

**October 6, 2009**



An interview with:

## **COACH FERENTZ**

THE MODERATOR: Coach Ferentz.

COACH FERENTZ: A lot of things going on Saturday. Good to see the sun out. Doesn't sound like we're going to have a sunny day based on what I heard this morning, so it's good to see the sun out. Obviously pleased with last weekend and now looking forward to moving on.

Had a great crowd in Kinnick last Saturday, and I'm sure it will be a lively crowd this Saturday evening, so we're looking forward to that.

On the health front, things are looking up. I think we should get Shaun Prater back in the lineup. And Tony Moeaki will practice, hopefully, today. I think he's improving so we'll see what the week brings, but we're hopeful to get him back on the field, too.

Captainwise, we're back in our earlier season mode, Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds on the defensive side and Tony Moeaki and Ricky Stanzl on the offensive side will be representing us.

Shifting toward Michigan, very impressive, their football team. We haven't played them in two years and I know a lot has gone on over the last two years, but basically you're looking at a team that's one overtime away from being undefeated; they're playing really well.

Based on a couple of observations, things that strike me. It's like every Michigan team that I can remember seeing on the field, it looks like they've got an awful lot of good players right now, and they're playing well, and I think the other thing that's obvious is we saw them on tape last year, didn't see them in person, but they went through a huge transition and certainly it's a different style of play offensively, defensively.

And anytime you go through a transition that affects a program, and they've had great

success under Lloyd Carr and several coaches prior to that, but Lloyd and his staff did a wonderful job. Big change in terms of philosophy, the offense is very different than it was under Lloyd's direction and the defense is the same way.

So I think last year they went through a transition, and they had quarterback issues, well documented from a year ago, and they have both of those issues cleaned up. They're playing their schemes well right now, and this young freshman quarterback has done a fantastic job. He's got a presence out there and plays well beyond his years.

Those two things in combination with what's going on this year present a heck of a challenge for our football team, and we'll have to be at our best.

**Q. Tate Forcier, he's good at creating plays with his feet or getting himself open. Would you talk about that?**

COACH FERENTZ: He is. Number one, he's very aware, great presence out there, great feel and he is a playmaker. He can improvise, which is a sign of a good quarterback. He can get out of trouble with his feet and certainly can hurt you with his throwing and has done that.

I think the most impressive thing is just his demeanor out there. Seems like he's totally under control, he'll improvise, but it seems he has a good knack, a good instinct, and that's what good quarterbacks have. I'm not sure you teach that but he certainly has done a good job.

**Q. A solid freshman quarterback, is it an anomaly?**

COACH FERENTZ: I guess he was up there this spring, but he was in high school last year playing. To answer the question I think it's really unusual, and I'm sure there has been a case like that before, but I don't recall what it would be.

It's a huge adjustment. So a guy with that

little experience, 15 days of spring ball really isn't that much for him to be doing what he's doing is really impressive, and he's given the whole team a lift.

**Q. Drew Tate, didn't you have him as a starting true freshman.**

COACH FERENTZ: He was our back-up, and he did a lot of amazing things in 2004.

**Q. The type of system that you guys haven't seen before at Michigan, usually in conference is a familiarity but not the case this week?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, and I'm not saying we've played systems just like this, but we're not playing the wishbone, so it's not quite that extreme. The thing that's weird is when you miss a team for two years and then get them back on the schedule, that's always a little bit strange and weird and we're going through that.

That street runs both ways, I'm sure. But that part of it is. We've seen them on film the last couple of years and watched them from afar but now to be doing the research and that type of thing it's a little bit different.

**Q. When you're defending the spread option you don't alter your personnel, occasionally you go to a 3-4, sometimes you get your linebackers and a 4-4 guy outside. Is that mostly because you want to get the tackles rather than speed match-ups?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, and hopefully you won't get a man-coverage match-up against a 4-4 guy that's not good. But philosophically it goes back to when we played Northwestern back in 2000. We came to the conclusion that as different as their attack was, we felt the best way to match up was to stand with our base personnel. Philosophically that's how we think, and we'll make our changes more on down and distance.

More typically we will match up against four or five receiver sets, and when people put those unusual groupings on the field we may do a little something. But usually if there is a tight end on the field and it's a normal situation, we're going to keep our base people in and adjust off of it.

And as you mentioned we've got to be careful about what we do so we don't get mismatch problems and certainly a team is looking to create mismatches, and they're going to continue to do that.

