

University of Iowa Football Media Conference
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Kirk Ferentz

COACH FERENTZ: First of all, we're certainly very pleased as a staff about the victory on Saturday night. That was a really hard-fought game, as I said afterwards, very tough game. We talk about playing the full 60; that was the fullest of 60 for sure. Both teams really competed, and for Marshall Koehn to finish up with a moment like that, that's something all of us will remember, but certainly he will, and to be recognized by the Big Ten the way he was, it's a special thing for him.

It's even more special because he's worked extremely hard coming here as a walk-on player. He's always had great leg strength, but his consistency over the last two years has really improved. So congratulations to him, feel good about that certainly.

Also to have Brett Greenwood be honored and recognized by the crowd was really special. Brett has served as an inspiration, I think, to everybody involved in our program, and then on top of that our crowd was absolutely fantastic Saturday night. Somebody pointed out to me, and it's really true, the students stayed all the way until the end. I guess they leak out occasionally in the fourth quarter, but they were there to the end as was everybody. So just a great environment.

Now we'll turn the page on to our next challenge. It's the last nonconference game for us, and a very important period of our schedule certainly, so as we try to finish this phase up, we'll try to get ready for this football game. Our captains are the same four guys, Drew Ott, Jordan Lomax on defense, Austin Blythe, and C.J. Beathard offensively.

Injury-wise, we came out of the game surprisingly healthy. It was a physical ballgame. I was curious to see what it was going to look like on Sunday. We had guys nicked up a little bit and sore, but I think we're in much better shape than we were a week ago, so hopefully we can move forward here as we continue to push forward.

As I mentioned, this is the last game of our non-Big Ten portion of the schedule, and it's a really important game for us that way. I'm sure it's been suggested that on paper we would have the team that would be favored, and I think it was Mike Scioscia said a couple years ago, games aren't played on paper.

So as we move forward right now, I think there are two major things we're looking at. First we're trying to learn as much as we can about North Texas, and that's a work in progress. Obviously they're a new opponent for us, but all of us, especially myself, know an awful lot about Dan McCarney. I don't need much help on that one. Dan and I worked together side by side for nine years, literally sat next to each other in the staff room for nine years with Coach Fry back in the '80s.

I've got tremendous respect for Dan as a person, as a football coach, and then what he's done since he left here is well-documented, whether it's his time in Wisconsin, building that program with Barry up there. Certainly did a great job at Iowa State, and then most recently took over a

program that needed a lot of work at North Texas, and had them in a bowl not that long ago and won a bowl in very convincing fashion.

Then the other aspect, and I saw in one of the papers this morning, it was on my mind certainly, he knows how to get a team ready. He brought a heavy underdog in here in '98 and did a great job with that football game. So that's got our full attention.

The other thing, obviously, this is true every week, it's about us trying to address things that are concerning right now, weaknesses, things that we see on tape that need to be addressed, and remedied as fast as possible in addition to trying to build on our strength. So those are the things that we're working on right now.

We're two days into our preparation, off to a good start, but certainly plenty of work to do before we're ready to compete on Saturday. So with that, I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Sometimes games like this have as much mental challenge for a team to move forward as the physical challenge. Last week you had a really emotional game after Iowa State, and an emotional situation and high energy here. There is always a natural tendency to let down. But is this where you rely on fundamentals, techniques, what you've been trained to get through the emotional highs and lows?

COACH FERENTZ: I wouldn't say it's always a tendency, but there is that possibility, certainly, if you're not careful. To me it's kind of like everything else, it gets back to the mindset of the football team and just understanding and realizing how important every week is, not just certain weeks in a season.

That's one reason we don't gear for certain opponents. We just don't make a habit of that. The message we're trying to get across to our football team is each and every week we have a chance to grow and develop. Sometimes you go backwards also. Sometimes you fail and learn from that and move forward.

That's especially true here. We need to be growing each and every week and taking advantage of those opportunities, regardless of who our opponent is. And just go back the last couple weeks, we've played different styles of teams. There are different preparations from that standpoint, the games have been different, yet the challenge is still the same.

