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An Interview With:

**COACH KIRK FERENTZ
LeVAR WOODS
BRIAN FERENTZ**

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Just welcome to everybody. Got a young journalist (Julian Vandervelde) back here on the right I see. Will you put this in Japanese when you write this or not? I know you could.

I'll just tell you a couple words real quickly and I'll slip out and let these guys have the showcase here. Just real quickly, both LeVar and Brian, there are obviously some parallels here. Both are guys that graduated from the University of Iowa, played in this program, and also products of our state high school programs here, both academically and athletically.

Obviously both guys had great careers here at Iowa, served as captains and seniors, and really had productive careers here. Played on two different kinds of teams, if you will, or different levels, or different levels of development in our program. Brian was fortunate, was part of two championship teams during his career; and LeVar his entire class were really a big part of why we were able to get this thing going a little bit back 12, 13 years ago.

I think about guys like LeVar and Kevin Kasper, Matt Bowen, some of the guys that were here when we got here, just a great job they did of helping us push forward. So it's something I'm very, very appreciative of. Obviously both LeVar and Brian have had really good NFL exposure since they left, kind of different exposures, if you will, but both had significant time in the National Football League as players, and I think their

experience is going to be something that's good for our program.

I think LeVar and Brian know our program inside and out, and they have a great feel for it. I think with it comes new and unique perspective, not only coaching, a way to go about coaching; but also some of the things they have experienced are going to be helpful for us in recruiting as well and just in general.

They are both guys that have done a great job in the past and I'm really confident that they are going to do a great job, already have in a short time, but really anxious for them to begin their coaching careers here and feel like they really balanced out the way our staff is situated now.

So I'm just really thrilled with that. If anybody has any questions, I'll answer them but otherwise I'll turn it over to LeVar.

Q. LeVar is doing social media and you're not, does that make this a good fit?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: That's part of the package, it really is. We say it jokingly, I'm not claiming to be. My interest level not really high. Certainly LeVar and Brian, Brian's wife, that's what she does for a living and she's pretty tapped in. LeVar has great expertise and some of the guys that work in the office do, too. If you deny the importance of that, then you're putting your head in the sand and it would really be foolish. I think it certainly is part of what we are hoping to gain and learn from as we move forward.

Q. Brian added a Twitter this weekend; can we expect yours?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: If he wants to do it for me -- we have the same name, not fudging it too bad. That's part of the world we are in right now. Again, I think if we put our heads in the sand, we are probably losing ground. Don't want to do that.

Q. Just seemed like LeVar was headed toward the defensive line, and that changed; was that a quick deal?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: You know, that was really -- I think everybody was just assuming that, and I didn't step in and say bad assumption. Just this overall situation starting with Phil moving forward, you know, where I was at in December was one place and then I just -- we had the luxury of time so it gave me some time to think out different scenarios. And then obviously Norm's retirement evolved into more than that, just filling one spot; we ended up with three spots.

I think just considering all of that gave me some opportunity to maybe think some things out. I think that's really what January is for. So had a lot of different scenarios in my mind and the more I weighed it out, I just felt this was really going to be a win/win situation for us.

And just on that front, you know, I've got some of the reports; we'll look a little different defensively next year. It's not going to be wholesale different, but we will be different offensively, too. Regardless, had Norm and Ken stayed, we were at that point where we wanted to go back and look -- we do this every year, but I thought in all regards to our program, we needed to look at things as thoroughly as possible.

Just so happens we have some transition that accompanies that and with that transition it gave us an opportunity to bring in three people with different perspectives and ideas. Greg's experience level is certainly different in terms of longevity, but both in a short amount of time, both Brian and LeVar have already contributed a lot of good ideas. LeVar has been doing that from a different seat. Long story short, to me it was all about let's get the three best coaches in here we can get and figure out where the best spots for them were and I'm really just excited about all the moves right now.

Q. LeVar's change -- not change I'm assuming, was it who filled the defensive coordinator's spot?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Not really. I don't know if this answers that question, but I even had LeVar possibly filling a couple of spots. In other words, what I was thinking about, the openings, it was really getting the best people, but the best people for us in the right spots. I felt like LeVar, we could have gone ahead with keeping LeVar in the defensive line. That was one I had in my mind certainly, and like I mentioned there were

a couple spots on offense he could have fit in, and even a year ago, when it looked like we might have an opening, I thought of that immediately, too.

LeVar as a person and as a player and what he's done since he finished his career here, just he's one of the guys that I've felt would always be a great fit here and we have got a couple other guys now that are not on our staff that I feel the same way about.

But it's got to be the right time, right place, all that type of thing, and probably would have been that way a couple years ago for LeVar quite frankly, because this is when the opening came. That's how it worked out.

Q. The transition, you talked about transitioning on the field and what you guys do. The coaching staff, it was a natural type of thing, would you have to go on the other route if it wasn't natural, like Norm retiring and Ken leaving, would you have considered the axe I guess?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I was perfectly happy with the people we've had here. We were not so dumb two years ago. We had a pretty good football team and everybody thought we were pretty smart then. I've been of the school for a long time, if you've got the right people, you work with them.

