprising. Probably reflective of our conference right now.

In college football, you guys know better than I. I don't know if I've ever seen a crazier year in college football, all of the things going on, it seems like weekly and I'm no expert on the BCS thing, but just, you know, the teams that are playing right now. Like for instance Kansas and the little bit I saw of it Saturday night, certainly deserved to be there and excellent football team. I don't think anybody would have predicted that back in August, but those are good things, it's kind of interesting.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: We're not in the same league as Kansas, that's for sure. I think the bottom line is anything can happen this year and there's evidence of that, and every week there are scores that are surprising.

So, it goes back to what you do, week-after-week, and again, that will serve us well this week. May have mentioned to the team last week, you know, Louisville and USC, both no victim at home as 40-plus point favorites, and two games this year. So to think things can't happen, any year, but especially this year, is really being naive. I don't think we've been 42-point favorites -- if you added up all our games for the last 12, I don't think we have been 42-point favorites over anybody; not that I follow that stuff.

**Q. Usually at this time of year, you have a couple of players you like to talk about, honors and so on.**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I haven't thought much about it quite honestly. One guy that jumps out, talking about Mike Humpal. For obvious reasons, I haven't looked at a lot of stats this year; I don't want to get depressed. I think Mike would probably be up there, pretty high, in the conference. He's played the last two weeks on a limited ankle. I can't imagine a lot of guys playing much better than him. That's just an A-1 guy. He's really played well this year.

You know, so that's probably where it would start. We've had several guys playing really high. I don't know about all-league. That will be determined. Usually the teams that win the most get the most guys on there, so one of those dealings.

**Q. Linebackers?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Lot of good linebackers in the competition. He fits right in there with all of those guys, as far as I'm concerned. Albert probably has not had the kind of stats, we would put him up there, he's really played well for us and you could probably say that about all of our seniors, they are playing at a high level right now.

**Q. How much of a motivator is it for players and coaching staff that you have not really put together a fourth quarter?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: That's something if we did it, we might be dangerous. Again, that's part of the challenge this week. If we're going to play our best game, that certainly factors into that equation and would help our chances greatly.

**Q. A Bowl run would make a difference; winning by one point or 20 points, does that make a difference?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I really can't answer that. I've seen a lot of crazy things happen in Bowl selections.

Going back to '84, I remember we thought we were dead in the water and ended up going to the Freedom Bowl. I'll never forget that one. It was a Sunday night and I was watching some -- not that you guys care, but I'll bore you with the details.

Back when they had those tapes, you know what do they call them, super eights, they only had one side, which were impossible to watch. And so I'm sitting in the room watching that and Coach Fry found out that we got a bid on Sunday night, right before Thanksgiving -- I can't remember, before or after. And he was looking for somebody to share it with, and I'm the only guy around and I got to be the first one to find out. But none of us thought we were going to a Bowl that year and we had just lost to Hawaii -- the rest is history.

How did I get on that tangent? But anyway, it's hard to predict. It's hard to predict. Going back to an early point, having a great fan base really helps, I know that, but we have to do our part on the field, I understand that totally. That's the way it should be.

**Q. Can you talk about the role you think your fans played this year?**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I'd be foolish to say they have been -- I think that's one great factor for us, I think it always has been. We enjoy fans that follow -- there might be some that rival ours, but I can't imagine anybody better.

I told the story about last year, it was disappointing for us and, our fans in San Antonio, thought we were the Big Ten champions and we knew we weren't but they were there, and they were boisterous, enthusiastic, supportive. I can't imagine anybody having better fans than we have, so we're lucky there and I think that's one thing both people do know.

Again we have to do our part on the field, and we understand that.

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