

September 10, 2013



An interview with:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, welcome, everybody. Just to start out for this week, our captains are the same four guys. We've got James and Chris on the defensive side, and Brett Van Sloten and Mark Weisman offensively. I'm not saying we're settled in, but that seems to be the way it's going right now. Certainly happy to get the win last weekend. We've got a big challenge on our hands this week, and we'll get to work starting today. So I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Mark Weisman is up to 50 carries. Is this a reflection of how well he's playing or would you like to spread it out a bit more? (Luke Meredith, Associated Press)

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I think we have four backs we feel good about based on practice and what we've seen so far in games. It's just things are dictated by how the game goes. But Mark's doing a good job, and we're not surprised by that. But certainly we feel good about all four guys.

Q. What do you see from Iowa State? (Bob Brooks, KMRY)

COACH FERENTZ: It will be a tough ballgame like always. Anytime I think we get together, it's usually a pretty good game. I expect him to be ready to go, and they're an aggressive ballclub.

Q. Have they changed anything for philosophy this year? (Bob Brooks, KMRY)

COACH FERENTZ: We've only got one game exposure to it, so they've got some new players that weren't in there last year. Obviously, lost a pair of really good linebackers, but

offensively their quarterback is back, and he came in and did a great job for them last year and the latter part of the season. Picked right up where he left off. He's a very dangerous guy both running the ball and throwing it. So it starts there. They've got a good group of backs, so those two positions look really solid for them.

Q. After watching that one game against UNI, are you tempted to rush the ball every down with Weisman and Bullock? (WHO)

COACH FERENTZ: Well, you know, some of the plays, I don't want to say they were freak plays, but some of the things that happened, just funny things happen in a game sometimes. UNI played really hard and they did a great job certainly, but there was nothing easy out there. Both teams competed hard. It's going to be that way this Saturday, certainly, so. We're going to try to run what we do. We'll try to run the ball, throw the ball, and do a little bit of everything and just try to figure out what's available and then go that direction.

Q. What benefits do you see coming off of a victory as opposed to being in Iowa State's position where they had a bye and had two weeks to prepare for this game? (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: I think we'll know more about that Saturday after the game. You can play that one either way. I don't know if there is an advantage to either side.

Q. How would you rate Conor Boffeli's play so far? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Good. I think he learned a lot about himself at the end of last year when he got in there. He played really well the last several three games. He had as good a spring -- two guys that I thought had good springs of our senior class were he and B.J. Lowery really just

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practiced all 15 days. Hit a level higher than what they had done. He's had a good camp. So Conor is doing a good job out there, and we're counting on him to have a big year.

Q. Do you recall Reese coming to you and telling you that Coach had called and had he already committed at Iowa State? He wanted to see if there was room for him, and do you recall that at all and did you have to think about it very long? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Not really. I don't remember the details. I don't remember the exacts of it. I remember watching him on tape as a tight end at Valley High School and being really impressed with him. Yeah, I don't remember that, but thanks for reminding me.

Q. Do you have a late game day routine a little bit for this week with the light start? (Tom Kakert, hawkeyereport.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we just shift everything. We've played night games before, so just slide things over and keep going.

Q. Do you anticipate Lomax playing this week? (Steve Batterson, Quad-City Times)

COACH FERENTZ: We'll probably know more by Thursday. He's scheduled to practice some today. Not the entire practice, but scheduled to go some. Kind of leveled off last week, which we were hoping to see improvement, and there really wasn't any until like Thursday. So it was kind of late in the week that week. But we expect him to practice partial today and the hopefully the whole thing tomorrow unless he goes backwards.

Q. Does Don Shumpert show you something that kind of justifies you starting him? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, typically, we start the guys that do the best in practice. Right now it's been a close race between him and Tevaun. They both play. You just gauge it daily, gauge it weekly. We don't have many incumbents right now, so it's just a matter of competition and letting the guys work every day.

Q. You didn't redshirt him, you used him on special teams? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he played well on special teams. Shump doesn't say much. He's really a quiet guy, but he works hard, he's a smart player and he's done a good job and has helped us on special teams as well.