It's trying to be ready to compete at your best during the game. That's our job during the week.

Q. What did you do with Marshall Koehn to turn him into Reggie Roby?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I'd like to take credit for that one too. That would be an exaggeration, a gross exaggeration. He's really done a great job of concentrating. He's done a pretty fair job in practice overall since he got here, but it's a little like I alluded to with Marshall. Marshall's biggest challenge was developing consistency, which over the last two years he's really done, and I would give Dillon the same credit. Last year he wasn't really consistent. That showed up. And thus far three games into it and he's doing a super job.

I know he's really approached it with the right mindset. He's worked hard away from the field.

Worked hard on the field. It's great to see it when it carries over to the game. He deserves all the credit for that just like Marshall with his progress and accomplishments.

Q. Besides the 3-0, what are some of the benefits that you think now regarding the change to morning practice?

COACH FERENTZ: The jury is still out on that one. Actually said to Chris last Wednesday or Thursday, I said to him, okay, this seems like it's going well. Now what shoe is going to drop here in October, November? I'm still waiting. Trying to figure out what the downside is going to be.

I think the biggest thing is when we're practicing now, it's just been the mindset of our football team. They've done a good job thus far. I've said that many times going back to January. But since we got going in August, we haven't had many bad days, if any. That's a credit to our players. They're working hard. We see leadership developing, and that's important.

But we're only a quarter into it right now. So we're happy to be 3-0, don't get me wrong, but we have a lot ahead of us right now to try to accomplish.

Q. It sounds like Dillon really went under the hood this summer and talked to several different people on the outside, punt people, his dad, stuff like that to get confidence or mechanics correct. How much do you like that when an outsider gets in, or with punting do you care?

COACH FERENTZ: It depends on who they're talking to first and foremost. The other danger is you can get too many chefs in the kitchen, I think at any position. I really believe that. That's a matter of getting down to the player. I think it's really smart in anything you do to go out and seek advice, talk to people, wide variety of people. His dad was a very successful college punter and very successful NFL punter so, it would be silly not to ask him.

But you know how kids and parents are, they don't always relate the best. So it's good to go to outside sources as well. You know, you draw upon those things. But the key in anything, is what can you take and make work for you without cluttering your mind and that type of thing.

I know nothing about being a specialist, I can assure you, but I do know this: It's a different position, a different mentality, different mindset. So I think the key is finding out what works for you and trying to simplify things. Anything in life, the more you can simplify it so you have clarity, that's a good thing. I think that's really the trick to avoid that information overload, find out what's working for you. I'm not sure what those buzz words are right now or the key things are, but it seems that they're really resonating very well for him right now, so that's great to see.

Q. What stories or memories stick out to you about Coach McCarney?

COACH FERENTZ: The first one that comes to mind is Coach Fry coming down and ripping us for doing one-on-ones shortly into whenever it may have been when I got here. But Dan and I, there are different relationships people have. Typically with line coaches on any staff, they work hand in hand just like the coordinators communicate a lot. So being a line coach offense, defense, there is that natural camaraderie, I guess.

We had a lot of good experiences. That was the thing that made it so special to be here throughout the '80s. For the most part, our staff stayed intact. I got here. First guy I met was Barry Alvarez; he picked me up at the airport when I interviewed. And I think it was seven straight years not one coaching spot changed on our staff, so we had great stability that way. Needless to say, we all became very good friends.

Then to see the guys afterwards and after that nine-year period, guys go off and do things on their own and have the kind of success they've had, be it Barry, be it Bill Snyder, Dan, all those folks, that part has all been great. The only downside has been having to compete against each other. It's probably four or five guys that I think I've worked with that we end up being on the sidelines opposite, and that's not much fun, quite frankly.

I talked to Coach Fry last week, and he never enjoys that either because it's like who are you cheering for? The offense or the defense? So it's one of those can't-win propositions sometimes.

Q. Did your relationship with Dan kind of change when he was at Iowa State?

COACH FERENTZ: Absolutely. I mean cats don't like dogs, right? I mean, not that they don't like each other, but it's just natural. We're not going to be buddy-buddy, and that's just how it goes.