**Q. Is that with more emphasis on the pass rush even though they're more equal in timing and space?**

COACH FERENTZ: We typically keep four on the field -- I was going to, but we will switch out of that, too. But, yes, first thing is we got to stop the run, and this team is a good running team. They're a really good running team and they'll use the option to keep you honest.

The back, Minor is a veteran player who is really good, and they have a lot of good players but we have good respect for him and good receivers, too, good skill people.

**Q. How important do you think time and possession is? Does that figure when you look back at games?**

COACH FERENTZ: You wonder. It's great to have it, but in general terms, but not in my pecking order of statistics, it's not the top of the list. I'm always happy when we're ahead, and I think we are right now, we're doing okay.

We don't go into a game saying "Boy, if we can hold them forty minutes, that would be great." Scoring points is more important. I think the Colts were a good illustration of that, and I didn't see that game, but I saw the stats, and if we can do that, that's great.

**Q. Fifteen years ago that was a stat looked at more?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's fair to say, and the no-huddle offense, Buffalo is the first that comes to mind; they gave up on time of possession, but they did a nice job of holding the football and probably changed the complexion of the way a lot of people -- that goes back to Scott's question earlier.

I remember Buffalo had some success against Pittsburgh late 80s, early 90s, and Pittsburgh was subbing out and playing field defense, and that indicated the success that Buffalo had. It's interesting, the chess match that goes on.

I don't know how I got on that topic but that's where to me the "no huddle" has changed the time of possession and the way people look at that a little bit.

**Q. How much more important is field position when you consider the punters that both you and Michigan have?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's important in every game, and they do have good kickers. Certainly their punter is excellent and their kickoff guy has a very strong leg. This is going to be a great game, and special teams are important and these guys do a great job on special teams. They're skilled players and their core guys work at it. That's going to be a big challenge for us there.

**Q. Have you noticed there is more hype coming into this game than there has been in Kinnick Stadium in earlier games?**

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't, but tomorrow night I get to do the talk show. I've kept a lower profile. I get to feel the temperature out there a little bit, and Friday morning, too. I'm sure by the end of the week we'll feel it.

Larry Station is coming back; I wasn't aware of that, that's fantastic and so deserved, and we have a lot of guys with bye weeks this weekend. There will be some NFL players in the house, might be a Packer in the house, maybe a Charger, so that will be neat, too.

**Q. Are you displeased with the offense?**

COACH FERENTZ: Consistency, just consistency in general. I think we had a better day in some areas the other day and maybe regressed a little bit in some areas. Probably the hardest thing, the thing we've been struggling the most with is our kickoff return team. I think we're gaining ground but we're not consistent enough yet and obviously the other day missing a field goal.

You like to think that one -- and they were kind enough to return the favor, and those were two big plays in the game there, but you can't count on them missing one, too, that's makable.

**Q. Tony not being available with injuries, did that help you build depth at the receiver spot, unintentionally?**

COACH FERENTZ: If it did, I would rather not go through that again. I like it better when he's on the field. It's limited some of our flexibility in terms of things we like to do.

So it's not a good thing, I guess, but, yeah, if there is a positive, maybe we're getting better in other areas.

**Q. There are some quarterbacks that have had success against you guys this year, Leonard and Grace. Does Tate Forcier remind you of that kind of a quarterback?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, you can throw him in that category. Both of those guys can improvise. Grace played well, and Leonard, I can't say enough about the game he played Saturday, so I think it's fair. They make plays on their feet, find that open guy, get the ball there somehow, and it poses a challenge; good quarterbacks make it tougher.

**Q. Are you a "Blackout" man or a "Gold Rush" man?**

COACH FERENTZ: I like them both; I'm good either way. Flip a coin on that one, but I just hope everybody jumps in with the spirit of things and that would be great. It will be a great environment. That's one thing, it's like we talked about going over to Penn State, we knew that was going to be a great environment, and this should be a great environment, too. And playing night games adds to the environment, there is no doubt about that. It will be nice to be on the home side this time, and we can hopefully make it work to our advantage.

**Q. After Saturday's game, what is your assessment of the line coming out Arkansas State?**

COACH FERENTZ: Our offense? I thought we regressed, quite honestly, not so much an effort thing but we had a lot of loose ends and it probably showed up on the scoreboard.

**Q. When you face a young quarterback, like you'll face on Saturday in Tate Forcier, is there an emphasis on getting the pressure on him and maybe make him make mistakes because of his inexperience and force him to do things he wouldn't like to do?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think normally there is, but with this guy I'm not sure that's a good thing, because he seems to thrive on that situation, that circumstance. We were riding home from our second game and it was on the TV on the bus and one play they made, just pulled it down and ran whatever it was, 30, 40 yards. I think Notre Dame was in man coverage and he took off.

