

September 3, 2011



Iowa – 34
Tennessee Tech – 7

An interview with:

**COACH KIRK FERENTZ
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR GARY BARTA**

GARY BARTA: I'll make a couple comments, then be happy to answer any questions.

First and foremost, everywhere I've been over the past 25 years, you prepare before. Have not had to execute yet. There was a significant storm heading right towards the stadium. First and foremost is the safety of the student-athletes and the fans. We made the decision to pull the teams off the field. We also had to evacuate the stadium.

Once that occurs, there's a rule that indicates 30 minutes have to go by since the last lightning strike before you can reconvene. We were monitoring that with the National Weather Service, my senior staff, university police. It was a team effort. We made the decision. Fortunately we were able to finish the game and everybody was safe.

Any questions?

Q. Was there a point when you discussed not finishing the game?

GARY BARTA: There's a couple of principles you operate by. The safety of the competitors is first and foremost, and the fans. Secondly, you do everything possible to play the game. The only thing that would have stopped us from finishing the game today was darkness. You always attempt to finish the game.

Q. (No microphone.)

GARY BARTA: I want to say in the six seasons that I've been here, we've had conversations leading into Thursday, Friday, Saturday where we just put everybody on alert and remind ourselves what the protocol is if we get to this point.

We had those discussions last night as well as this morning just in preparation. What happened was, there was a band of lightning that was very condensed, very significant. I think some of you might have seen it on the radar. Obviously we have somebody monitoring radar, but we work with the National Weather Service.

When it was apparent that within 10 or 20 miles of the stadium there was a direct lightning pattern coming towards the stadium, that's when we made the decision.

Q. Clearing out 70,000, to your knowledge, did things move smoothly?

GARY BARTA: I think there were a couple things in our favor in this case. Because of where we were in the point of the game in terms of the score, where that was, and because the weather after halftime, several thousands of people had left the stadium, I think it allowed for this kind of procedure to go a little bit more smoothly.

For future reference, one of the things we do as a matter of normal business, we can put approximately 40,000 people underneath the stadium in the concourses, then the rest of the fans would be able to evacuate to the rec building or the hospital. Those are the most nearby opportunities for fans to take cover. Hopefully something we'll never have to go through again.

Q. Does this heighten the potential need for lights?

GARY BARTA: I think if this would have been a late afternoon game, it would have made the discussion whether or not we would be able to

finish the game a little bit more critical. When we play late afternoon games most of the time in preparation we bring in lights.

I don't think this changes the discussion. I think certainly it adds to the equation of whether or not we had lights to put in.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, obviously we're pleased to get the win. Needless to say it was a pretty unusual circumstance today, something I don't think any of us have experienced during the course of a game.

I give our players credit for doing a good job of handling that. It looked like Tennessee Tech did the same thing. Again, we're just happy to get the win. I think there were a lot of positives out there.

Flipping that around, certainly we have a lot of things we need to work on. It's imperative we get to that quickly here. A lot of loose edges. But I think some young guys jumped in there did some good things. Communication overall was pretty good. So a lot of positives, but a lot of things that we'll have to get cleaned up here real quickly.

Q. How hard is it to get the guys refocused after an hour plus?

COACH FERENTZ: It's difficult. The most difficult part about it is there's just no certainty. Anytime lightning strikes, they have to push the clock back another 30. First we told them it was going to be a while. Got another report, came back and said it was going to be quite a while, which it ended up being. The guys relaxed, stayed hydrated. When it was time to go, they did okay.

Q. What can you take from this game as a stepping point for the next game and the rest of the season?

COACH FERENTZ: Really had a strange feel to it, every part of it. When we were out there a good portion of the time, the rain was really coming down. We had struggled with that. Unfortunately this camp I think we've only dealt with rain twice, one was about a 10- or 12-minute period. We had another practice where there was a significant amount of moisture. We didn't handle the ball well at all in the weather. That's a concern. There's a lot we can teach off of.

It had a strange feel almost start to finish. A lot of things we can coach off and need to get better at with ball security.

Q. Report on McCall?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. Unfortunately, he's got a break. It's going to cost him the year. We're all disappointed. Nobody's more disappointed than him. He's just really a tremendous young guy with a great attitude, great spirit. He was looking forward to playing today and was playing very, very well.