But we've always been friends. Just like Barry and I have been friends and all that, but when you compete against each other, there is a little different feel to things. I prefer it when those guys are not working somewhere where we're diametrically opposed to each other.

Q. Talk about LeShun Daniels, seemed like he wasn't quite himself the other day. Is he getting better? Canzeri moved ahead of him on the depth chart, does that mean anything?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it means Jordan's healthier. I can't say enough about Jordan. I think I complimented him after the game and I'll do it again. Going back two weeks ago when he had to carry the load and he did a great job of it, and certainly the same thing the other night. LeShun couldn't drive off of it to be effective enough. So I think we're gaining ground there. And for Jordan to assume the role the way he's done, it's just fantastic. I'm not surprised. He's really played hard.

Q. Getting back to McCarney one more time. When you look at where he's gone and the situations he's inherited, et cetera, do you think guys like that maybe don't get their just due?

COACH FERENTZ: Absolutely. I'm not saying anybody can coach anywhere, because every place has their own unique challenges. But Dan has taken over two problems that were obviously in need of work at that point. What he did at Iowa State is very well-documented. He did a fantastic job there. I think history has proven that or will prove that and continues to prove that.

What he did at North Texas. They went through a really tough period, a year ago, I think it was the 13th season, they had a fantastic season, and finished up with a convincing win in a bowl game. So those things are hard to do. I always felt that same way about Coach Fry. Coach Fry never had an easy job, I don't think. He took over jobs that were challenging, very difficult, and made them very successful.

So credit to anybody that does well, but certainly what Dan has done is well documented. And Barry would be the first to tell you he played a major role up at Wisconsin too with that rebuild of that program.

Q. Where is Drew Ott health-wise?

COACH FERENTZ: Similar to LeShun, and the good thing is time is on our side right now. So every day we're moved away from Saturday is a good thing. So they're both practicing right now on a limited basis. They're not a hundred percent, but hopefully by Saturday they'll be close to it, if not there. The big idea is not to go backwards, so we'll just keep pushing forward.

Q. Would you consider holding him out this week?

COACH FERENTZ: We'll see what he looks like. If he can play effectively, we're going to let him play. That's what he wants to do. Certainly that's what he wanted to do Saturday. But he really couldn't use that elbow effectively, so it didn't look like Drew out there. With all due respect, the other guy's a good player too.

Q. Jake Duzey was in uniform, I noticed. Is he getting closer to starting?

COACH FERENTZ: He is. Last week was the first time he got to do team work, got involved in that part of it. We knew he wasn't going to play in the game, but we wanted to get him back in the routine of going through pregame, being in the hotel, all those types of things. So it was great to have him out there and get back in the swing of things.

I doubt he'll go this week, but we're moving closer and we're all pleased to see him get more involved.

Q. Henry Krieger-Coble has done a good job catching and passes, tough catches. He's kind of maybe picked up something from Jake?

COACH FERENTZ: I've told pro scouts over the last five years nobody has made more tough catches in practice than Henry. So with Jake out, it was a blow to us, but I think all of us were confident that Henry would play very well, and he's done that. Did a great job the other night too.

For us to have a good football team, we need our seniors playing their best. He's certainly doing that, and doing a great job in all regards. If we can get Jake back, that just gives us one more guy to make us a better football team, and certainly good to have George back too.

Q. Do you talk to the guys about your 2009 team and the success they had?

COACH FERENTZ: Not at this point. We're not that far down the road. But to that point it's still about each and every week. Let's go back to the point about winning games on paper. We played Arkansas State that year out of the Sunbelt, and I think that was supposed to be a one-sided game, and, boy, I tell you we got out of here with a three-point win, and it didn't come easy.

That is the nature of college football. If you're paying attention to scores around the country and all you have to do is look at this season, three short weeks there are a lot of examples that we can draw upon. Bottom line, everybody's got good players, everybody's got dangerous players. You give up a blocked punt, give up a punt return, turn it over, throw a pick at the wrong time all

those kinds of things, and you find yourself in a bad situation.

It's still about preparing the way you have to prepare and get ready to play your best football.

