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An interview with:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome. Certainly was a tough loss for us this weekend. We got to move on. So that's what we'll do.

Our captains this week, just a little shift. We have Adrian and Karl Klug on defense, also Brett Greenwood nudged up there in the voting, and Ricky Stanzi, our four guys that represent the team this week.

Obviously we have a great challenge on our hands playing Ohio State. They've been playing well all season, but particularly the last three weeks, I think they've outscored their opponents 46-8 (average) in the last three games. They are really on a roll right now, playing with great momentum.

If you look at them on tape, little bit of a broken record from anytime you play Ohio State, they have tremendous players, very well coached, are very well coached. If you look at them statistically, it's almost intimidating. Ranked extremely high in all the categories that really count. So it's going to be a great challenge for our team.

We'll go back to work, try to put together a great week of preparation, and it will be good to be back in Kinnick, certainly. I know the crowds have been great all season long, so we're looking forward to a great environment. Hopefully we'll be able to take on an outstanding opponent.

Q. In the three losses this year, the defense has given up long touchdown drives in the fourth quarter. Have you been able to pinpoint some of the reasons why that keeps happening?

COACH FERENTZ: Can't get them get off the field. It happens. The other day was interesting. They drove the first series, then the last two, so they had three possessions for touchdowns. Probably all of them at inopportune times. One of those things. They made enough plays to sustain a drive and we couldn't get them off on third down.

Q. How is the health of your team for this week?

COACH FERENTZ: Fairly decent for this time of year. Probably the only news out of Saturday, doesn't look good for Jeff Tarpinian. He got reinjured on Saturday. That's unfortunate. You hate to get anybody injured certainly. For a senior, especially. He's just had a tough year. We all had high expectations for Jeff for very valid reasons. It's been a real frustrating year for him.

Realistically I can't see him making it this week, probably not next week. Hopefully he'll be healthy to play in the bowl game. We are all keeping our fingers crossed there. Outside of that, I think we're doing okay.

Q. Have you identified the reasons for the third-down issues?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, they made plays. I don't want to spend all day talking about last week. I think everybody ought to give their quarterback some credit. That's one of the better quarterbacks we played in 12 years. First of all, he's a good player coming in. What he did Saturday was, I thought, pretty impressive.

So to me, they've got a good football team. I said that a week ago. The quarterback, we had great respect for him, as I mentioned. He played at a higher level than any of us would have expected. The last throw that he made, a little bit like the throw that beat us at Iowa State a couple years ago. Guy is running to his right, throws it to the left, puts it right on the money. Tough plays to

defend.

Goes back to your point: They made great plays. Going to happen. The more you get off the field on third down, the better off you're going to be. That was a big part of the game the other day, too. If you want me to pinpoint one thing more than the drives was our inability to convert on third down. We put ourselves in a lot of bad situations during the course of the game. Third-and-longs are tough to convert, third-and-10s, third-and-16s. If you go back, look at their drives, our drives that were productive, the third-down situations were good for both offenses when they had productive drives.

Q. Marvin seems to have come a long way from being a backup quarterback to wide receiver. Where can he end up, not only this year but in the future?

COACH FERENTZ: That's up to him. He's made a lot of big plays. He has improved. I think that's a real fair assessment. The good news is he's got potential to really to continue to improve. He's having a good year right now. We all think he can play at a higher level. He'd be the first to tell you that. We'll let that play out, too.

Q. You've averaged 34 points in the first eight games, and 17 in the last two. Why the drop-off by one half?

COACH FERENTZ: What I would say is last week third down, the week before down in the red zone, shut the book. Up until then, we'd been pretty good in both those circumstances. When you don't operate well in those two areas, it's tough to be productive offensively.

Q. The senior class is a pretty big one. Can you talk about what they've meant to this program?

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, we expect a great crowd. As Phil mentioned, it's been sold out. Senior Days are always really special. We have 26 guys. They're always hard. It's part of college football. It's like your children leaving home. But it's part of the process. Can't say enough about what this group has done. I'll say more about it as the week goes on.