Same thing with players. And I feel like our staff makeup, I thought we had a tremendous staff in '09 and I don't think it's been any different the last couple of years. Like anything else, you have to go back and look at things and what can we do better. If there are things we can do offensively, defensively, special teams, recruiting; those are the main thing; and the way we present and teach to our players currently on campus, obviously retention is a big thing in college athletics, all sports.

Those are the things we're really focused on. Had the staff stayed intact from where it was in November it would have been fine. But again, with change comes opportunity to put some new people in, and I think all three guys really bring something to the program. That's what I'm excited about.

Q. Did you figure out where you're going to put LeVar and Brian recruiting?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Right now we are looking at shifting Brian to Ohio and letting him concentrate on that and LeVar is probably looking

at Kansas City down to Dallas and as you can imagine, Greg will be a great helper there. I don't want Greg recruiting full-time. That's not my intention.

But I think in the initial stage, certainly the spring, he can certainly help LeVar get around, introduce him to a lot of people down there. It would be silly to not take advantage of that opportunity. So that's kind of what we are settled on.

Q. Going to stay in Florida?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Will probably spot that. I think that's what we are going to do there, and I'm not sure how we will do that spot, if we have reason to be there. We have some good connections with schools that we'll keep following up on that.

Q. Ken kind of hit the northeast corridor up there.

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: We'll probably spot there, too, again. If we have a connection, good reason to go but we are going to try to squeeze our eyes down a little bit and keep trying to be as thorough as we can and making sure we are not driving by anybody that can help us, help us with the program. Maybe find a Karl Klug out there somewhere. They are not only in Minnesota, they are everywhere. So find a couple guys like that.

Q. In New England, was Brian on the path of becoming an offensive coordinator someday?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: Perhaps. Hard to predict that. Seems like people were pleased with him up there. Got good feedback from a lot of folks and think he's doing a good job. I think in his case, LeVar was gone, he played seven years in the National Football League, so we felt really good when LeVar came back here a couple years ago.

We felt in Brian's case, not only am I his employer now, but I've also been his dad for 20 years I guess; but knowing that he wanted to get into coaching, which, you know, to me I thought it was really important that he get some distance from here. He got that as a player for a year in Atlanta. He got exposed to the system there.

Got a little exposure in New Orleans and now he's had a different system in New England. From a personnel standpoint, picking guys up at the airport, starting there, but got into evaluations

and that type of thing and certainly the last two years has been coaching on the field. I know the dirty jobs that he's done up there and I say that, I mean, dirty in terms of jobs nobody else would want or accept, especially at the pay they had him at early.

So that's part of coaching. That's how all of us get started. I think the big thing for him, I really thought it was important for him to get some distance from us. I thought that before he even thought about ever coming back here. You know, or if he had never come back, he needed to get out and learn from other people.

Q. How long did he -- I don't want to say bug, but how long did he petition to come back here?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: He really didn't other than a couple of years ago, tried to put in for a GA job, trying to think when that would have been. Whoever left last time -- when Dan (Clark) left, I guess, yeah, he tugged my shoulder on that one. I said, "You're out of your mind."

But today -- that's what it's all about is learning from people and don't worry about that. Yeah, the big thing is just stay there and keep working. He really didn't petition.

Q. Was Bill upset at all that you took him away from New England?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: No, that was -- I don't want to say a hard call, but the one thing I didn't want to do was ever do anything to danger our relationship or damage it in any way. Bill's dad was a coach, so I think he fully understood the whole dynamics of the situation. He couldn't have been better about it and I'm very appreciative of that. I'm equally as appreciative of the opportunity that he gave Brian up there.

Q. Is there something to the NFL thing, LeVar comes in after several years, Brian's coached in the league and had success, does that resonate with kids more?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I don't think it hurts us from a recruiting standpoint at all and from a coaching standpoint, both sides of the ball, our players respect where these guys have been, their experiences.

And the thing I point to, and I think what I saw LeVar as a player here, maybe not so much in '99, but 2000 to me, he was a guy, you could very

easily envision him being a coach, a successful coach, and I think Brian, safe to say the same thing about him. They are both leaders and they are guys that knew more than what their job was to do. They kind of saw the big picture. A lot of times you can identify players that would be successful in coaching and I think in this case it was that way with both of them. I think their experiences in the NFL certainly will play well on a lot of fronts for us.

Q. LeVar, how do you feel about this?

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: I'm going to pass the baton. You're on your own.

LeVAR WOODS: Thanks, Coach. No, I appreciate the opportunity from Coach Ferentz.

To answer your question, I'm over the moon excited. Outstanding opportunity for me. I can't say enough about Coach Ferentz. I'm glad he left the room, actually, because I have a hard time not getting emotional when I talk about him and what he means to me.

Also Coach Doyle and Norm, just from this particular program, those three guys mean a lot to me and over my career as a player, I feel like without them I would not have been able to accomplish some of the things that have happened for me in my life.

I'm very excited for the opportunity. Obviously this is my first job. Coach Ferentz, I mentioned to him that I feel like he sort of went out on a limb for me, since this is my first job. But he reassured me that he does not feel like he's going out on a limb, but that still remains to be seen.

Coach Ferentz is a person I viewed as a mentor since the day that I left here as a senior in 2000. I've always viewed him that way and it's been a great opportunity for me to leave this program. As coach mentioned earlier, to leave the program and actually see how the University of Iowa and how the state of Iowa is viewed outside of here -- for myself, a unique opportunity, because I came here under Hayden Fry and so I feel like I know this program from a few different angles.

