

**October 2, 2007**



An interview with:

## **COACH KIRK FERENTZ**

**COACH FERENTZ:** The captains this week, we'll go with Albert Young, Damian Sims on the offensive side of the football, Bryan Mattison and Mike Humpal will represent the defense.

Injury situation real quickly. We basically have four players in doubt right now. We'll just kind of ride that out, see how it goes. Mike Klinkenborg, Devan Moylan, Jacody Coleman and Trey Stross are all iffy. My guess is we'll know more tomorrow. We'll see how it goes. They won't do much today, if anything, so we'll see how that all works out.

Certainly last weekend was disappointing. Credit goes to Indiana. As I mentioned, I thought they played a very good football game. Appear to have a good football team. We left a lot to be desired certainly with our performance. They certainly had something to do with that. They played a good football game.

Our focus turned over this week starting on Sunday afternoon. We're going to need a great week of preparation. We play a very talented Penn State football team. If you look at them, they've lost two games in a row after getting off to a great start. And I think it's obvious in their case, too, what's hindered them, they've had some very untimely turnovers the last two games. You play a team like Michigan at Michigan, you need to be at your best. They played very well, but they turned the ball over.

Same thing last week. Illinois has a very good football team. They're playing at Illinois. They experienced some problems there, too. But they're very talented. They got a very good group of receivers. We've been hearing about most of these guys now for a couple of years. Now we're

finally getting to face them. So they're very, very talented there.

A good offensive line. Talented runningbacks. Excellent fullback. They've got a quarterback who's done a good job for them in a year and a half's time, led them to a lot of big wins. They're a good team offensively.

Defensively the most surprising thing I think is, like Ohio State a year ago, they graduated a bunch of good players off their frontline. The guys they have playing right now are playing like veteran players. They're very impressive on film. Big, athletic, quick on the edges. They've got a very good linebacker crew led by Connor. Excellent player. Excellent secondary. Two very good corners and good safeties.

The kicking game, it's interesting, they've got two left-footed guys, left-footed punter, left-footed kicker. They're both excellent. As long as we can keep the ball outside of the 40, we'll be safe from the kicker. Once it's inside, he's a real threat.

Williams is a prominent guy on the return game, too. They're a very good football team. It's a tough place to play. We're going to need a good week of practice, great week of practice. That's where we'll start today.

**Q. Might be a tough place to play, but the team's played well there.**

**COACH FERENTZ:** If there's any consolation, that's one thing we've done. Might want to borrow the 2004, 2002 ballclub to come join us for this one.

Yeah, even going back, Tim Dwight had the punt return over there going back as far as '83. We had a good win over there in '83. But that being said, it's a great football environment, tough place to play. It's one all our guys look forward to. They should be excited to have a chance to play over there.

**Q. What do you remember from that 2004 game?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, it's like everyone I've been involved with. They've all been tough. There weren't many points scored 2002. Just the opposite 2004. 2000, was an overtime ballgame, as was 2002. I think it was double. Then '83, that was a wild game back and forth, too.

I don't know if it's coincidental, but I think I've been in four of them now. They've all been really hard-fought games. Two teams that have competed hard. That's what we're going to have to do this year to have a chance, whether it be low scoring like 2002 or a high scoring affair like 2004.

**Q. Can you risk getting involved in a high-scoring affair at this point?**

COACH FERENTZ: It would be a great thing if we could. I don't know if we're capable of that right now. Logic would tell you the best chance we would have would be a defensive game. But, you know, sooner or later we're going to break the ice here and get it going offensively. Logic right now would dictate the other direction.

**Q. What were you thinking from Saturday afternoon until you reconvened with your team as far as what you've got to do from this point forward?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not going to say there's a formula for every situation, but I think this one's pretty basic right now. We've lost three games. If you want to rank the losses, you know, it certainly was up there in the disappointment stage. Again, it's not so much losing but some of the things we did in the loss. That's what you're concerned about.

Some of the things we did Saturday, if you do them against any good team, you can't expect to win. We've got to focus on getting that corrected. I'm not ignorant to the fact we've lost three straight. I'm sure our players are probably more aware of it than I am. So I think that's the other thing, just make sure we have our players' attention directed towards what's really important right now.

What is important is what we do this week. It's really about all we can worry about, how much improvement can we make, what can we do to clean up the things we didn't do well, you know, hopefully get ourselves in position to play a game where we give ourselves a fighting chance to win the thing. Some of the things we did Saturday won't allow us to do that.



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**Q. You flip-flopped a couple offensive guys.**

COACH FERENTZ: On Saturday? Yeah, the thinking there basically was Dace got pressed into action at Wisconsin two weeks ago. He's been practicing both sides. I think the thought process was pretty simple: that he really has basically two years of accumulated work on the left side. Didn't look extremely comfortable on the right side. That wasn't the time to make a change. We certainly didn't anticipate injury going into the game. Hopefully you don't have that.