What they've done collectively and individually is very, very impressive. We have a wide range of guys that have played a long time, three years, four years in some cases. Then you have other guys that are interesting, guys like Paki O'Meara who has been a great role player for us,

special teams player, a guy like Josh Koepfel came as a walk-on, Paki came on as a walk-on. Josh has filled in for the last two weeks and been a solid player for three years now. Go right down the list, Ross Petersen, Donny Nordmann, guys like that, Andy Schulze. Then you have other guys that most people won't recognize the names', a guy like Justin Greiner, probably biggest accomplishment he'll be going to med school next year, that's been his goal. He's been a great look team player for us through the years. Nick Kuchel played well on special teams. It's a mix of guys. That's what makes football so interesting.

The big thing is all these guys have been committed. It's probably true in any program. For someone to be a senior and finish up their career as a senior, they've gone a hard road, paid the price academically, citizenship-wise as well as football. I've got tremendous respect for all the guys that are going to be out there Saturday. All of us are extremely appreciative of what they've given us. Great group to work with. They've done a lot of good things on the field. That's important, especially the last three years.

Q. Is this a week to look back of how the people got to where they were?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it is. I mean, you can't help but think about those things. We'll do more of it in December certainly and after the last game.

But it is. That's a great thing about sports, I think. It's a great thing about college athletics. Everybody's got a different story. Some guys make it through fairly unscathed. A.J. Edds gets hurt in camp in the NFL. Career injuries are part of this game unfortunately. Go through hardships. We all went through one on Saturday. That's part of the process. It's usually a tough road.

But I think they're all going to walk out of here feeling pretty good about what they accomplished, can be awfully proud of what they've done off the field and in those other areas too.

Q. How important is getting off to a solid start? Your first two drives with Northwestern, penalties that bogged you down. How important will it be to start strong this week?

COACH FERENTZ: Again, it goes right back to what I said earlier, two weeks ago we

moved the ball, got down to the red zone, couldn't do anything. Last week, first couple possessions, we had a penalty, so we were third-and-10, whatever it might have been. We had a third-and-16. We did have a third-and-three, but we had to overcome a second-and-16 to get there.

That's football. You have to do everything right. You have to do everything well. If you don't, it's going to be tough to sustain drives, tough to score points. That's the objective out there. We're playing a team right now that's going to make it extremely tough. These guys don't give much on the ground, in terms of points. They're highly ranked in any statistic defensively. It's going to be a great challenge for us.

Q. What has DJK meant to this program in the last four years?

COACH FERENTZ: If you look at his production, it speaks for itself. I don't know how many records he's set, but they're all big ones. Possessions, TDs, I'm losing track. It seems like every week he's surpassing someone else. He's really done great job. We talked about Marvin earlier. It was a little bit different because he went through the receiver position earlier during his is time here. He started out at one. It was a learning process for him. He's improved with every year. Done a lot of good things. Anytime you lose a good player, it's a big loss certainly.

Q. Expectations you had of the team, the fans had, would you say that the team has underperformed win/loss record-wise at this point in the season?

COACH FERENTZ: I'm surprised it took so long for that questions. I'll go back on your question.

My expectations, I wouldn't describe them as lofty. I would say they've been the same every year, almost every year. First couple years, I wouldn't realistically say we were competing for a championship. But once I think we moved into the 2002 area, it was certainly a goal of ours - collectively, not just mine. I think that's true of most teams in the conference. I want to be conference champions. That's where it ends. After that, our goal is to do the best we can each week. It starts with preparing well, then playing well. That's what the goal is. It hasn't changed.

I told our players this back in January, reemphasized it in the spring, went through it in August. As the season goes on, you remind them. You can't control what other people's expectations

are. Those are external thoughts. The experts aren't always right, that's pure and simple. If they go back and look it up, Oregon was behind us at least in two of the major polls, pre-season polls. They got that wrong. Oregon has been averaging about 50 points a game. Put 15 up the other night. I doubt the experts predicted that. They missed on that one, too.

It's just how it goes. Nobody can predict all the things that happen during the course of the season. I do know that. There were a couple of teams ranked ahead of us going in that are probably ranked behind us right now.

This stuff about other people's expectations, our responsibility is not to live up to anyone else's expectations. Do the best we can do. That's how we try to evaluate and assess where we're at.