Q. You guys have done a good job forcing turnovers when you've played Iowa State the last few years. Is that an aggressiveness on your part or simply following the scheme that you have? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think there is anything that we changed. So I can't really explain it, quite frankly. And last year was one of those deals where we won the turnover battle and lost the game. That's kind of unusual in this series. But last year, that's the way it worked.

Q. I know you always want to beat these guys, but having lost to them the last few times you've faced them, does that kind of amp it up even more this week? (KCCI)

COACH FERENTZ: This is the 2013 season, and we're 1-1 right now, and we want to win every week. I mean, pretty simply, and I'm sure they feel the same way. They've got 11 opportunities left; we've got 10. They're awfully important, every game is awfully important.

Q. Cleaning up penalties, is that a situation where each position coach works with his guys over tape and stuff, or is it just a matter of mental discipline and concentration? What is it? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: They're all different. Typically, not always, but typically penalties are just not concentrating hard enough, not paying close enough attention to some details or being mismatched physically. Sometimes those things happen. But a lot of times, it's just concentration, bad judgment or being mismatched or lazy sometimes. Guys are lazy and grab instead of using their legs.

But we're not going to win games consistently playing the way we did Saturday. We took one penalty intentionally, but we had nine for 95 yards, and that's just not going to cut it. It hasn't been an issue, but it sure was Saturday. If it continues, it will be an issue, so we have to correct that and that's everybody. That's coaches, players, everybody doing a better job.

Q. You guys didn't seem to change what you do on defense for Desmond King. What's that say about him and what's that say about you guys? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: It says, to me, he's a young player who is working hard and currently he's our second most experienced corner out there, so at least for this season. He's working hard, has a good attitude, but he's still young and learning like some of our other guys.

But, I mean, you can't change things wholesale typically for a guy. Maybe if you had a quarterback in there, you'd have to, but he's got to learn what we're doing. He's done a good job of it since he's been here. He's working hard or he wouldn't be in there right now. So we'll keep working him and if Jordan can come back that gives us a little more reinforcement, and we've got Draper and Gavin Smith who is really doing a good job on special teams.

Q. What did Matt VandeBerg show you to get in the game? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it goes back to that point earlier. It's just what guys do in practice. He's practiced well. He's not the biggest guy in the world, you probably noticed that. But he'll grow as we go along. He's really practiced well and made some good catches. He tries to block, and he does what he's supposed to do. So he's really picked things up quickly.

Q. Do you hope to have the receiver group kind of melted down to a solid six? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we didn't put a number on it, but the guys that can do the best in helping us win. If we can get six, that would be great. Then make sure we've got the right rotation going.

Q. How do you feel your defensive line panned out after getting a chance to watch the tape from last Saturday's game, and considering there were really only six or seven guys that saw significant snaps? (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, really we're playing mostly the six right now. Meier's giving us seven, an auxiliary seven, and doing some good things. I think that group's improving. We're

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making progress. We're further along the road than last year at this time, probably, and that's encouraging. So it's just a matter of keep getting better, and we have to do that at every position.

Q. Is Carl Davis here to stay? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Two weeks ago was a big time for him. He's never played -- I guess you could say the same thing about last week too. But he's over 100 snaps now for two games. But, the comparison I made was kind of like he's almost where Scherff was a year ago. So he's grown through practice, performance, all of that. He's at the point now where we consider him an established starter, and he's doing a lot of good things out there. Hopefully, like everybody else he's trying to get better each week too.

Q. How would you assess Rudock's play? (Bob Brooks, KMRY)

COACH FERENTZ: So far, so good. You know, I think he's doing a lot of good things. Kind of like everybody else, there are things he can get better at and do better. But we'll expect him to continue to improve. But his attitude has been great. He seems to be very aware. This is the first time he'll be on the road, first time our team's been on the road, so it's going to be a new experience. This is not an easy environment by any means to walk into. So it will be another degree of difficulty from the challenge standpoint. But really pleased with a lot of things Jake's doing so far.

Q. Did you do anything additional with him for his first road start? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, well, the whole team has to be prepared. It's going to be hostile going in there. It always is. It's a noisy, loud environment. You know, they do a good job of pressing and pushing the envelope with noise and all that kind of stuff right up to the snap. So it makes it tougher on offense. It's just something you have to do.

Q. You practice that stuff with noise, right? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you do. But it's still not the same when it's live.

