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An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Clearly we're anxious to get going here. It's been three weeks of camp, and I think certainly the team was happy to break camp and set their sights towards the season. You know, the nice thing about three weeks of camp, we had a good time to really be with the players extensively, have a lot of good meetings, practice time, all that type of thing.

Probably the only downside is yesterday was the first day of class, so you're going through the first -- especially with the younger players, their first time out on a college campus trying to figure out where the heck they're going, that kind of thing. I'm sure we'll have some guys coming in today dazed and confused. Hopefully we'll work through that and have a good week of preparation. We certainly need to do that before the ballgame.

On the injury front, there are three guys that certainly will not be with us. One, Karl Klug, a guy that's been doing pretty well. Karl had a minor foot repair yesterday. He incurred an injury last week at the end of the week, and that required a little bit of surgery, so I think we're probably looking at four to six weeks for Karl not being with us.

And then with the guys that we've been watching a little bit, I really think it's unrealistic right now to think that Paul Chaney or Dace Richardson would be able to play this weekend, so we'll be without those guys.

Captains for the week will be Albert Young representing the offense; we'll have Mike Klinkenborg, Brian Mattison on the defensive side; then Dan Olszta, a senior, is going to be our captain for special teams.

We have some work to do this week. There's no doubt about that. We're anxious to get started here with our game preparation. Just anxious to kick the season off. I think it ought to be an exciting trip. It's been a while since we started a season on the road certainly, so it won't be as hostile of an environment as we're typically

accustomed to going to when we travel, but nevertheless it's going to be a road trip and a nice scenic bus ride.

We'll have to get used to that. It's a challenge we have to handle as well as the opponent.

And shifting your focus, Northern Illinois is a program that I think obviously has had traditional success. I give Coach Novak an awful lot of credit, and I'd make mention of their administration, too, because the first couple years weren't easy ones for Coach Novak and his staff. They weathered a couple tough years and have really built an outstanding program since that time. They've had continued success in the conference. Joe went in there with a great plan and he rode it out, the administration rode it out with him until it paid dividends for him.

So you're looking at a team that's hardly going to be impressed playing a Big Ten school. They played us tough last year for four quarters as a four-quarter ballgame. They played at Michigan, played the heck out of Michigan two years ago, so we know it's going to be a challenge that way. They've got a very well-coached team, very aggressive team, and we know they're going to hustle and play hard.

Like all first games, our focus really has been as much on us as it has been on any opponent. We've done our best to scout them. They've got a new offensive coordinator so there might be some uncertainty there. Any first game you're going to get wrinkles; we have to be prepared for that. The biggest concern is just hopefully how we respond, and hopefully we'll do a good job when we get out there.

I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. How much time have you spent in this three-week period on special teams with the kickoffs coming from the 30?

COACH FERENTZ: I couldn't give you a minutes total, but we've added a little bit more with the rule changes, but also just in light of the way we played last year on special teams.

Both in the spring and this camp we added a little bit more time, a little bit more attention, both in meetings and practice field. Hopefully that will

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show up. It's certainly going to be a big part of the game for all teams this year, kickoff coverage and kickoff returns.

Q. (Medical news on Alex Kanellis?).

COACH FERENTZ: Got some positive news there, but we're not out of the woods. I'll probably have more news for you next week or the week after. I think right now we're still having conversations. We'll gather a little bit of information. He certainly, as I mentioned, will not be playing this week no matter what happens. Hopefully next week I'll have a little bit more information.

Q. How beneficial is it for Jake knowing that he's going up against a team that he's pretty familiar with having gotten a chance to start against some of them last year?

COACH FERENTZ: It's probably a lucky coincidence in that regard because again we don't know what they're doing right now but we expect them to be somewhat similar philosophically. You look back through the years, Coach Novak's teams have been that way. So I think that's probably a good thing. It's going to be a different environment certainly, we're not playing in the friendly confines of Kinnick.

We're going to have a lot of young players out there, but I think that is a good thing to answer your question. And all that being said, he's practiced very well. I think he'll play real well, not only in this ballgame but for the whole season we're counting on that.

Q. Have you ever heard of a college quarterback getting his first two starts against the same team?

COACH FERENTZ: I really haven't, no. It's kind of unusual, I think.