I've said this before, too. I'll assess this season when it's over. It's not over yet. We still have three games to play. That's all we need to worry about now, is doing the best with what's in front of us.

Q. You have a few Ohioan's on the roster. How many of those guys did you knock heads with Jim for?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I'm chuckling. That's not how it works, but go ahead.

Q. Can you talk about what recruiting in Ohio involved.

COACH FERENTZ: In a nutshell, you let Ohio State take their guys and then you go from there. That's how it works, I think. Maybe I'm wrong on that. You guys going to contradict me on that one? You follow that stuff a helluva lot closer than I do. You know everything about everything, Tom, go ahead, seriously. Not in Ohio, I don't think we have.

Q. Are you pretty satisfied with what you got?

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah. If you look at the Big Ten rosters, there are a lot of good players from Ohio. That receiver last week, No. 19, is a heck of a player. He's from Ohio. There's a lot of good players. They can't take them all. It's like Florida and Texas. They only have so many spots. If they got 12 or 13 available, that's a good thing for everybody else, because everybody

else has a chance to go in and get some good players. There are a lot of good players.

Ricky Stanzi is one of the top quarterbacks in the country. Fortunately we were able to recruit him. That spot was already taken at Ohio State. I know they weren't involved in the recruitment. That's a good thing.

Q. With Rick, what were your expectations for him initially when he first arrived on campus?

COACH FERENTZ: We thought he had a chance to develop into a really good quarterback, and that's exactly what he's done. And the credit goes to him. He's worked extremely hard. He wasn't recruited by a lot of schools. He was a good, solid prospect. Not a knock-down, eight-star recruit, one of those guys. But a lot of good players come from that stock. Same thing happens in the NFL. There are a lot of guys that get drafted after the first round that are historically pretty good quarterbacks. I think I heard on the poll a week or two ago, Joe Montana, second, third player in history, I can't remember what round he was, but he was down the rounds a little bit. Johnny Unitas was playing for the Morningside Bulldogs.

We're looking for guys that have a chance to develop. Ricky fit that mold and he's done a great job.

Q. You have a history of after tough losses bouncing back with solid performances. Last year against Ohio State, Michigan State this year. Do you alter your approach that week?

COACH FERENTZ: We put a 10-0 win up after the Ohio State game last year. I know what you mean, yeah.

Q. Do you alter your approach or do you stay consistent through the week?

COACH FERENTZ: We do really what I tell you. We try to move on. We tried to bury the game Sunday. It's easier said than done, but then you have to move on. We are playing good teams every week. So you have to do it. This week we happen to be playing a team that's as strong as anybody we're going to face all season long.

We don't have much time to dwell on anything. What happened is behind us. We need to get working here on what's in front of us, really kind of go from there.

Q. Easier to move on when there's an Ohio State in front of you?

COACH FERENTZ: It gets your attention, that's for sure. If we don't move on, it will be ugly Saturday. These guys, it's been 46-8 the last three weeks. Penn State is not a bad football team. You know, we better get ready. That gets your attention.

Q. You think of Ohio State as kind of a grind-it-out type of team. Do they have a type of offense that you want to keep them off the field?

COACH FERENTZ: We want to keep everybody's offense off the field. That was part of the problem last week. That's always a good thing. But it's going to be tough because they've got a couple different personalities. They were wide open in the Rose Bowl, have that capability. But they also can run the ball right at you and make it tough to stop you.

They were one of the few teams last year that did that to us. Not many teams did that to us. They took that ball and jammed it right down our throats last year that second half. We better strap it up and be ready. A tough outfit we're playing.

Q. How do you prepare for Pryor and all the other weapons they have?

COACH FERENTZ: It's hard. They traditionally have had that. They have good players at every position. I'm impressed with their offensive line. They've grown. They were good last year, but they continue to grow. No. 75 is their only new starter. And he may be the best guy they have. I don't mean any disrespect to the other guys. Everybody is focused on the other guys. 75 wants to transfer, I'll take him. I'm not tampering. Can't do that in our conference. But he's really quite a player.

They've got good linemen, an excellent tight end, good receivers like always. Terrelle Pryor is a very dangerous player. They have about four backs that are outstanding, two that they've been running hard. They're really, really talented.