Q. Can you compare their playing now,

the last few years compared to maybe eight, nine years ago, the environment? (KCCI)

COACH FERENTZ: I can't remember many trips up there in the last 15 years where it hasn't been pretty lively. You know, it's not an easy place to go play.

Q. With the Cyclones coming out on top the last two times, is there something you've learned?

COACH FERENTZ: It's better to have more points than them at the end. That's what I've learned. I learned that about 15 years ago.

Q. With this being a later start and the games only a couple hours away, do you still intend on going out there Friday or do you keep the team around this area and head out Saturday? (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: No, we'll treat it like we would any game. Try to get over there late afternoon and just relax a little bit and then things are really starting full swing on Saturday.

Q. So afternoon Friday then? (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, uh-huh.

Q. Jake Rudock comes from a high school program that was on ESPN. Are there any idiosyncrasies recruiting a kid from a high profile program? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: No. Jake's a normal guy, normal parents and mom's a school teacher, dad's a lawyer. He's from Pennsylvania, ironically. They're just a good family. But Jake's the same Jake you guys visit with. He's a great young guy. Just very low-key, modest. You wouldn't know what program he played or what he did in high school. He didn't come here with his resume hanging off his shirt or any of that stuff. So he's really handled himself well, and because of that, our players have a lot of respect for him and the coaches do too. He operates the way you would hope a young guy would.

Q. The scrimmage as I recall was a late afternoon start, did you do it that way to have a walk through for this game? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, to get our guys used to hanging around all day. That is the hard part about night games. There is a lot of dead time

that you have to occupy, so we just tried to encourage them back a couple weeks ago, probably a month ago now, just to have a mental plan and figure out what you're going to do and just get used to the dead time because that's really what it entails.

Q. What's the dead time like for you? They say the hay is in the barn going into Saturday, but do you sit and go over things? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think everybody does. But the big cautionary thing is you just can't play the game on Saturday during the day. I think that's really important for the players and coaches. Just not the burn -- you can't burn it up during the day. You have to try to stick to your routine, whatever that routine may be. Just compartmentalize your time and just make sure, again, you're not expending energy or playing the game during the day because that's not good.

Q. What do you like most about this week every year?

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's certainly a great series for the entire state. I'm not saying everybody is paying attention, but there are a lot of people in our state paying attention. People that follow college football and the unique part about it is, again, we're from two separate conferences, which, there are a lot of great rivalries around the country. But I don't know how many there are of this category where you have two conferences represented, so it makes it a little bit more unique. It happens early in the season, which a lot of the things, those rivalry games take place later in the year.

It's all good. Whether we're playing here or there, it's going to be a great guarantee to be a great environment, at least it has been the last 15 years. So if you like college football, it's really a great thing, I think.

Q. Do you plan to have a lot of your coaches out to different games in the central part of the state on Friday night? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we'll be out several places only because we're not going to be with the team Friday night. We'll shift our meetings to Saturday. Otherwise I'm not comfortable with -- and I've been places here in the '80s where we

used to do a lot of recruiting on Friday nights even when the team was together, but I've never been comfortable with the coaches not being around the players if we're having an organized team activity. So, yeah, we'll utilize this as a night to be out.

Q. Coach, what are your feelings on the pace being operated on offense so far this year, and do you anticipate doing that quick offense against Iowa State? (Kyle Hughes, KCJJ)

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see. We'll see. So far, so good. But no matter how many plays you run or how many yards you get, it's still about getting points. That is the number one criteria for an offensive football team.

Q. What do you guys need to do to be able to finish those drives and get seven points? (Kyle Hughes, KCJJ)

COACH FERENTZ: First thing I think of is two weeks ago and conversions on third downs, whether it be 3rd and short, 3rd and long, whatever it may be. You've got to keep the chains moving, and we didn't do a good enough job of that certainly a couple weeks ago.

Q. What does this game mean for in-state recruiting? (Ben Ross, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not good at that. I know this, there is nothing about winning that hurts that I've found so far. When you win, it's good. So be it recruiting, how you feel, all that stuff, it's just a good thing. Then losing tends to go the other way.

Q. Have you ever known a recruit to choose as a result of this game? (Ben Ross, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: I can't cite an example. But I'm sure it's happened, yeah.