Q. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the guys who have done jobs on the offensive line. I know you're going to be really young there. What's the status there?

COACH FERENTZ: We are going to be young. We're going to be inexperienced. Yeah, we started out two short in the count from the spring. We really thought Rob Bruggeman and Dace Richardson would certainly be in the mix there, the top seven. I'm not sure how it'll all shake out, but with those two guys out of the lineup, that changes things extensively.

I think the good news is the guys have practiced well, but the bottom line is we have two guys that have experience; Seth Olsen has

practiced well, and I think Rafael Eubanks has really had a nice camp. He's really elevated his play and is letting his experience work in a positive way for him.

After that I think Kyle Calloway really did a good job, and then Julian Vandervelde, we've been pretty consistent in this camp with him running with the ones. After that right now I think you're still looking at a three-horse race between Andy Kuempel, Travis Meade and Dan Doering; all three of those guys are still competing. We haven't nailed anything down yet and we'll just kind of see how the week plays out.

Q. (Question about Jake Christensen, and who would be the second QB.)

COACH FERENTZ: Let's hope that doesn't happen. We'll look at what's the score and what's the situation. That's one position that -- I appreciate that. That's one position that's really a question right now, is our backup quarterback scenario. Nobody has really moved ahead or distinguished themselves, I think, in the race. You've got both Arvell and Rick Stanzi are in competition. Adam Farnsworth is another guy that's kind of been in the mix, and I wouldn't rule him out totally, either. We'll try to get a little bit of extra work this week for those guys and just see how they continue to progress.

Q. With everything that's happened off the field the last few weeks, are you looking forward to a game week to have sort of a routine and bring a little bit of a sense of normalcy back?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I hope so. Certainly you never plan the kind of week we had last week, and I think this was a positive. The guys really did a good job of for the most part keeping their focus where it had to be.

We moved on as a team, as a staff and handled things appropriately. All that being said, we brought some things upon ourselves. That's usually the case. It's kind of like ballgames, we talk all the time about you get what you deserve, and we had a media feeding frenzy last week, and we invited it. We opened the door for it.

Bottom line is right now we have to be beyond reproach. Everybody on the team has a responsibility to realize that and do a good job.

To answer your question, yeah, we're anxious to get into a game week routine, but if we do something that's not what it's supposed to be, we open the door for more distractions and hopefully we put that behind us.

Q. Any update on that situation?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think so. I really haven't heard much of anything, so I think we're moving.

Q. (Question on Douglas and Bowman being back on campus)

COACH FERENTZ: I'm hopeful that they are, but I'm not sure if we've been able to locate either one the last few days. We're not quite sure where they're at.

Q. Do you see any carryover from the Texas game in the spring into the chemistry of the team?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that remains to be seen, but the guys have worked hard, and they've really seem to be meshing well together. I think we're getting good leadership from our older guys, not just our seniors, but guys like Mitch King, Matt Kroul, Seth Olsen that are juniors that are playing a prominent role. So far so good there, and the newcomers have been fun to work with, and they seem -- for three weeks they've done very, very well.

We'll see what happens once they start going to class. Like I said, they'll be a little bit frazzled this week for sure, but we feel good about that so far and the proof will be in the pudding. We'll see how things materialize, but we're looking forward to starting. It's been a fun group to be around on a daily basis.

Q. You talked last week about 10 to 12 freshmen. Have you made more decisions on that?

COACH FERENTZ: We're probably still looking at the same things. A couple of them are nicked up a little bit. Hopefully they'll be full speed today and that will play into things. But I think the 10 to 12 we're looking at, special teams, backup roles, that type of thing, certainly realistic.

Q. Talk about some of the guys from the '05 class being from the Chicago area kind of going back making their debut back there.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I just talked to somebody on The Call, somebody brought that up, a reporter from Chicago. I hadn't really thought much about it. Hopefully that won't be a distraction to them. Hopefully it'll bring out the best if that's the case. I'm sure it'll be a little bit special for them, especially Soldier Field.

I remember playing a baseball game at Three Rivers when I was a kid, and that was a real

thrill, too. Of course there were like five fans there when we were playing, but just to play in a big league park was a neat thing.

I think it's going to be exciting for both teams. When they walk in there for the walk-through on Friday -- that impacted me at the press conference we did there in August. When we go inside there, it's really going to be exciting for everybody, I'm sure for the Chicago native guys especially.