Knowing this program under Hayden Fry, been through the rebuilding process with Coach Ferentz, some lean, rough years early on in '99 and 2000, and then leaving here, going to the NFL, having that experience, which was a very unique experience, and seeing how the university and the program are viewed from people in the National Football League.

A lot of respect is given to players from Iowa and also the coaches at Iowa and the head coach, Coach Ferentz. A lot of people in the NFL

respect Coach Ferentz, which is widely known. But seeing the program from that angle, now coming back and seeing it from an administrative assistant's role, seeing the sort of behind the scenes, how the university works; it's sort of funny when you leave as a student athlete here, you really have no idea how many people are really involved in what it takes for the program to run smoothly and for you to be successful as a student athlete. There are hundreds of people that are involved.

And I think coming back in the role I came back in, at this program, sort of opened my eyes to that, if you will, and allowed me to see how everything is run and all of the people that are involved in helping the student athletes become successful.

But, you know, seeing the program from all those different angles I think will help going forward. Now, of course, obviously I had a little bit of experience in 2010 with Norm's injury, and also the bowl game last year with Coach Kaczynski, those are unique experiences, thrust in action in different roles, different areas. But I feel good about that.

Obviously this is a great opportunity for me personally. I feel very fortunate, like the most fortunate man in the world, I get to coach a position I played at the university that I attended for a coach that I have the utmost respect for. Get to work with a great group of young linebackers. And I'm excited, and I have been for a few years. I get to do this in a city that I love in Iowa City. My wife and I wanted to raise our kids here. This is a place we have always talked about wanting to raise our kids from the state of Iowa. I grew up in the state of Iowa. Played high school football here. It was great for me to be able to start all of the opportunities right here in a place that I love.

Now, getting the opportunity to work with a group of men that I've known the longest, 13 years, I've seen them as players and worked alongside them in my administrative role, now getting to work alongside them in a coaching role; you talk about the opportunity for me to learn from a guy like Phil Parker who I've known since the day he walked in here in 1999; a guy who I have the utmost respect for in Darrell Wilson, outstanding teacher, outstanding coach, great motivator and as you guys know, he's an outstanding recruiter so I get to learn all those things from him. Reese Morgan, the man from 2000 when he first got here, I have

respected him from his teaching standpoint, he's an unbelievable teacher. Very passionate guy, very passionate about his players and also another outstanding recruiter. All three of those men I get to work alongside with.

So for me, I feel like this -- I don't like the word luck, but I'm the luckiest guy in the world, the most fortunate guy in the world and do all of those things and be able to learn from those people. Obviously the rest of the guys on staff that I've been around for or known in some capacity for the last ten to 13 years -- so I'm ecstatic and excited and look forward to the opportunity.

Q. Is there a sense of comfort, considering your role as an administrative assistant? Your role changed from time to time, and now that you have a set job and it's obviously something that you're passionate about --

LeVAR WOODS: I'm definitely not comfortable right now because I'm constantly learning. Every single second I'm learning something new, and again, this is a defense that I played in, however long ago that was, 13, 14 years. But in between all of that time, I've had seven different head coaches, six different defensive coordinators, so I've been around all those different defenses.

Now, fast forward 13 years, or however long, ten years since I've been back, or been back four years, but ten-year span, now, things have changed, things have evolved and we don't call things the same way, things are a little bit different. So for myself, I'm not very comfortable in that, which I shouldn't be because I'm still learning. I always want to be learning and want the players to always be learning.

Comfort isn't the right word. I think the surroundings and knowing the people and the faces and knowing where to go and who to talk to and all those things definitely comfortable from that standpoint. But the overall comfort in the job that I'm in, no, not at all right now.

Q. When you came here in 2008, administrative assistant's job, 45 grand maybe a year; kind of a leap of faith, was it not?

LeVAR WOODS: I know when I found out how much I was making -- I thought I was making more when they reclassified the position and made it a full-time position, I thought I was making more beforehand. But yeah, it's sort of a leap of faith. My wife and I didn't come here to do the coaching

thing. It was, basically we wanted to raise our kids in Iowa, and Coach Ferentz said there's an opportunity to come on the staff, sort of feel your way through and look at the program from that standpoint.

I do remember, shoot, it was a couple -- probably about six months before I moved back -- in talking with Coach Ferentz about coaching, I told him that if I got into it, there were certain people that I wanted to learn from, obviously Coach being one, and if I did that, I wanted to start from the bottom up so I could learn the process of how everything works and learn how the defense is built. Obviously I'm a defensive guy from that mind-set and how our program is built. So I don't know if he recalls that it or not, but I remember sitting in his office talking about that.

So administrative assistant, I got to do everything imaginable for this program and work in different arenas that I think will help carry me on forward in this career.

Q. You've worn a lot of different hats, had a lot of different experiences as a player and here. What do you think prepared you most for this position now?

LeVAR WOODS: I think like you said, wearing different hats, being multiple and being able to fulfill different roles. A lot of different roles from the time that I left here as a player, obviously that plays into it a lot from knowing this area, knowing what this program is built on, and then in the NFL, again, I go back to seven different head coaches and six coordinators, and that's in the span of seven years.