You better be careful with what you wish for with this quarterback because he's good; he's really good.

**Q. Are freshman quarterbacks coming in more prepared? Like Ohio State's**

**quarterback and Tate Forcier and a few others?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think you necessarily want to depend on that, and it's rare, but it's probably fair to say people are throwing the ball a lot more in high school now, 7-on-7 tournaments. Kind of like youth league soccer, they're mushrooming, so yeah, I think it's fair to say more guys are throwing the ball than they ever have, more guys in the shotgun, that type of thing.

So there is no question there is a lot more of that going on and you've got all these quarterback schools or clinics and camps, what have you.

So it's a booming industry right now. Maybe they're coming in more prepared, which is not bumping up to the NFL. I think you talk to NFL people they'll tell you the exact opposite; they're having a hard time finding a guy who can take a snap from under center and play quarterback. And this guy might be the exception, but there is a trend in college and high school football that are kind of mirroring each other right now.

**Q. Are they more athletic?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you see guys that are athletes and then you always see guys that are throwers. There are some colleges that are spread teams where their guys throw, Texas Tech throws it 60 times a game -- I'm pulling that out of my pocket -- and the quarterback is not a good runner but, boy, they've had great success throwing the football, so I think in general you see more of that.

**Q. Do you alter your defensive philosophy. There is a lot of talk of 6 seconds of hell. Is it more of a containment issue?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's true till the ball is thrown, and then it's chasing it, and it's however you brake up the six, but the ball is coming out quick and you're not going to get a lot of sacks. You might be able to disrupt a little bit, you know, maybe closing up some throwing lanes, things like that, but your sacks are going to go down certainly.

**Q. Have you run into Rodriguez anywhere along the coaching trail?**

COACH FERENTZ: Only at the Big Ten meetings. I think we've sat next to each other at the luncheon the last two years. He seems like a pleasant guy, and his resume is extremely impressive; everywhere he's been they've had great success both offensively, and as a head coach he's done a tremendous job.



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**Q. Is this really a new offensive attack or theory --**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know that it's new now but I think when he was getting it going at Tulane -- probably before that, Tulane and Clemson, you know, and then certainly what he did at West Virginia is really impressive.

They've got used to it, and the guy at West Virginia was an excellent runner and thrower, so I think that makes any team more dangerous, but it's unique to them and they've done a great job with it, historically.

**Q. Kind of different to have a nonMichigan man coaching Michigan.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's a different coat of paint, for sure. Lloyd's tradition linkage with the program there is long, and I think it's kind of a traditional thing, if you go back, gosh, when did Coach Schembechler start, late 60s? So it's a departure from what they've done, but you look at Coach Rodriguez' track record he's been successful. But it is an interesting thing.

**Q. The spread as it becomes more prevalent does it lose its uniqueness? Does it become easier to defend?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's like any offense, it depends how it's run. I'll go back to that Northwestern game, at that point it was like, whoa, looking at that thing it was a little bit different. So certainly we're more accustomed to playing 3-wides, 4-wide, that kind of thing, ten years later than we were in 2000. Certainly it's easier to plug in against, I think, but it doesn't make it easier.

If you have a good system with good players it presents a lot of challenges. I'm more focused on the players and how they operate the offense and what the offense may be. People forget they were a good offense -- the last game I think Coach Carr participated in was the Capital One Bowl. He beat a good Florida team, and it was going well that day, too.

So when you have good players and they understand the scheme and they play well, it's tough to defend and that's what we're seeing with Michigan.

**Q. Looking back at Saturday, was that as a whole the most disappointing game?**

COACH FERENTZ: We're 5-0, so I'm not

too disappointed about what's happened so far, and in fact I'm happy, happy as you can be. It's football, it's life, not every day is going to be as good as the other, and probably the only people upset are people dumb enough to bet on games; if they lost some money that's their problem.

Outside of that the idea is to come out ahead, and we would like to play cleaner and better but I want to give them credit, they played hard and played well, and we weren't good enough to make it more comfortable than that. But they had something to do with it and we had something to do with it, but we're going to move on just like we always do.

**Q. The last few Homecoming games have been a frustrating ordeal --**

COACH FERENTZ: You've got to review me on that.