Q. What about their linebacker coming back from a foot injury last week, what kind of spark does he give their defense?

COACH FERENTZ: Both he and No. 36 are both tremendous football players. They were a year ago. They're a year older and better. Would

have been nice if he held out a couple more weeks, but that's the way it goes.

Q. Any similarities between Pryor and Persa, the way they stretch defenses?

COACH FERENTZ: They're different, I guess. But they're both different. They're different players.

Q. How is Gettis?

COACH FERENTZ: I think Gettis has a shot. We'll wait and see. He's improving pretty quickly. But we'll see. He's scheduled to practice this week. Keep our fingers crossed, maybe we'll get him back.

Q. What kind of role did Norm play last week?

COACH FERENTZ: It's pretty minimal right now. He's got his foot in the water, but he's not swimming right now. He's in a weakened state, if you will. I don't know how many weeks he was hospitalized. I think we're looking at realistically he's supplementing us a little bit. We're just taking our time, thinking big picture here.

Q. Is it more watching video and having an idea?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. I mean, he does. But he's not real involved in a lot of it right now. We're more broad-based stuff than specific information, that type of thing.

Q. What does Adam Robinson have to do, how good can he become from here?

COACH FERENTZ: He just has to keep his foot on the gas, which I think he's done. He's worked hard every opportunity he's had. He plays extremely hard. I don't want to say he plays in a nondescript way, but he's kind of been under a lot of people's radar. But he's extremely productive. Again, I mention this every time I talk about him. Obviously, he runs the ball well. He's productive there. He's good in the passing game. The things you don't notice are his blocking. His blocking is typically right on. He also is a high-energy player. To me there's a lot of value in that, guys that are really high energy and really tough. He has those two attributes.

I hope he has a great future. Back in the summertime, going back to expectations, everybody thought we had three outstanding running backs. That shifted a little bit. Can't

predict those things. We think he has an opportunity to have a great career. That's what we're hoping for.

Q. Do you think Pryor is a better player this year than last?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he is. I mean, he's just more comfortable and confident. Just like Ricky Stanzi is a better player. He's a very explosive, dangerous guy. You know, you've seen him run. When he runs, it doesn't look like he's running that fast, but he's covering a lot of territory. Persa is not quite the same stature. But, boy, he's a very gifted athlete and a very accomplished quarterback at this age of his career.

Choose your weapons here, choose your poison. They can threaten you in a lot of different ways.

Q. How is the recovery of Jewel Hampton and Bruce Davis?

COACH FERENTZ: Going well. Going well. We met on that this morning. Everything is very positive. We're moving right along, which is good.

Q. Is spring logical at this point?

COACH FERENTZ: Bruce's is, I don't want to say, a little more routine, but predictable. He has a legitimate chance to be out there. Jewel, I made this comment, he'll be tackled hopefully 26 more times in his career, 26 more days. We're not going to have him get tackled while he's here. It's how we do it with guys that have played. To me there's not a sense of urgency there. We want to get him fully healthy. If we have him back in August, that will be great.

Q. What do you remember about Ohio State's defense last year?

COACH FERENTZ: They're just really good. I mean, they've had a few injuries this year in their back end, I guess. The other thing, too, their heaviest graduation losses were up front. But if you turn on the film, as good as they were a year ago, you turn on the film, it looks the same. Different guys. Heyward is back. One of the premiere players in the country. The other three guys that are starting, they're awfully good players. Gibson, No. 90 last year, is a great player. No. 43 is just as active.

These guys, they're very well-coached,

very talented. Obviously, they're very deep because they graduate deep, the next guys look the same. I go back to '06, they just throttled us in '05. I think they graduated eight or nine guys to the NFL off that defense. They came into our game in '06 ranked higher than they were defensively. Speaks well to the talent and speaks well to the coaching their players get, the way they play.

It's a tough challenge. We moved the ball a little bit last year, scored a few points. That's what we're going to have to do this year to have an opportunity.

Q. How would you grade your two-minute offense this year?

COACH FERENTZ: We didn't get it done Saturday. That's it, so...

Q. Is it safe to say there's a bunker mentality, an us-against-them?

COACH FERENTZ: It's us-against-Ohio State, I know that. We better be bunkered in there or we're going to get blown up. Staying on the war analogies there, these guys are the varsity. They're very good, very tough.