So you pick up a lot of football knowledge from that standpoint and also how programs are run, ways programs that are run successfully and others that were not so successful. I've been around a lot of coaches, a lot of really good coaches, and a few coaches that I wouldn't want to learn from.

But then fast forward it to administrative assistant role, all of the different areas from recruiting, from operations, from building a website, social media sort of came on out of nowhere for me. I've never done any of those things until over the span of the last four years.

Q. You mentioned -- we asked Kirk about assuming you would be defensive line coach. Did you assume that?

LeVAR WOODS: No, I didn't assume anything. I was by the seat of my pants, that whole experience.

I was looking forward to the opportunity, because again, another great group of young defensive linemen and guys that are very eager to work. And the opportunity to coach two All-Big Ten players, Mike Daniels and Broderick Binns, Tom Nardo, Joe Forgy and Lebron Daniel, those seniors, having an opportunity to coach those seniors in one game; you can't buy that opportunity.

I'm very thankful for the way that those guys responded. But after the bowl game, I didn't know what was going to happen. I was hoping for that opportunity, and the linebacker thing sort of came out of nowhere for me because I sort of had my mind set on defensive line. I was starting to get to know those guys a little bit better. Hopefully that answers your question.

Q. Your age and that you played in the NFL, how much do you think that helps you in recruiting?

LeVAR WOODS: To be honest I didn't think about the recruiting aspect until Coach Johnson mentioned playing in the NFL helps. I look at it more so from the standpoint that I came through this program; and came through this program and have had success after I left this program.

You know, I guess coaching isn't the only thing I can do right now. It's something I want to do and I'm passionate about. My experience through this program as a student athlete through the school, through the city, through the fans, the community, I think that sort of helps me in recruiting more so than playing the NFL because I feel like I try to represent the program the way that it's been designed to be built and having success -- the one thing I'll always say about Coach Ferentz that really strikes me, and not only just Coach Ferentz but the entire staff about player development and person development.

You cannot come to this program; you cannot come to the University of Iowa and be halfway in on academics and halfway in on football. You have to be full force on both or else you'll quickly find your way out.

And along with that, are the citizenship in the program and just becoming a better person. I look at that more so as an advantage in recruiting more than playing in the NFL. Obviously playing experience at the linebacker position helps and

also special teams that I played in the NFL, I think that helps from a coaching perspective. Maybe adds a little bit of credibility, but again I look to the actual being a product of this program more so than the NFL.

Q. Do you have aspirations of being a head coach some day?

LeVAR WOODS: I do, yeah.

Q. Coach suggested in '99 or 2000 he could have envisioned you returning at some point to coach. Was that in your mind at that time?

LeVAR WOODS: No. I do recall one instance where I met with Coach, and I was talking about playing in the NFL and what it's going to take for me to get to the NFL and that I was most likely going to be a free agent.

A couple pieces of advice he gave me, he said, "Look, if you ever think about getting into coaching, give me a call and I'll advise you against it." (Chuckling). But I have not reminded him of that yet.

But I never really saw that, I never looked at football and tried to learn, I had an excellent teacher in Norm Parker. Obviously Norm is a genius, it's his system, he taught it from the evolution from the very beginning and to be able to learn that way, I think you learn more about how -- you not only learn your own position, you learn everybody's position which helps in coaching. I definitely think that helped going forward as a player. But looking into being a coach -- I was on track to be a teacher.

Q. The linebackers the past couple years have had a tough go, more because of injuries than anything else. Have you looked at the guys with fresh eyes? Do you have any ideas?

LeVAR WOODS: I wouldn't necessarily say fresh eyes, because it is a position I've played and it's a position that I've had the opportunity, along with learning from Darrell Wilson, who again is an outstanding coach.

And you can see, I've been watching tape all day up until now, and you can see that the guys are well coached. Again, you mention injuries, which happens. That's football. But I think the way things are going to shake out, still unknown right now.

The one thing I've mentioned to the guys is that it's going to be different than it has been for them up until this point for the majority. They are all young guys. They really don't know any different. But it is going to be different around here. A lot of unknown things, and this is -- when I had these meetings, it was before we hired an offensive coordinator.

But you know, what we do defensively may be called different, maybe tweaked different, I may ask you to read something different or look at it a different way, which, you know, can sort of lead to uncomfot but it keeps people on their toes which makes for a competitive environment.

When things are competitive it brings the best out of people. The people that are competitive, that are true competitors, which is what we want in players, those guys will rise to the top and those guys will help lead the defense and help our team improve.

Q. This staff has not had a lot of turnover; were you worried this opportunity might not come?

LeVAR WOODS: To be honest I wasn't. I'm just happy to be back in Iowa City and be back in the state of Iowa. I obviously grew up here and love the state, love the area. As far as the opportunity I've had a couple opportunities to look elsewhere but I wanted to be here. So I'm here. Whatever role Coach envisioned me in, that's what I wanted to be.

Q. Last couple schools you were looking at, and why did you pick Iowa -- out of high school?

LeVAR WOODS: Nebraska contingent where I grew up, Iowa State and Iowa. I picked Iowa because I thought that it would give me the best opportunity to achieve the goals that I wanted to achieve in earning my degree and hopefully play in the NFL. That's why I chose Iowa.

