

October 5, 2013



An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Give Michigan State credit, congratulate them on the win. Tough loss for us. We'll come back in tomorrow, regroup and move forward.

Q. Can you talk about how physical that game was? You had a lot of injuries. Do any of them appear to be the kind of injuries that (inaudible)?

COACH FERENTZ: The bad news is we certainly had a lot of guys that had to come out of the game, but the good news is it looks like everything is pretty minor. Hopefully the bye week probably comes at a good time. Hopefully all those guys will be back full speed.

Q. How are Weisman and Martin-Manley?

COACH FERENTZ: I think they're fine. They couldn't play effectively, but nothing long-term.

Q. The unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, was that a discussion thing?

COACH FERENTZ: One of our coaches did that with his headset, and unfortunately half his headset flew out there. He did not throw it. Kind of fitting with the game. I guess it fit in with a few other things.

Q. Did you think you would see your running game be --

COACH FERENTZ: Not to that extent. I don't know what we ended up with. It wasn't significant, obviously, but we knew they were a tough team to run the ball against. They have been that way for quite some time, and to try to

move the ball on them effectively you've got to be mixed and balanced. But it was tough starting out there, and then obviously in the second half, or last quarter we didn't have much opportunity there.

Q. You guys got fooled by a fake punt. Talk about that play.

COACH FERENTZ: We may never try to return one again. It was our thinking -- try and get to the return, and to their credit they made a good call and that cost us a field goal.

Q. Do you think this offense loses its identity when it can't establish the run? Mark Weisman only got seven carries.

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I think any team is better if they're balanced and you have to be able to run the ball effectively. Again, we didn't think we'd come in getting 280 on these guys. That wasn't our thought coming in. But we were hoping that we could run it effectively. The way they're built they make it very difficult to do that, and they're playing good team defense, period. They did a year ago, as well. So we knew it was going to be a tough challenge. We weren't naïve to that by any stretch.

Q. Seemed like things started clicking offensively for you the last half of the second quarter. Was there some adjustment that you made from the bench at that time?

COACH FERENTZ: No, not really. Our first five possessions, we were three-and-out, a pick, a ball was underthrown, so we did nothing at all, and then once we got it going a little bit, it was certainly good. Disappointing part was in the second half we weren't able to do that up until that last possession.

We got nothing established in that second half basically.

Q. And the field position you couldn't

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establish, either?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, the entire game there really wasn't anything that we did to indicate we were taking control. Outside of the way we closed the second quarter, that was certainly -- it looked like we were getting some momentum. That was good. And to their credit they came out and took the ball and drove it and scored, first possession, second half. We're kind of playing from behind the count most of the game. Fake punt, not only the fake punt, we really didn't get anything out of our special teams in terms of an advantage, so that makes it tough.

Q. On the fake punt did Michigan State do anything prior to this game that maybe led you to believe that they would pull it out in that situation?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, historically they've taken chances and special teams have taken chances, run fakes, gadgets, whatever, so that didn't surprise us at all. We were aware of that. I go back to the field goal they had on the Saturday night game. Big game, where they go out there in overtime and got the win. So that was not a surprise, that part of it.

But it's a good job on their part. We had a return set up, and they hit us where we were weak.

Q. So when you talk about the return setup, how do you defend it? Is there a way to do it?

COACH FERENTZ: On theory you have it defended, but if you've got guys turning and blocking, set up a return, you're vulnerable. It's one of those things where maybe you can't. It worked pretty good two weeks ago, and we paid for it today.

Q. Defensively you guys were really aggressive with Cook early. He hit that long ball, the 56-yarder. Did you have to change your approach a little bit or maybe not?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, I don't know about that. We gave up some plays, and you're going to -- that's going to happen at times. To their credit they did a good job throwing and catching. They threw a bunch of them today.

Q. You took momentum, and the first drive of the third quarter you were planted on your heels and couldn't get close?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it didn't help, and it seems like the whole game went that way,

outside of when we scored our second touchdown, then all of a sudden we had it tipped in our direction.

But immediately had a three-and-out to start the half and they go down and get points again, and we weren't able to do that, and give them credit because they did a good job of stuffing us out in the second half.

Q. Michigan State has historically had a better defense, but physically what did you see that that defense or how did they surprise you?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think anything surprised us. We played them last year, they're really physical and they're really good on defense, and they graduated some players, but the guys that they've had step in are playing really well. They've got a couple veteran guys that play extremely well for them.