Q. This year, all three top in-state recruits have committed to the school. Does that change anything? Ben Ross,

COACH FERENTZ: Recruiting is just so ongoing. I don't think so. It's just top to bottom. It never stops.

Q. How is Mark handling the extra workload? (KCCI)

COACH FERENTZ: I think he's fine. We worked him hard last year. The good news again is we have three other guys that are very capable of playing well. But if somebody gets a hot hand

too, we're going to stick with that person. But it's a little different situation than when maybe Shonn was running here where we had one guy and had a relief pitcher. But I think we can probably spread things around a little more this year.

Q. This probably means more to the players, but with it being such a long season, is there something to be said about something tangible like the Cy-Hawk Trophy? (WHO)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it stands for winning the game, so that is important. That's certainly important. If you get a chance to possess a trophy, that's a good thing. If there is one at stake, we want to get it just like I'm sure they do too. So certainly it's a tangible thing.

Q. What is the importance of having a trophy when you've had great series with other teams like Penn State or Illinois through the years? You don't play for a trophy, but this one you do. Is there a motivator during the week, for instance, showing the empty trophy case or the trophy itself as a symbol? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I guess you could do that if you don't have the trophy. You just like to think college football players understand. Maybe this will change with the proposed playoffs and all that stuff if they had 16 games. But football, every game counts for so much. It's just so important.

Yeah, a trophy is a tangible symbol that you don't have in maybe some other games, but they're all important. They're all really important.

Q. Maurice Fleming, is he back this week? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: I hope so. I thought he was close. He dressed last week, but he never got to full speed, so I'm hoping so.

Q. What similarities are there between Jake and Sam? (Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: They're both quarterbacks, and they both start. One starts for them, one starts for us. But outside of that, I don't know. I mean, their guy is a good player. He's a really good player.

Q. Is Mike Malloy still around? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we'll keep you updated there.

Q. Does it help to have a little bit more, two extra or three extra games as a sample size? Does that give you some film? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, for sure. That's always helpful. But they've got two on Jake, so it's not like cat's out of the bag on that one too. So, yeah, the more tape you have on players is always good. At least we have a couple on hand, but there are a lot of guys we don't have film on, so it's one of those deals.

Q. Anymore true freshmen? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see. Yeah, possibly one, possibly two. But that's as of today. Yeah, possibly. I haven't ruled it out.

Q. Do you think the penalties have impeded the progress of the team? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I mean, they're a major part of the game Saturday. Penalties, mental errors, things like that, they just kill momentum. And in some cases, they really affected field position. Those are really, really bad things. You know, good winning teams typically don't -- I've talked about penalties before. It's not always important to be at the top of the penalty rankings, but you probably should be at least in the top half because you're going to have some aggressive penalties too sometimes, you know?

But it's just hard to win football games. It's kind of like turning it over too. If you turn it over very often, it's hard to win football games. I'm not saying you can't do it, but the degree of difficulty keeps increasing. So what we did Saturday was just we're not going to win doing that. It's just not going to work.

Q. Do those penalties make it hard for you to judge the progress the team is making? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Well, yeah. I mean, it changes the game a lot. But I'll say this too. We're pretty good on penalties last year, and we won four games, so it's not the whole answer. But it does keep you from being successful. Evidence of that was Saturday. We made the chore really hard.

Q. Was the play Saturday the one that stuck with you the most, was not getting the first out on 4th and short inside their 5? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yes and no. We ended up getting great field position and scored afterwards. But I'm not big on looking backwards. Watching the film, I haven't seen the TV copy of it. Have you seen it?

Watching the film, I don't know how we did. But we had to play defense, so it doesn't matter what it looked like. Down the road, too, if you don't get those, it's not a turnover. Although, again, you could argue you get the ball back on the 32 or wherever we got it back, it's not bad.

Q. Have you been able to monitor Brett Greenwood? (Dan Egger, KXIC)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, just read a nice article, somebody put it on my desk this morning. We're coming up on the anniversary, so it's just a real tribute to everybody the support that Brett's gotten. You know, Brett's spirit is just -- it set him apart when he got here. Reese Morgan identified that in the recruiting process, and probably if we were smarter, we would have given Brett a scholarship with. But when he got here and got his opportunity, he never looked back.

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