When I came here, it was just a different feel for me. Obviously, it was just a different coach in Coach Fry; but when I got to Iowa City and got around the city, got around the people in the university, I just had a different feeling when I came here.

Q. There have not been a lot of University of Iowa graduates on coaches staff, at least recently, how does it benefit to have you and Brian on the staff?

LeVAR WOODS: That's a good question. I think that with two former players, we have all seen players that are on the team right now, it sort of gives them a different view of -- we know what they are going through and sometimes when things are hard they can come to us and we can say, look, it was the same way ten years ago.

As you know, this program has not changed a whole lot but it has been successful because it has not changed a whole lot. The true core values and things that make this program successful will always remain here.

And I think going through -- going forward from now a coaching perspective, it's being able to just let them know what's going to happen or how things work and sometimes they don't believe you when you say this is going to happen, right, and I'm telling you, this is going to happen and then boom, all of a sudden, I don't believe you, I don't believe you, and boom, it happens.

Right now that sort of gives more credibility and being products of this program I think just helps show them moving forward in the future.

Q. You got to go on the road recruiting; what was that like for you?

LeVAR WOODS: It was wild. It's a whole new ballgame. All of my recruiting that I have done up to this point has been here on campus, and it's a whole different ballgame when you're sitting in the living room across from mom and dad and they are asking questions that you're not quite sure how to answer or know the answer to.

It's a different ballgame but it was a great experience. Again, I got to this year, I got to travel with Phil Parker, who again, I had no idea how good of a recruiter he was until I actually got into a home with him. I was like, man, he's unbelievable.

And to get to travel the road with Darrell Wilson again, who as everyone knows, is an outstanding recruiter. I got to travel with Lester Erb who is another outstanding recruiter. And also 2010, when I was able to fill in for Norm a little bit, they allowed me to go on the road for one day and got to see the route that Coach Morgan always talks about but no one quite believes he does all this work, right. But then actually doing it and seeing, holy cow, this is pretty intense. Just recruiting the Iowa and Omaha area how intense it is.

But it was a great experience for me and I learned a lot and I look forward to carrying some of

those things forward.

BRIAN FERENTZ: For me, like LeVar, a lot of familiar faces out there. I don't have a lot to say. I think in the last couple weeks, it's been more than a couple weeks now; about a month ago, I heard myself talk more than I probably care to for the next couple years.

So I'll just say very excited to be back in Iowa City. I was born here. I was kind of raised here, bounced around a little bit, but obviously a player here and I love it here. So I'm very happy to be back and I'm happy to be a part of the program again.

And with that, fire away.

Q. What about moving from Belichick to Ferentz?

BRIAN FERENTZ: It's good to see you, Bob. That's a heavy question right out of the gate. You're supposed to help me out.

I'll warn you guys all by starting with this: For the last four years, I've been studying media relations, and I've been taking a lot of notes. But in all seriousness, it's different. I'd start out, right out of the gate, I'll just address it.

The head coach is my father so certainly that's a unique situation. But I played here and my head coach was my dad as a player, and I think as an assistant coach, it's not much different.

I was asked a question a couple of weeks ago at the Super Bowl about being on Coach Belichick's staff and my answer was simply, it's our job as assistant coaches to make sure that the head coach's vision reaches the players, and I don't view my job any differently here. That's basically my job, and I'm going to do it.

Sometimes it may be easy to disagree with the vision as a gut reaction, because I'm more familiar here with the head coach than Coach Belichick, but my job description I don't think has changed.

Q. What will it be like to coach your younger brother?

BRIAN FERENTZ: That will be interesting. But again, I'll go back to this. It's certainly unique, and it's exciting and it's special and it's all those things.

But at the end of the day, he's a player, I'm his coach. It's my job to make sure that all of our players play at the standard that we set here and

what we expect out of them is pretty simple, to play with great effort, and to do their best.

And for everybody, the level of expectation is a little different, but those are the base expectations. Whether he's my brother or anybody else, it's my job to make sure that he lives up to that, and I wouldn't foresee any problems with that. I think he's acquainted himself pretty nicely in those regards, and it's my job to make sure that continues and just try not to screw him up too bad.

Q. Was there any hesitancy on your part to come back and work for your dad?

BRIAN FERENTZ: Well, luckily for me, I don't call plays, so part of that is taken care of. Hopefully Coach Davis will deflect from of that criticism for me. Those guys are usually the first lightning rods.

Obviously there's probably going to be a little more scrutiny and a little more attention paid to the group that I coach, the offensive line. But that's fair, and I would argue that on any staff and at any program in the country, there is always going to be a little bit more attention placed on the offensive line. When things don't go well up front, everybody sees it.

There's an old adage, not that I'm an old guy, but there's an old adage that everybody is an offensive line coach and everybody truly is. Because when it goes wrong, it's very easy to see. When it goes right, sometimes not as apparent, not as apparent. But would I expect any extra scrutiny? Sure. I'm realistic. I think that's natural.

But again, I just go back to this, I experienced it, I lived it for five years, and there was a fair share of that at certain points in my playing career, and I would expect it in my coaching career. I don't shy away from it. I'm not excited about it, but it's part of the job. It's part of the job description.