Q. Do you think a 3-0 start has changed the feel around the team and the guys in the locker room?

COACH FERENTZ: There is nothing wrong with winning, I can tell you that. I'm more pleased with how we've won so far, and they have been three different types of games. The first game we came ready to play right from the start. We haven't always done that in our first ballgames, so that was good to see against a team that we have a lot of respect for.

Certainly the next week was right down to the wire, and then we were able to punch it through there at the end. You shift gears to Saturday night, and it was a really physical football game. They play a lot like we do. We're differently built, but they play a lot like we do. They come after you pretty hard physically.

So for us to have to go through a game like that and to win it on the last possible play of the game, that was gratifying too. So hopefully those are all learning experiences. You learn from everything, but we all prefer learning from a win, that is the best way to learn, no doubt about that.

Q. I'm sure you have a list of things you want to improve, but if you could pick a couple one, two things you need to sharpen before Big Ten play, what would they be?

COACH FERENTZ: The biggest things are little details, I think. Obviously the punt block the other day was pretty obvious to everybody, and it was a big play in the game, certainly. So that was one. The pick was another. Those two plays were the most obvious bad plays that we had, and they both cost us dearly. But there are a lot of little things that you probably don't see as a casual observer, but our opponents are seeing, whether it's the leverage we might have on a coverage, et cetera. And if we don't get those things cleaned up, we're going to get found on them.

It's interesting in a game when there is an interception, there is a blocked punt, those things, boy, okay, they screwed that up. But there are a lot of plays that happen in a game that nobody really sees. Quarterback may not see a guy running wide open, but next week they're going to see you and test you again on it.

So those are the kinds of things. That's ongoing. That will be every week of the season because you never play a perfect game.

Q. With the rugby-style punt, is this a case of if you can't beat them, join them? Because you're on record of not really liking that.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it's a new me. It's as simple as this. You just get back to everybody that left the stadium back there in November, everybody, players, coaches, every fan that we have, and we have the best fans in the world, everybody left saying, hmm, you know. Really? Okay. So you go through a little period like that, and the bowl game wasn't much fun either.

So you go back and look at everything. Yeah, we were wide open. We had an open mind back in January, more so in February, March, April. What can we do to be better? I don't think we look totally different right now as a football team. But if we can make some tweaks and little changes that are going to help us and be advantageous, then, yeah, we're open to it.

It's all about moving forward. So that's kind of what we've all, and everybody has made great contributions, all the guys on the staff. So that's what it's all about. That's what we ask our team to do too.

Q. Everybody saw his ability to throw the ball and the speed. But the intangibles seem to set him apart from a lot of other players, toughness is obvious. He got smacked in the face and his hip was dragging. Also being able to run in those situations to make plays whether it's with his feet, running 8 yards instead of trying to force a pass in there. For somebody who hasn't played a whole lot, it seems rare to me that he's able to do so well?

COACH FERENTZ: I think you have to give him a lot of credit there. Those are the things that are hard to evaluate without a player being in a game. The toughness aspect, it's hard for any quarterback at any level to be extraordinary if they're not tough minded. I mean, they just have to be. That is the nature of that position. Then the other two parts are judgment and just the poise aspect, and they kind of go together. Because, again, it's easier to have good judgment when you're not getting hit in the face or getting chased around, those types of things.

But that's football. It's going to happen. You have to be able to deal with those things. Tough crowds, et cetera, bad circumstances, all those things, because it's going to happen during the course of the season. And again, it's hard to simulate. You try to simulate those things, but you can't simulate 60,000 or a hundred thousands people screaming at you or peaks and valleys or getting hit in the adams apple, whatever it may be. I think if anything I've been impressed with, and I think everybody on our staff, just his poise and judgment over three games has really been impressive. It's really something to build on. We're not there yet, but it's something to build on.

Q. He took a helmet to the chin, and should that have been a penalty, and it sounds like concussion protocol only made him angry.

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think he was hurt at all, but I would just say this: I know in our conference that's going to be a point -- as it's been made apparent to us, that it's going to be a point of, you know, point of attention. So we anticipate and we're coaching our defensive guys to really be careful about those hits because it's been a point of emphasis for the last two years, and I know the Big Ten's going to continue to look at it that way, which is probably good for the game.