Q. Fan expectations came up.

COACH FERENTZ: I said this earlier. We can't control what other people think. I want our fans happy. That means we're winning. We all want to win. You can't worry about expectations. You can't worry about hurting somebody's feelings or somebody made a bad prediction. That's not what we're playing for.

We're playing to win, try to do our best. If we come up short, we come up short. Like I said, look at Oregon-Cal the other night, I don't think anybody would have predicted that one either. That's football. That's what makes it interesting. It's fun when you win. It's fun when you upset somebody. It's not fun when you lose, get upset. Just the way it goes.

Q. Are you confident this team has the moxy to bounce back?

COACH FERENTZ: I like to think we are. I'm not worried about moxy or character. I'm worried about us being good enough. That's our goal. We have to get good enough by Saturday to get the job done against a real good team.

Q. You played a lot of 3-4 against Indiana. The injury to Tarpinian keep you from playing that more?

COACH FERENTZ: We have our reasons for doing things. I mean, I think we have good reasons. Injuries always factor into it. We're a little thin at linebacker. You probably noticed that. I talked about the running backs. We came into camp thinking we had Tarpinian and Davis as our middle linebackers. That hasn't worked out. Tyler Nielsen is not out there. All those things affect your strategy, how things go. No question about it.

Q. You mentioned the linebackers. Game by game, how has James Morris looked in that middle linebacker role?

COACH FERENTZ: He's really doing outstanding. Couldn't be more pleased. I think all of us feel that way. He's a young player who's learning on the fly. It's just how it goes sometimes.

But he's playing with great energy. He's really a tough, competitive guy. He's going to be a tremendous football player. Has an opportunity to be a tremendous football player here.

He's not there yet. But he's learning on the job. That's a great way to learn. I think he's done a great job out there. But it's a process for him.

Q. How do you try to contain a guy like Terrelle Pryor?

COACH FERENTZ: We kind of talked about that earlier. He's a very dynamic football player. He's developed into a pretty good passer. He's extremely athletic. He's got great size and range. You can't gang up on him because they've got excellent skill players at all positions and they've got a line that blocks very well.

We're going to have to play team defense. We're going to have to play well in all three phases. That's pretty obvious here.

Q. With all the tape, the front six, all those guys, is that your best foot forward in any game because of what they've done, what you've seen in them over time?

COACH FERENTZ: Our strength on defense right now, in my opinion at least, is our defensive line and our safeties, our most experienced guys, if we had Tarpinian and Nielsen. Right now we're kind of patching things together at linebacker, it's pretty obvious. Doing

the best we can there. Our front four guys, contrary to popular opinion, I thought they played a really good game this past week. Those guys were digging hard, working hard.

But it takes 11 guys to play good defense. We got to put it all together, find a way to get it done. That's what we've got to do.

Q. The quality of those players, does that dictate what you want to do and can do on defense?

COACH FERENTZ: They help you play better, they help you play worse. It's not like we've reinvented our system or anything like that because of them. Every year you have more experience, your strengths shift, what you have. Hopefully your system accentuates what you have.

Q. You talk about your senior stories. Can you visit Brett Greenwood's story here.

COACH FERENTZ: He's a guy who Reese Morgan had a good feeling about all the way through recruiting. We were really fortunate we were able to convince him to walk on here. Probably my biggest snapshot memory of him would be his true freshman year. I wouldn't say he was Larry Station, but he was Larry Station-like. He was redshirting that year, but he was so intent on paying attention to what was going on, really learning what was going on, not only in terms of our broad-based system, but our game plan type of thing.

We took him to Michigan in '06 even though he was redshirting, which we don't do too often. We felt like he was a guy that was going to emerge in the future for us.

You know, that's the first thing I would say. Then he got his opportunity in the Illinois game I think it was in '07 and hasn't come out of the lineup since. He's done a good job each year, just improved. He's gotten better physically. He's worked hard at that. He's got the knowledge and wisdom to play faster than maybe with time out. That's what experience does for you. He's a guy that gets it, to maximize. Boy, he's done a great job for us. Probably said five words his whole time here, in front of us at least. Extremely quiet.

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