Q. Does this move say that you want to be a college coach?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I think move says I want to be a coach. I had an excellent experience in New England. I very much enjoyed my four years there, and it was a tremendous experience on a lot of different levels. I got to work with excellent football players, excellent people, excellent coaches. It was a very good situation.

For me it just seemed like a natural move for a lot of reasons. This is home, this is family,

and more than just family with my family, but I feel like this program is family for me. It's very important to me. It's very near and dear to my heart, and I think this is an exciting time here. We are all excited. I think change can be a very healthy thing and I think it was time for a change for me personally to grow. Hopefully I can be a part of the change of this program to do the same thing.

So I don't know where I want to coach. I know I would like to coach. I enjoy coaching. I enjoy the teaching aspect of it. But I was fortunate, I coached very young players in New England. The only difference was they had a lot more distractions.

Q. At what point after the Super Bowl did you come to that decision that you just felt that a change was necessary for you?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I want to be really clear and say that it wasn't a negative thing, that change. First of all, I think Coach Belichick did a very good job. He would tell everybody after the Super Bowl, "Everybody needs to take some time and decompress before anybody makes any decisions about anything; players, coaches, anyone."

Obviously disappointing to lose a game like that, and in a game like that where we felt like we were as close as you could get without doing it. We took some time, but it just felt right, and to me it was a no-brainer, if that makes any sense, to come home and coach here and to be a part of this program that I feel very strongly about and that's pretty special. It has a special place in my heart. It was a pretty easy decision at the end of the day. That's the best I could say for that. But the time frame, I don't know.

Q. Take the recruiting test yet?

BRIAN FERENTZ: One of the first things I did.

Q. How did that go? What is it like? Is it elementary? Is it hard?

BRIAN FERENTZ: It's a little different than anything I've been used to. Was it hard? I studied. I studied harder than I've studied probably since college. Actually staying up at night cramming for something but it wasn't -- I was prepared, let's put it that way. Was it what I expected? No, but I didn't know what to expect.

It's like anything else now, you sit in front of a computer. You know what it's like? It's like

taking the driver's test, you forget to renew your license and you go in there and it's too late and you have to take the exam; that's what it was like. The common sense questions -- but there's one or two that even with the book in front of you, you're really not sure of the interpretation. That's why there's compliance officers.

Q. That's the new wrinkle.

BRIAN FERENTZ: Made a difference for me, right out of the gate and I've been exposed to a couple things. Social media being one of them. Not something that I had to fool around with in New England and I've learned what an effective communication tool it is. I've seen it firsthand. It's eye opening.

But the whole recruiting aspect, it's a never-ending process. Something you don't really deal with in the NFL. You have your evaluation period in the spring where you're going to go and see players, you're going to go to the Combine, you're going to do all these things. A lot of the work is done for you; by the time those names hit your desk, it's a pretty short list.

Here it's a little different. You're kind of looking at everything and it's been a learning experience. It is constant, very constant.

But I'll say, this, also: It's something I've enjoyed so far. I think it's good to interact with the high school kids, guys we are recruiting and guys that we are going after. I think that's a credit to our program. The guys we go after are kids I'm interested in interacting with. It's not a chore; it's enjoyable for me and it's easy for me, because I do believe in the things we are doing here. I believe in them fundamentally. I don't know what LeVar would have said; I imagine it would have been something similar.

To me, having played here, it's a tremendous advantage when you're out there trying to put the program and plant that seed in people's minds that this is a good place to be, because I don't have to point any further than myself.

I would say I've had some measure of success in my short life and I'm not going to qualify it or interested in being braggadocios, but I would not have been able to do any of the things I've done without playing football here.

Coach Brad Smith, he retired two nights ago as the wrestling coach at City High, which was a big surprise. My brother just finished there, my

youngest brother, and I guess what my point is in a roundabout way, without all of the people that have done things for me in my life, like Coach Brad Smith, all of the coaches I've had here, a lot of them are still on staff, I would not be where I am.

So it's very easy for me to go out there and say good things about the University of Iowa or City High Wrestling, because those are things that positively affected me. When you are sitting down with a recruit, whether it's the recruit or his parents, it not a schtick, it's not a line. I believe what I'm telling you. I believe it. And you may disagree and that's fine. But I lived it and it's very important to me.

Q. How can your experiences here help you as you work with the guys?

BRIAN FERENTZ: Hopefully I know a little bit about playing the position. That would be a starting point. My experience as a player here, hopefully I can relate to the players. I think the most important thing, and I learned this from people that are a lot smarter than me and have a lot more experience than me, is relate to your players. Clichés like, kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care, things like that. Those are true things; there's a reason they are clichés.

I think it's important that you are able to relate to your players, and I'd start by saying that nobody was better at that than Reese Morgan, and that's why he's going to be so tremendous with the defensive line. I think not to get off subject, but our defensive line needs encouragement and they need to be built up and I think there's nobody better for that than Coach Morgan. I think he's going to do a great job with them.

Because of those qualities, we are losing a tremendous leader at the offensive line position. I don't hope to replace Coach Morgan or hope to be Coach Morgan. I hope to be Brian Ferentz, but hopefully I can relate to players the way he did and build a relationship with these guys, trust. We all have to trust each other and they have to trust in me and I have to trust in them.