Q. You had a different look at North Texas' quarterback when he played alongside your son at City High four years ago. What are your recollections of his ability, and now seeing him on tape, how much has he grown since those days?

COACH FERENTZ: I didn't get to see many of the high school games with my kids. It was a treat when I did. Two things, I was always amazed City High had pretty good teams. One of my kids went through there, and I was amazed how dumb the coaches were just listening to everybody criticize the calls. I was like, geez, these guys win every game but one every year it seems like. So that was an education.

But when Andrew was playing in high school, he was a really good player. Just an all-around, versatile, just the things we were talking about, a guy that had great judgment, was really poised and very dangerous.

He's gotten his opportunity now at North Texas. He's doing a great job. He really played very well last week. So we better be ready to go, because he's a good football player and a real competitor. I saw that at a young age from him.

Q. Not taking away from North Texas or anything, but you got to develop a little depth against Illinois State. How important would that be in a game like this?

COACH FERENTZ: Anytime you can get players in there, whether it's -- preferably it's your choice, sometimes it's not your choice. Jameer comes to mind right away, Parker Hesse, you'd love to have those guys get some training before they get thrown in like they have. But you don't get to control those things.

But I'll say this: Anytime guys that aren't starters get to play, that's a benefit. It's just good for everybody. It's how they grow. It's how they move forward, and it's a reward too. But you've got to earn that right, and those things don't come easy.

Q. Your home-field advantage is kind of missing in action. Think Saturday was a real positive step, the atmosphere in that stadium and what your team did with that.

COACH FERENTZ: I know it wasn't a sellout. It was short of a sellout, but it sure felt like one down on the field. I can't remember it being much louder than that especially at the end. Again, what a great opportunity for Marshall to be recognized, and he's smart getting out of there and away from the danger.

But to me it's like everything. Not finishing games, not playing well in the fourth quarter, whatever it may be that's on our check list right now, those are all positives, and we're trying to build credit right now. That is our goal as a football team to get better in all the areas, traveling on the road, whatever, that won't be a challenge this week. But whatever those things are we've come up short on, that's what we're trying to do is get back in the positive column.

Q. Coach, where does Desmond King rank among the cornerbacks you've coached over the years and how do they allow you to do some things differently on the defensive side of the ball?

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't thought about it in those terms, but to your point that they're both playing really well right now, Desmond, I thought was okay last year. He played very well his first year. Not that he didn't play well, but it wasn't like he took a real big step forward. Last year was Greg's first year playing, so he was kind of feeling his way around just like Jordan Lomax in the back end.

The benefit of playing is if guys are thinking right, they have a chance to step forward, and I think we're seeing that certainly with Greg. I think we're seeing that with Desmond too right now, not only in the kicking game, but also what he's doing on defense. Those interceptions were beautiful plays.

So how they are going to rank or will rank, hopefully near the top. I don't even know who the top two are right now. But we've had some good corner play here traditionally, so hopefully those guys will take their place in line. That would be great.

Q. Is guard still a competition? James got in there while rotating in Sean.

COACH FERENTZ: I'm afraid to even say this, but right now I think we're playing pretty well inside. Our interior is playing well. So to that point really happy with what both Jordan and Sean are doing, but also really happy with James.

We're going to keep playing him. He's a good young player. We've made the decision to play him. If he goes in there, it's not because we're mad at either of the other guys, but we're happy with James, and we want all three of those other guys to play a lot. So it's a good situation right now. Again, I'm afraid to even talk about it and jinx ourselves here.

Q. Did you expect C.J. to be this effective as a runner?

COACH FERENTZ: We knew he had potential, but I don't know what I expected exactly. The biggest thing is he's learned to try to go down or get out of bounds at a smart time. He hasn't always demonstrated that, and he's taken some hits that were not so smart, and even on the one sneak he didn't get down. He gets a little excited out there. That's okay, that's what makes him good. But he's doing a nice job really. He's in good judgment of when to and when not to.