Q. Where are you at with a kicker?

COACH FERENTZ: Pretty much still indecision. I think Austin and Daniel are both in contention right now. He has a little bit of an edge but we'll let the week play itself out and see how it goes.

Q. Judging on the scrimmage (question about Daniel Murray).

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that was one exposure. We've been watching them all camp. It's fairly close, we'll just keep gauging it and see what happens. Maybe both guys will have roles. We'll see how that plays itself out.

Q. (Inaudible) picked up any playing time this year?

COACH FERENTZ: He's certainly in contention right now, so yeah, we're anxious to see what kind of week he has. But he's in contention. He's certainly one of those 12 guys.

Q. (Question about freshmen).

COACH FERENTZ: No, I really hadn't thought about it, but it seems like a high number. Maybe it'll taper off a little bit, but I think on the low side we're still looking about eight to ten. That's just the way it shakes out, and hopefully it'll be a positive thing.

Q. Any pleasant surprises coming out of camp?

COACH FERENTZ: I think so. Unfortunately Karl Klug was one of them. He was a guy that had back surgery a year ago in December, so we really -- we probably never got to appreciate him a year ago, but he was really doing a good job. We had a lot of guys do some nice things. I mentioned Rafael Eubanks a little while ago; I think Kyle Calloway has really just continually improved, and we're excited for him. Brandon Myers continues to do a good job; Tony Moeaki has done a nice job. Just trying to think of who else we're looking at here. That's a good

question. To name a few, there's a few right there. Chad Geary, I'd throw him in there, too, a defensive end, nice job. He continues to improve.

Q. What does that do for your depth at defensive tackle?

COACH FERENTZ: Cody is one of the freshmen that will work with the twos. Pretty much we had a five-man rotation going there with Karl, so I don't know if we'd add to that or not. You know, he'll be working in there. And Adrian Clayboon has worked in there a little bit, too, so he's worked at end and tackle.

Q. A little bit of a shake-up there at the receiver spot. How have the guys come in and responded since that all went down?

COACH FERENTZ: Pretty well. They've been practicing well. With Andy Brodell -- I think the good news is I really feel better about the group now than I did a year ago because it was not a group to feel good about a year ago. We saw Andy Brodell, he's practiced well but he really stepped up in the last year so I think he's starting to hit his stride. Trey Stross has done some good things out there; James Cleveland we think is a guy that will play well; Derrell Johnson-Koulianos is a guy that we're hopeful will do some things, he's got some potential; Colin Sandeman has really done a nice job, too, so I think you're going to see him play a lot for sure on Saturday. So those five guys are the guys that we're relying on to start out, and then we'll go from there.

Q. (More on Colin Sandeman?).

COACH FERENTZ: He looks a lot like he did in high school, which isn't always the case. I'm not trying to be smart here, but I thought he was a smooth guy in high school that just played really professionally and did a nice job and got to see him firsthand last fall when they beat City High, and he played very, very well there. He's kind of done the same thing here. He's just kind of walked in -- it doesn't seem like he's really struggled with anything. I'm sure he has, but you don't get that impression just watching him. He's a very smooth athlete and just seems to do things pretty fluidly, not only physically but also mentally. You know, it's a good thing to see, and I'm sure he'll be a little antsy, too, this coming Saturday, but we're excited to get him out on the field.

Q. Will you use him on the return game at all?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he's a potential guy back there on returns as well as receiver.

Q. Julian Vandervelde, he's a guy who separates himself when he walks in a room. How about on a football field?

COACH FERENTZ: Julian is an intriguing guy as a person and then certainly as a football player, too. I think I mentioned before, he probably set the all-time Iowa record for cheese fries on his visit, which concerned us a little bit. Since he's been enrolled here he's never had a problem with his weight; he's kept it right where we've asked him to. And he's been a very disciplined, hard-working young guy. It's going to be interesting to see. That being said, I know he's going to pull off some stuff Saturday, I know that, just like all young guys do and will. But I think he's got the mental make up to play through it. It'll be an experience for him, but he's going to be a good football player for us.