What I've told those guys, fortunately I've been able to be around them now for about three weeks. It's been great. Not to get off subject, but that's one of the hardest things about coaching in the NFL, the season ends and your players are gone. And they are gone until you bring them back, six, seven, eight weeks later. For us, it would have been shorter this year in New England, but it's a long time to be not really coaching.

Because that's why we do this. We don't do it for any of the notoriety, that sometimes is very good; but like the earlier questions, can sometimes be not so great, which obviously doesn't bother us too much, but our wives and so on, they tend to -- nobody likes to read those things. But we are used to them. The wives sometimes not so much.

To be back here where you're coaching pretty much year-round, your players are in the building, that's great. But that's what you do; that's why you do it. That's what's fun about it.

But what I told those guys was simply, they have my trust. They would have to lose that, which I told them, but I have to earn theirs because they don't know me. So basically we are working under the premise that they have my trust completely until they prove otherwise, and I need to go earn their through the spring and summer.

And if we can get to that point by the season where these guys are trusting me and I'm trusting them; and same thing for our whole team. We all need to trust each other. We have had changes on the coaching staff, and that's part of getting to know each other and building trust, is part of what being a team is about. If I can relate to the players, hopefully that's where my experience will come into play.

Everything else, that's just clinic talk. You have to be able to teach the players when you go in the room, and hopefully I can do that. Otherwise it's going to be a pretty short-lived experiment, I imagine.

Q. How big of an advantage will it be to have former offensive line coaches, Reese and your father, on the staff?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I think it's a great advantage. I was very fortunate in New England to be around a guy named Dante Scarnecchia, who is the best offensive line coach in the NFL in my opinion, and that was a tremendous resource.

To be back around my dad who has a boatload of experience coaching the position, although I would argue, he's been out of it 14 years now, so he may not have as much recent experience as he would care to think.

But obviously Coach Morgan has been doing it a long time and staying in contact with Coach as I matriculated, as did he, I feel very fortunate to have a lot of the resources that I have and I know that if I have a question or I'm not sure about something, I can get a pretty good answer. I

don't know who will give it to me but I have some options.

Q. Looking at what you have in front of you, do you have any idea how it will shake out?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I think we are looking for five offensive linemen right now. I think that's what we are looking for. You guys have probably heard that spiel before here.

We are looking to put our five best guys on the field and what we are going to do this spring is try to figure out who they are. We are not sure right now. We know we have two guys right now coming back that have started a lot of games and other guys coming back that have played in a lot of games.

We feel like we have a good mix of youth and experience coming back. Obviously we don't have that line where you can look at it and say, well, these five guys played these five spots last year. That's what they are going to play this year. I think this is a really good thing and I think it's going to develop some competition in the room, and I think that's healthy. Any time we can be competing and pushing each other to be better, it's going to be healthy.

I'm looking to prove myself as a coach to them, to the other coaches, to the other players on the team, to the rest of the team period; and I think they are looking to prove themselves as players. That's a good combination, and hopefully it's going to be productive for us.

As far as who is going to play what, I can't tell you right now. And I'm not ready to anoint anybody with a position. I think that's the beauty of having a fresh start. It's truly a fresh start. Coach Davis addressed some of our players this morning and told them that. He said, hey, guys, I don't have a preconceived notion of everyone and everybody is an open book. We start writing it, now, but to me, that's the beauty of it.

The guys are all going to have a chance regardless of what's happened in the past, whether they are happy with their lot in life or unhappy with it, right now they are all take ownership now and start moving forward. The same applies to me, too. Is.

Q. When Kirk announced that Reese was going to the defensive line, who calls who?

BRIAN FERENTZ: We talk a lot. We always talk a lot. I know he made a crack about

that last year which of course my mom -- it was true. My wife did not hesitate to point out to me that it was true.

So we spoke a lot and once he started to crystalize things in his mind, I think we all know that he's very meticulous; he takes his time and measures twice before he cuts once. I've learned well; I've learned from him, and personally I think it's the right way to do things. We live in a very immediate society and people want answers now, something changes, they want to see what's next, what's next, what's next. Well, sometimes what's next is not immediately clear.

So I think just like with the entire staff, it started to crystallize as time went on, the pieces started to fall into place in his mind and obviously once he had an idea of what he wanted to do, he reached out to me. Wasn't much to reach -- we talk a lot.

But for me like I said it was a no-brainer. You can't say no to your father. And for me personally it was hard to say no to Iowa. I know that sounds cheesy and corny, but it was, it really was. This is a special place. I believe that.

Q. Coach Davis talked about the meetings you had, dusk to dark, what's that been like?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I think he was talking to somebody the other day, and he said that it must be like getting divorced after being married a long time and then all of a sudden having to date. That was the process of finding new coordinators for him. He had been married a long time to a couple of guys, and I think he had become married to the system, the terminology, the things like that; it's natural, comfortable.

And I think what's been very healthy is it's been a melting pot of ideas. Obviously Coach Davis is the offensive coordinator, he's in charge. The head coach hired him for a reason, and that is to be the leader of our offense, and everything goes through him. I think that's the way it should be. That's the chain of command. That's why it is what it is.