**Q. By keeping score, ball security, injuries, what happened two years ago vs Indiana? Is that something that can be used as a motivator?**

COACH FERENTZ: What was two years ago? I'm sorry, I'm not being smart here.

**Q. Loss to Indiana.**

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, geez, man, you just ruined my day, now I'm disappointed, okay? Is that right?

**Q. Last year was Northwestern?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think we're going to switch Homecoming, make it retroactive, probably upset everybody if we did that. You just ruined my whole week right there. Yeah, those were both disappointing games. See if I can schedule a root canal at one o'clock, get that done, too. Boy, you ruined my whole day.

I think it was more of where we were at rather than Homecoming. Neither were at night, though, were they?

**Q. No.**

COACH FERENTZ: Gotcha.

**Q. Is homecoming a big deal, like when you're in high school?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's a big thing on campus and the seniors go out on Wednesday night and do autographs at the Hall of Fame, but quite honestly once we get into our Friday routine, we try to keep it pretty sterile for the guys. And I

don't know if there is a dance or not -- do they still do those things? My kid went on a dance last Saturday night but I never did when I was in college.

I think you can -- there are a lot of people that come back on campus, and it's usually a festive time and hopefully we'll add to it. Apparently we haven't done well the last two Homecomings, so we'll get that straightened out. We've never been 5-0, either, so that's something else we're going to change. I'm going to counter that point; we have a chance to change this.

**Q. How do you handle the later game time on Saturday? It's a little like Penn State, only you're home --**

COACH FERENTZ: We just shift our Friday meetings to Saturday, the evening meetings we shift over, and the guys will watch TV, take a walk, whatever, and sounds like they might have to bundle up. Sounds like it's going to be in the 30s or 40s, which is kinda like Penn State or Purdue, games we won. Now you've got me thinkin', here! (Chuckles.) But it's a long day.

**Q. How do you keep the guys from getting stir crazy?**

COACH FERENTZ: We've had practice at it. We have one under our belts and another one to come, and I think the biggest thing of all is just the adjustment after the game; it's a pain in the neck, particularly when you're the away team, which we are twice this year. I'm guessing the only team in the Big Ten -- we're the only team that has two away games at night, just taking a shot at that.

**Q. No.**

COACH FERENTZ: Okay, just taking a guess, so I think it's more what happens after the game than before the game.

**Q. Do you get the sense that the players are staying grounded or putting the brakes on a little bit or --**

COACH FERENTZ: We had a lot of things to correct after Sunday's tape, so I would hope we're all looking at it real typically, and typically when you win there are still a lot of things that need to get cleaned up, and no matter your record you're five games into it; I think there is a lot of room for improvement.

You know, if you want to stay in the right

side of the column you better be focused on that. That's kinda where we're at right now. We still have a lot of work to do and moving parts, and we're playing a good team so we've got a big challenge this week.

**Q. Your wide receivers have had real production, different guys have led the team in receiving each game. Do you like that balance among the receivers, or would you rather have one or two emerge as being kind of the go-to guys?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm totally comfortable with that and that's how we are offensively; we tend to be a balanced group. Last year you could say Shonn had all the rushing yards, which he did, and I talked to a guy on the telephone earlier, he mentioned Russell's name, and when you have a guy like that that's fine, and we have two guys doing a decent job for us at running back, and typically in the throwing game it changes week to week, how people defend you and who comes open.

For us the way we do things, if things are working well, it's going to be spread around a little bit.

**Q. Of your wide receivers, three of them played other positions previously -- one played wide receiver and quarterback, and others played other positions. Those three guys have played a key role this year. What is the biggest reason they've been able to change --**

COACH FERENTZ: The first name I see is Greg Matthews' name. I remember sending him a note -- typically guys like that go to Michigan and we try to find guys that can evolve into receivers, or find ways to fill positions. We've tried to recruit a lot of our key guys, and maybe it hasn't worked out but we try to keep an open mind in our recruiting.

And good players a lot of times come from different positions, and it's just part of our deal. It goes back to -- Hinkel was the same way, Hinkel was a quarterback receiver, defensive back, we thought he would be a free safety and came in here and ended up being an excellent receiver for us. That's typical of our program, I think.

**Q. Do you talk about it when recruiting?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, most definitely, and we've had a lot of guys -- I mention him and

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Sandeman, and we've had guys that were receivers in high school that were doing the same thing, and we're okay with that, too; so we have a little bit of each -- and Stross was a receiver in high school, so it goes both ways, but we have to keep an open mind with all positions in our recruiting.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.  
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