Q. Talk about Devan Moylan, where he came from in order to get back on the field.

COACH FERENTZ: He literally came from Europe in the spring. First of all, it's great to get him back. I think he's excited about it. He's had to work extremely hard because of the injury that he suffered last September. That's a tough one to come back from. But he's worked hard, he's really paid a price certainly. On top of being a good football player, I think he's got great intangibles. You can never have enough of that.

Q. Hamstring?

COACH FERENTZ: Hamstring, they had to surgically repair it, which is not pleasant.

Q. You heard them talking about there will be probably 40,000 Iowa fans in the stadium. How exciting does that make it?

COACH FERENTZ: That sounds like the Orange Bowl. Hopefully it's a different outcome.

Our fans, I can't say enough about our fans. First of all, there's no question in my mind the reason we were in San Antonio last year is because of the fan support that we have, that we enjoy, we're fortunate enough to enjoy.

The season ticket sales this past summer have been phenomenal considering the kind of year that we had. I'm just hoping that we can repay our fans during the course of the season; certainly this Saturday go out and play the way they'd like to see us play.

Q. Moylan and Greenwood, is that a situation where they'd split time or are you looking for somebody to take over that job?

COACH FERENTZ: Again, I think it's a three-horse race and we'll see how it plays out. We're not displeased with any of them. I think all three of them are doing a great job and we'll see how things go.

Q. Did you say 10 to 12 true freshmen in the two deep?

COACH FERENTZ: Not in a pure two deep, but we're talking about special teams. Actually playing, I think we're looking at 10 to 12. The low side might be eight, but that's kind of what we're looking at right now. We're committed to getting those guys on the field and trying to bolster the team any way they can.

Q. That's a higher number than we've seen in years past. Is that out of necessity or because these guys are ahead of the curve?

COACH FERENTZ: I think our minds were a little bit more open coming into this season, but also, that being said, we're not fabricating, and the guys have to do it on the field. We have to see evidence that they can in some way help the football team, and I think that's what we see, and we've been really pleased with the way they've been working.

Q. Coming into last year you weren't afraid to express your opinion about your underwhelming performance at the receiver position. This year it doesn't seem like there's any one position that stands out as having a deficiency. Would that be accurate?

COACH FERENTZ: I think I so. I feel like we have potential this year. Not that we didn't at receiver last year, but we didn't see enough evidence to say, boy, it's going to work out. It took a while. But I think right now we're very young in spots; obviously the offensive line and quarterback we don't have a lot of experience. But we've seen enough of the guys that are involved right now to think that they have the potential to play well, hopefully sooner rather than later, and I think they will. I think in due time we have a chance to have a good football team.

Q. (Overall strength of special teams?)

COACH FERENTZ: Knock on wood, I don't want to jinx this, but I think in practice we're seeing a lot of good things we have to get out there. We're young there, too. No matter who it is punting or place kicking we're going to be inexperienced, so like anything else we'll go through some highs and lows there. I think we have some guys that are capable of doing a good

job, and I think the way our core performers have performed in practice, we have a reason to think we have a chance to be decent, so that's what we're looking for.

Q. When you were in the National Football League did you coach some games at Soldier Field?

COACH FERENTZ: One game. I couldn't remember the score, but I read it this morning or somewhere in one of the papers. I think it was 24-3. It was one of those games that kind of doesn't stick with you. It was a bad game, both teams. I read there were 40,000 people there, so 40,000 people saw a game that they were probably mad they paid their money for it. Well, they were probably happy because the Bears won, but it was not a classic. It won't be an NFL Classics, if there is such a thing.

Q. They have some guys coming out that are tremendous running backs. They've got a couple receivers that probably saw the ball in the air 40, 45 times a game coming out of their programs, too. How do you prepare for that?

COACH FERENTZ: We have great respect for their guys. The two Davises are both excellent receivers. One of the funny things, the running backs that they've had there, if you look at it statistically, three out of the last four years they've actually thrown the ball for more yards than they have running. We all know what kind of player Garrett Wolfe was, and I think it was Turner before him.

Yes, they've been balanced. They do a nice job of throwing the football. They've got a new offensive coordinator. Their last offensive coordinator took a job at Georgia Tech I think it was in February, but one thing since Coach Novak has been there, they've been pretty consistent with their style of play, and it may not be exactly alike but we're going to expect similarities. I'm sure they're going to throw the ball, no doubt about that.

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