But I will say this about Coach Davis: What makes him such an excellent leader, he's a tremendous listener. And he's been very open to everybody's thoughts and their ideas moving forward but at the end of the day, he has the final say and he's putting everything together the way that he envisions this offense, which is the way it's

going to be and the way it should be and I think I'm excited about it personally.

But it's been interesting. It's been a lot of fun because it's coaching. It's back to football. With all of the other things, I think for our head coach, for my dad, for Coach Davis being out of it a year, this is fun to be back in here coaching and throwing ideas on the board, arguing with each other, having discussions.

It's a really healthy thing, and I think it's been healthy for everybody and I think it will be really good for our players, too, to be exposed to some new things. We started that process and I think that's exciting. I just think the players are excited about it. You'll get a crack at them in a couple weeks. I think learning new things for anybody is exciting. You get very comfortable with things that you know and that you feel good about.

I mean, it's not my job to sit up here and tell what you are going to be offensively. But I know as someone who is very interesting in learning football and the identity of this football team and this program has been built on being tough, being physical, being smart, doing all those things. That's not going to change. But are we going to go out there and be the same? No. I don't think that's the answer right now. We have got new coaches. I'm excited about where we are going right now.

Q. How would you assess your coaching style in terms of the way you've developed?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I don't know. That's such a hard question. I think all people are very reflective. You have to be analytical and you have to be honest about yourself and kind of always constantly evaluate how you do things. But my coaching style is pretty simple. I just try to be myself. I try to make sure that we teach kids; that we encourage kids; that we are positive.

But then we can also be demanding and we can demand a standard, and I think that's what players need. That's why there are coaches. You have to enforce a standard. Any player is going to have goals and they are going to see themselves a certain place and most players see themselves at a very high place, as they should. But a coach's job is to see what that player can't see and to push them to that level that he doesn't really know exists, because it's human nature. That's not always comfortable for the player. I think that's important, too, to take them out of their comfort zone a little bit.

Q. Given how much time you spend on the phone -- what will it be like a couple doors down?

BRIAN FERENTZ: Sometimes it's better to be on the phone because you can hang up. (Laughter) it's been pretty fun so far. It's special. I think to sit up here and kind of minimize it, that's not true, for one, and it doesn't do anybody any good. In full disclosure, it's been a lot of fun and it's been pretty special. It's a unique situation -- although not that unique actually.

I received a note from Shane Beamer the other day from Virginia Tech. I met Shane when he was down at South Carolina through a couple mutual friends. He sent me a note the other day. So it's not that unique. I think he's like the associate head coach, so I've got a long way to go. I'm not quite there yet.

Q. Coach mentioned with LeVar there could have been several scenarios of positions that he went to. Is this the only position that you wanted or would you have come back for anything?

BRIAN FERENTZ: I just want to coach football. This was the position that was offered to me and this was the position I took. I couldn't say for sure anything else. I felt like this was a very natural move for my growth, personally, to go from being responsible for basically two guys to at least five.

I was happy about that challenge. I'm embracing that challenge. I'm excited about that challenge. That's kind of what I want to do but I would have been happy to coach. I don't see myself as just a line coach.

The world to me is a little bit bigger than the offensive line. That's what's changed since I left. That was the best part about being on defense for a year and then being over on offense for a year with everybody, doing quality control and working with the tight ends where you really, in both worlds, for the last couple of years, I've had about as much exposure to everything as I could and I really enjoyed that.

So I just like coaching football, and I really believe that if you can coach, if you can teach, which I'm not sure I can, I've got to figure that out. I'm trying my best. But guys like Coach Davis, guys like my dad, guys like Coach Morgan, they can do it anywhere. You can teach, you can do it

anywhere, and you can teach anything.

Obviously you talk about teachers, this guy is a history teacher; all right, well that's his specialty. My guess is if you asked him to go teach a math class, if he's a real good teacher, in a week, he'd knock it out of the park; he's kill it, because he knows how to teach the kids and he knows how to impart the wisdom and pass on the knowledge. That's why Coach Morgan is able to seem -- that's why I'm not coaching the defensive line; probably not a good enough teacher. Coach Morgan is.

Q. What about coaching the Super Bowl, what was that like?

BRIAN FERENTZ: It was pretty awesome. The last time I'll mention it, because for me, one thing, and I keep talking about New England a little too much. I'm interested in moving forward; that's the past.

However, I'll acknowledge coaching the Super Bowl, that's pretty awesome. We came up a little short, but the further you get away from it, the more you are able to reflect on it and just realize how special that is; what a special opportunity. You grow up watching it, wondering what it's like to be a part of it and then you're there.

One thing I'll say that is interesting, all the hoopla, once you get past everything else and you get on the field to warm up in the pregame, it's just football. Although seeing the look in some of our players' eyes, especially our young guys after the game, that was the hardest part for me personally. That was devastating. I'll coach a long time and who knows, I may be able to get back there; I may not, that's why you have to cherish it.

But some of those guys, a guy like Brian Waters, who is not one of our young guys, was one of our veteran guys but 12-, 13-year guy, never won a playoff game before he went to New England this year, and to be there in the Super Bowl in the twilight of his career, I don't know what the future holds for him, but to be that close, and not win it, you really feel pain for those guys. But the overall experience, everything you think it would be.

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