I just thought after talking with Reese, after playing, it just made more sense to put him back on the left side and let Kyle shift to the right because Kyle has been all over the place. If you remember the last scrimmage in the spring, he was at right tackle. So I thought that might help Dace be a little bit more comfortable. I guess that's ultimately what it came down to.

**Q. How about Colin Sandeman?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he should be ready to go today. The prominent guys we're concerned about, the ones I mentioned, I'm trying to think of who else has residual stuff. Jordan McLaughlin hasn't played in a couple week now. He has an ab strain. I don't know if it is the same as what Drew Tate had last year, but similar to. I think we're probably a week away with him. We might be a week away with Bulaga, Klug, some guys that have been out. Moeaki is moving forward. Brodell is done for the year. That's not going to change. He's doing okay, but he's done. So I think that's pretty much it.

Yeah, he should be ready to go. He dressed on Saturday, you know, but just didn't practice. So Sandeman should be fine. It was a contusion fortunately, yeah.

**Q. It's not like with the offensive struggles that you are turning the ball over a bunch. Is that one thing that's positive?**

COACH FERENTZ: There aren't a lot of highlights taking place right now, but that's certainly one. That was a prominent thing on our plate coming in. Thus far, knock on wood, we're doing a pretty decent job, although we made a dumb decision the other day on a pick and that cost us. It made that margin a little bit tougher. It was just a bad decision.

But I tell you, I think Jake, the one thing he has done, he's done a pretty good job making good decisions back there in some tough circumstances. The guys are hanging on to the ball. So at least we're doing a good job there. It's a positive.

I thought we ran the ball fairly effectively and efficiently the other day. But when you get behind the way we did in that second half, it's tough to stick with it. In the fourth, quarter couldn't run the ball very much, didn't that have opportunity. That kind of got lost in the shuffle a little bit.

We're doing some things well, but we're not doing it with consistency. You know, we need to pull the whole thing together to have a good chance to win a football game.

**Q. Did the tape show anything more on the sacks, what's breaking down?**

COACH FERENTZ: No, I think it showed what I suspected Saturday. It's a complex issue. It's not one guy's fault. Sometimes it is. But usually it's this, that or another. So it's protection, quarterback decisions, routes not being run correctly. You factor all that up, it had a very ugly result.

**Q. Is it fair to call the program unstable right now?**

COACH FERENTZ: Call it whatever you want. I mean, all I know is we lost Saturday, we lost the Saturday before, the Saturday before. You know, we won the first two. You can call it whatever you want.

We looked like a pretty good football team, what's it been, about 10, 11 days ago, and four days ago we didn't look so good. So erratic, you know, inconsistent. I think if you looked at the last two games, you could say that. But I don't think anybody's ready to throw in the towel right now. I haven't gotten that sense.

**Q. You talked about how you felt you did well with the run game. Is that going to be more of a bigger emphasis?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's easier said than done. Again, Illinois' attack is nothing like ours. Mention was made going into the Indiana game. We're following Illinois right now two weeks in a row, watching them on tape. They just have a whole different offense. They're more of an option-type team, so defenses have to play them a little bit differently.

The Michigan game is maybe a little bit more relative to what we're trying to do. But, again, you have to be able to -- usually to run the ball, you have to be able to throw it a little bit, too. I think for us to get better, we're going to have to throw the ball better than we did this past weekend to have a chance to perform the way we want to perform.

**Q. Beyond the different matchups, Wisconsin, Indiana, what happened from Game 4 to Game 5?**

COACH FERENTZ: To me, we just didn't play very well. We were victimized by a couple big plays in that first half. Again, the one -- I don't think you're going to see that one repeated too often. But we gave up two big plays to Hardy, gave up or were victimized by Hardy, however you want to say it. That's a tough thing, when you had the big play affect you.

Our kicking game was less than spectacular. We had seven penalties in the first half. Really didn't do anything of substance offensively. We had basically a fluke touchdown. So when you spot a team 14 points in the first half, a team that's built like ours, it's not a good equation right now. It's not one we want to follow.

For us to have a chance to be successful, we got to be playing well right from the start, continue that right through the end. You know, I thought we did that at Wisconsin. I thought we competed the way you've got to compete if you're going to have a chance. The challenge for us right now is to get to that level and stay there.

**Q. Is this as challenging a point as maybe you've been in since your first couple of years here?**

COACH FERENTZ: I mean, there's challenges in every situation. So that's just kind of the way it goes. You deal with them accordingly. This is challenging. I'm not dismissing that. But I think we're up for the challenge. We're going to go back to work today. We plan on having a good week.

**Q. Jake has taken such a beating, is there a number two that's taken reps?**

COACH FERENTZ: We've kind of been divided a little bit between Rick Stanzi and Arvell Nelson. With our receiver situation, Arvell has been working out wide. We're just trying to go with

whatever we have.

But our plan is to go with Jake. Hopefully we can give him a little bit more support and he'll play well.

**Q. If he were to go down?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'd say right now we'd go with Rick because Arvell has been working extensively out there. Guys can only run so many plays in the course of a practice or else you're not going to have them Saturday. We're trying to guard against that, too.