From where I was sitting, it looked like he and Jordan Bernstine almost had it in a different gear than anybody else on our team, which was good to see.

Q. Was it an ankle?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he's got a break, lower leg, so...

Q. Jordan Bernstine came back from an injury like that.

COACH FERENTZ: Maybe they can share notes. Jordan did a good job battling back. I'm sure Mika'il will, too. Obviously he's disappointed now.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH FERENTZ: I hope it wasn't nerves. I think I saw the ball on the ground three times in the first half. We came back and put it on the ground again in the second half.

We're not going to win football games like that. It's ironic, I was talking with the announcers yesterday, they were complimenting us. We've done a pretty good job last couple years with turnover margin. We didn't help ourselves there today. End of the day, that's going to get us beat. We're not a good enough team where we're going to be able to give up any quarter at all. That's one area we have to do a better job with. If that ball is on the ground, you're putting it up to a risk, leaving it to a referee's interpretation. First and foremost, that's on the top of my list.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH FERENTZ: Outstanding effort on his part. A bit of déjà vu. Traditionally, it starts with the coaches, they've done a good job of teaching the defensive team how to make that an offensive play, be it a pick or a blocked pick. Guys looked like they did a great job of setting the wall up.

Q. Marvin had a tremendous first game.

COACH FERENTZ: He did. We're going to need that. They looked like they were setting the front, weren't going to let our tailback run for 200. That's what it looked like. That's the case. We have a new quarterback. Made perfect sense. Thought James did a good job of getting the ball where he had to, Marvin made a couple of good plays, Keenan came in there, too. To Marvin's point, we need our best players playing their best and Marvin was ready to go today.

Q. Morris with a nice interception.

COACH FERENTZ: Sure did. Unfortunately we could only get three out of this one. Good pick by James. He did a good job on that ball too.

Q. Defense got to the quarterback, but couldn't get him on the ground. You're going to see a lot of elusive quarterbacks in the Big Ten. Is this something you'll point out?

COACH FERENTZ: It will be on the list of things to teach. The guys were getting some pressure. But couldn't get the quarterback down quite often. To your point, I just said the same thing to Gary, we're going to face a lot of guys that are going to be tough to tackle back there.

We have to do a better job. Credit to our guys for getting some disruption in there, but you still have to finish the play. We had a lot of respect for their quarterback coming in.

Q. Did you notice how many people came back in after the hour and a half?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. I was surprised, quite frankly. I was really surprised. That was great to see.

Q. Interception and passing game, is that what separates your team from Tennessee Tech?

COACH FERENTZ: The defensive big plays. We've done a decent job of that against everybody, if we get those opportunities. We play defense. If you take one thing away, it leaves you open in some other areas. They made it tough on us. They made it tough on us up front. I think it was a smart way to play us, find out if our new quarterback can do something, see if we can catch the ball out there a little bit.

We had a lot of respect for Tennessee Tech coming in. Well-coached, a good group of young guys on their team. Based on what we saw

on tape and saw last year, they're going to go on and have a good year.

Q. (Question regarding A.J.)

COACH FERENTZ: Weird deal. Third and eight, end of the quarter. I guess usually it's kind of weird to start out third and eight. Felt a little strange. But, yeah, that was the design. We were going to try to pick up the first down. First time he's been on the field. A lot of guys like that. Good for him to get some experience. Really valuable for him. Thought he did a decent job first time out.

Q. Special teams and kicking, how about that?

COACH FERENTZ: Up and down a little bit. Our kickoff coverage was hit or miss again. Some things to clean up. The punt return, the ball came out, I think they ruled him down obviously. Little things like that we're going to have to do a better job of.

It's a start, and we'll work from there.

Q. Where are you right now one game in?

COACH FERENTZ: We're 1-0 and have a lot of work to do. Pretty much simple as that. Be it the kicking game, all the things we talked about. We have great teaching film to work off of here. Got some good experience in playing in wet weather. That's a positive, I guess. Got a lot of guys I think that are capable of playing a lot better. That's going to be the thing we have to do not only this week but this month to push forward.

Thank you.

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