Our game was a tough one last year. I think they played Michigan the next week last year, a 12-10 game or whatever, so it's not like this never has happened before. These guys have played good defense, and it's pretty much been that way. You go back to '09 we had a decent ball club and had to score on the last play of the game. I think it was one offensive touchdown for each team in that game. That's just been part of the series. It's not like anything catches you off guard, but it's quite a challenge to move it and score. We did a nice job there at the end of the first half, and unfortunately weren't able to pick back up in the second half.

Q. Your team last week was really able to answer a physical game, play physical smashmouth football. How do you try to reestablish that identity?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, you know, this is a loss. Last week was a win. That was great, and today is a loss and it's not so good. We'll do what we did a couple weeks back, we'll go back to work tomorrow, take a look at the film and see what we can do better. You know, I'll predict this: They're going to go on and win a few games. They're not bad, and we plan on doing the same thing. We'll go back, look at the film, reassess what happened like we always do, and then try to learn from it, and then we'll move on. We're not going to change our identity. We're going to keep just trying to get better at what we do.

Q. With this being the first of two bye weeks that you have coming up here, do you alter how you go about it because you have two of them as opposed to just having one like you had in the past?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, if anything we might recruit a little more in the second bye week and less in this one. That was kind of our plan from day one anyway. The next series of games that we play involve new preparations for us, for the most part I think all but one. So it really gives us a chance maybe to focus on our team and then secondly focus on the teams that we have coming up and emphasize recruiting a little bit more maybe on that second one, but that's about the only change.

Q. You went pretty deep in the receiving corps. Talk about how some of the guys stepped up, and how did that impact you maybe not to have Kevonte?

COACH FERENTZ: It doesn't help, but that wasn't the story of the game. It just doesn't help. But it gave opportunities to some other things. I thought they did a nice job out there, made some good plays. That experience of playing will help them against really tough competition.

Q. (Inaudible) is that a leg or a hip?

COACH FERENTZ: Most of the stuff we have is either muscle, mild sprains, those types of things, at least as of right now that's what I'm hearing. There's nothing really significant other than some of the guys have been fighting it for a couple weeks and the bye week probably helps out a little bit.

Q. Mark, that's an ankle --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's a sprain, more of a sprain. Again, hopefully he'll be back here.

Q. Michigan State was going to take Weisman out of the game --

COACH FERENTZ: They were going to make it tough for us to run, no doubt about that, and they did a good job of that. And again, that didn't come as a surprise, but again, we have to be able to counter off that a little better.

Q. At this point in the season, what's the definition of your team at the halfway point in your mind?

COACH FERENTZ: I told our team let's not get too global here. We're all pretty happy after the game last week, and we're obviously pretty disappointed right now. That's how you feel after games: Really good or really bad. We'll come back in tomorrow and go to work. We're going to be 5-1 or 4-2, one of those two, and it really won't change our approach for the next six weeks.

We'll come back and go back to work, see what we need to do better, see what we can do to improve, and hopefully have a great week of practice and be ready to go for our next set of games.

Q. Your secondary struggled again today. Are you planning any personnel changes or coverage changes?

COACH FERENTZ: We gave up some plays, we made some good plays, so we'll just try to play better. We'll look at the film, and like we do at every position, if we think somebody else can play a little bit better, we'll give those guys an opportunity, but nothing major at this point.

Q. Is it a surprise that this kind of ended up with a game over 90 passes were attempted? A lot of people expected this to be a run it out --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, maybe the only surprise to me would be how much they threw it. I say that with all due respect, but their quarterback is not as experienced. Not that our guy is, but their quarterback is fairly new. But he played a really good game today, so you have to give them credit, and they've got to feel good about that aspect I would imagine.

Q. Did Cook surprise you in some ways? Michigan had gone kind of back and forth with him --

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, again, I don't want to pretend I'm coaching their team, but I would think they're pretty happy with the way he performed today. He did a really nice job and made good decisions, protected the ball pretty well. He only had one turnover and did a lot of really good things, so they've got to be pleased.

From the outside looking in, it looks like

they've been high on him for quite some time, and I would imagine they've got to feel good about the way he led their team today.

Q. What about the dynamic of not just having Ohio State up next on the schedule and the way they're playing this year but also having a bye week?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know how much of the dynamics I worry about. When you play in our conference you're going to play good teams, and we have six challenging games on our schedule ahead of us. You know, that's what I worry about -- or not worry about, but concern myself with. You're going to play good teams week in and week out in the conference. That's just how it is. We knew that when we signed up. We'll be ready to compete two weeks from now. We'll be ready to compete again.

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