**Q. What have you done about the kicking situation?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, if anybody's got any ideas, let me know. We kicked pretty well two weeks ago. Again, it's a consistency thing. I thought Austin kicked well at Iowa State. It's not his fault that one got blocked. That was a protection thing. It wasn't his kick. So he kicked well that week. Got injured. Danny Murray kicked well the next week. Really neither guy kicked real well. Maybe that's representative of the way the team was.

But for us to have a chance right now, I think anybody could figure this out. It gets down to us playing good defense, and we've got to play consistency on special teams. We haven't done that. We've done a lot of good things on special teams, but we're not consistent like we need to be. You know, then offensively we've got to make improvement. That's what we're working on right now.

**Q. Are bad routes being run more than we see by the wide receivers?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's a fair assumption. Again, look who's playing right now. I think I said this three weeks ago. The things where we're having a little bit of problem right now, I think most of them are predictable. When you put guys in that weren't slated to be in there at a certain time, you're going to have to live with some things.

You're trying to manage things, simplify some things, yet you still have to be able to meet the opponent also and do some things that are going to give you a chance against the opponent. So it's a juggling act right now. Some things you just have to grow through and you have to work through. That's the way it goes.

That's why I was saying the other day, it's a more complex than saying we're not tough

enough or our effort is not good enough. I've heard those speeches, too. Believe me, toughness and effort are huge in football. If you don't have those two elements, you might as well go home. But the game's more complex than that. It's not just going in and screaming or knocking a billboard down or something like that. There are a lot of pieces of the puzzle that have to go together.

**Q. Would you say that youth and inexperience is the cause of the slow start?**

COACH FERENTZ: In certain areas. I wouldn't say that's a problem, our defensive line. Those guys seem to be pretty experienced. We're a mixture. Like any team, we've got a mix of different elements going on right now.

Again, I think my sister would tell you, we got a few guys playing that we didn't anticipate. How do you anticipate Andy Brodell get hurt-- not just straining a hamstring but basically pulling it off the bone? Things happen and you got to adjust.

**Q. Is there that much of a drop off between Moylan and Greenwood?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not necessarily. No, not necessarily. We'll evaluate that one and see what happens. Perfect world we'll get Devan back. But the world is not perfect. He's not practicing today. I'm not optimistic we'll get him back. We'll just have to weigh it out and see which way to go.

**Q. Is it as simple as a spread offense is a bad matchup for you guys?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think it's as simple. I think it's more involving the players. I think their quarterback played an excellent game. He'll probably play a few more of them this year. You know, Hardy is a tough matchup. In my opinion, he'd be a tough matchup in any offense you run. The Rogers guy from Michigan State was a tough matchup. They weren't a spread team. Edwards. Go right down the list. We've seen a few in this conference.

To me those two guys -- I'm not minimizing the rest of them. I thought their whole team played very, very well. They have two guys who really are big-play guys. We've seen them firsthand. Hardy three years in a row, Lewis two years in a row.

**Q. What do you see from Morelli and the wide receivers that Penn State has?**

COACH FERENTZ: As I say, we've been



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hearing about their receivers and seeing glimpses of them now for three years. We had a two-year hiatus. Those guys really have played well. Morelli jumped in last year after Robinson graduated and did a nice job. They had a very good season. He's a good football player. We tried like heck to recruit him. We talked to him on the phone. That's about as far as we got on that one.

**Q. How does preparation change when you're coming off that hiatus?**

COACH FERENTZ: It just takes -- you're just not quite as familiar with. You do work out of the season just to keep track of the roster, what have you. But it's just a little different feel because you haven't played against them in two years. It works both ways, I'm sure.

**Q. Does it help knowing Coach Paterno is still their coach, knowing what to expect?**

COACH FERENTZ: Basically their whole staff is the same. I think it's exactly the same. I might be missing one guy. But since last time we played them, they've had great stability in that program, obviously not just with Coach Paterno but the whole staff. They do an excellent job.

Now, their offense has changed a little bit. Obviously when they went with Robinson, what was it, two years ago, they won the Big-10 championship. In, 2005 they changed their offense a little bit to feature him. Now they're somewhere in between what we saw and where they were in 2005.

**Q. You have been pretty spoiled the last few years. January Bowl games. In your gut, do you feel the team can make a run with all the injuries that you've got?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think what we need to do right now is just worry about this week. I really do. We're hopeful. We're optimistic. That's our business, if you will. I mean, everybody's disappointed.

Again, I think if you're not on a team or on a coaching staff, your emotions tend to swing a little further left or right than people involved in doing the activity. I mean, all of us, I assume we're going to stay optimistic. One thing about this team, it's had a great attitude to date. I don't anticipate that changing.

We're just going to keep working hard and do what we can do. We'd be very happy to win the game this week. But it's going to take a lot of

work. It's going to take a phenomenal effort. That what we're shooting to do. We'll worry about the next one next week.

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