Q. How Ike and Boone kind of graded out, what do they need to improve on?

COACH FERENTZ: They're making progress. It's been really nice not to have a lot of discussion about them. That's been great in comparison to August and July. And secondly, I talked about this being a different challenge for our football team. It was a very different challenge for those guys too.

The guys they played Saturday night were -- I'm not playing the comparison game, but they were different types of players than we'd seen the first two weeks in a different type of defense. So it was a unique challenge. I think they learned from it. I think they did a lot of good things and the exciting thing about those guys is they've got great attitudes. They're off to a good start with three games. They're hardly there yet. It's kind of like our team, hardly there yet. But their potential is there.

It's just a matter now of them getting burned a little bit more and learning from those experiences and keep pushing forward. But really pleased with their progress so far. So, so far so good. It's going to be a work in progress, but they're doing a good job.

Q. You talked about you never know with players. But you're shopping for offensive linemen at Cedar Falls, you had one in mind and found another one. Do you ever reflect back on that and how that math worked?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, to answer your question, yeah. But not a lot. Part of recruiting is probably like sales. I never did anything in the business world, but you probably hear no more in sales than you hear yes. I've heard that and read that. Recruiting is the same way. We hear no a lot more than yes. Quite frankly, and I don't mean this in a disrespectful way at all, but once a

guy goes that way, we're going this way.

So I don't worry about things that go that way, I worry about things going this way and the guys that are with us. We coach the players that are on our team and really enjoy that. So I hope everybody's successful. I really hope the guys on our team are successful. That's my primary care.

Q. You mentioned Parker earlier. It seems like he's ascended pretty quick from high school quarterback to defensive end at this level. Has that surprised you at all?

COACH FERENTZ: Going back to Mark's point there, he's a guy that piqued our interest in camp. And like Ike, we were looking at Ike as a tight end, projecting him as a tight end from quarterback, now he's playing tackle.

Parker, we weren't sure what he was. We thought he was a defensive player, and I'm really glad LeVar and Jim drove up during our bye week two years ago and went up and saw him play. I can't tell you who they played. But I remember talking to them that night when they were driving back, and they were really excited about what they saw. That's all we needed was confirmation about his competitiveness and seeing him in person compete.

Again, we're projecting a guy that's a high school quarterback and he played defense too. So to fast forward, it was last spring out there in the indoor. I remember not last spring. It was last December. First day he went to defensive end. Reese just told him, hey, it's like playing linebacker except you have your hand on the ground and that's it. Go to work. It's as simple as that.

But again, the credit goes to him. He's worked hard. He's got a great attitude. He's serious. He's tough. He hasn't gotten there yet either. But we can see some good things down the road for him. He's playing really hard out there.

Q. Used to be that quarterbacks would transition to wide receiver and safety. Now you've got your last year's left tackle, this year's right tackle.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we're recruiting bigger quarterbacks. That's our secret there. No, but the moral of the story is, if you're a high school coach, at least you put your two best guys, quarterback and running back. At least in the old days it was quarterback, running back, and now I guess they're receivers. I don't know. We're not getting into a spread, non-spread discussion. I can promise you that. Not going down that road today.

Q. What do you think the difference is for Marshall this year?

COACH FERENTZ: I really think it started last year. He, again, he's always had a very strong leg, no question about that. Big part in any position is not just kickers, but any position, consistency in your performance. I'd say two years ago he was as apt to hit one from 55 as he was miss one. I'm not sure the probability was any different from 25 in terms of yardage.

So the secret is what he's done from consistency. He's really been able to iron his game out a little bit now where he's hitting it no matter where the ball is. I think we all have great confidence that he's going to deliver for us.

It's like the other night, you know, to make it from that distance that required great leg strength, no argument there. But beyond that it's different than practice, and we've seen him do that in practice, so that part wasn't a surprise. But to do it in that condition, you can't simulate that. The game was on the line. We're going to win it or go to overtime.

He just looked totally unfazed out there, just like we're talking about C.J. So when a player can get to that level of confidence, that's a really good thing. I don't think he's going to get off the track. He's really wired in.