

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Chris White Brian Ferentz



COACH WHITE: Great to be outside today for the first time in a while. Spring weather has finally hit us, unlike last Friday night in Des Moines.

Just wanted to say quickly about Des Moines; it was really impressive the crowd that came and our players and coaches really appreciate the support. The weather was ridiculous. For the kids who stayed at the end, they had a blast and our players really had a blast working with them and having fun. So it was a great event. Our guys really like going to Des Moines and playing in front of that crowd, so hopefully we can expand that in the future.

As far as the state of my position and really the team as a whole, I think we are making steady progress. And my position is specifically the running backs. Fortunately last year, we had the opportunity to play four guys, and three of them are returning with a lot of experience, minus Jordan (Canzeri) at the running back position. We're going to miss Jordan's leadership. We're going to miss Jordan's production. We're going to miss Jordan's energy. That void needs to be filled, and hopefully some of these younger guys will step up.

Like LeShun, hard to believe LeShun is going to be a senior this year. He played as a true freshman. Has not really had a full season under his belt in terms of staying healthy, so my goal, our goal is to keep him healthy and see what a healthy LeShun Daniels can do throughout a 12-, 13-game season.

Akrum's progress has really developed. It's a day-by-day thing with him but he's showing signs of a lot of maturity, specifically with his body weight. He's been consistent with that, things off the field, academically, he's just maturing. He's growing up and he understands that he needs to really have a huge roll on our football team next year. His impact, the things that he can do on the football field can't be coached. And he realizes that and I think he understands that this team needs him, and he's really growing up.

I think you know, Derrick Mitchell will not be in spring football, but we expect him to be ready to be in the summer program come June and preseason camp we

expect Derrick to be back.

So those are the three guys that had a lot of experience with us. You know, we have two younger guys right now. They are just trying to figure stuff out right now. Right now Marcel Joly is a red-shirt sophomore who has really had a good spring, and the past couple days, he's really shown some flashes of his athletic ability.

And Eric Graham is a true freshman, he's just trying to figure stuff out. He's a talented kid that he just needs a lot of reps and I think that the more reps he gets, he's had a lot of reps this spring, so that's been good for him.

As far as the fullback position goes, we lose two really good football players. Macon Plewa and Adam Cox to me were the heartbeat of our offense, what they brought to the table in terms of their physicalness and just their energy, their approach and all that.

So we have some question marks there but I really feel good about the candidates that we have. This program has been built on walk-ons, and Adam and Macon were great examples of that, earning scholarships and really being great football players for us.

I expect at least one or two of those guys will emerge come preseason camp, whether it's Drake Kulick right now, who has played a few snaps on special teams for us and a couple plays last year at fullback. We have Austin Kelly who is a walk-on from Illinois who is a really strong, physical kid. And then we moved Brady Ross over from linebacker, and this kid's a football player. So we are excited to see his growth and development throughout spring and into preseason camp. So that's kind of where we're at with that.

As far as the specialists go, you know, big concern. Obviously Marshall (Koehn) and Dillon Kidd graduating; don't have any experience right now in our program kicking the ball. Miguel had a couple kicks last year. Mick Ellis we red-shirted and he kicked a few his freshman year.

So the field goal part of it is a work-in-progress. That's going to be ongoing throughout preseason camp, so you know, -- we have a new holder. Things people

don't really understand, the snap, the hold, all those things need to be really grooved up. We're getting there, but it's going to be a process, as well as the punting situation. Right now we've got Colten Rastetter right now, and a walk-on by the name of Ben Canby, who has been taking the reps.

So that's the major focus in the spring is those two things and then lastly, I'm just glad that Desmond is back. Desmond as a returner, I don't think has scratched the surface of how good he can be. I think at the end of the year, specifically in punts, the one punt he ripped off in the Stanford game was a great run. He's going to get more confident doing that early in the season. He made some judgment errors just fielding the ball, and I think you'll see more explosion out of Desmond there. We'll continue to use him as well as some of the young kids like Jerminic Smith, Josh Jackson, and Adrian Falconer.

That's kind of where my position is at. Just feel good about where the team is right now. We're not looking back. We're trying to build. I think the chemistry is starting to develop, and you know, the kids are just -- they are hungry and we're going to make sure that they stay hungry and humble and we're going to just keep grinding away. Can't believe we have 10 practices already in and spring game is next Saturday.

Q. What can you guys do to keep LeShun healthy? I know some of it's out of your hands, but what can you do to keep him as fresh as possible?

COACH WHITE: Well, I wish I knew. The injuries that he had were all lower body, kind of ankle things, where he just kind of got rolled up. I don't think those are preventable. Just seems like every time he started to really get in a groove, he'd just get that one turn of the ankle and a pile and you know, as you know with Jordan Canzeri, same deal. With ankles, if you can't have that cutting ability and explosion on it, you're not effective, and that's certainly the case with LeShun.

Q. Was that the case with LeShun after the Iowa State game, up until Minnesota maybe?

COACH WHITE: Absolutely. And Jordan, as well. There was a stretch in there after the Northwestern game that they just -- if you're not 100 percent on that ankle, first of all, their confidence, they know when they can make an explosive cut.

And they know when they are kind of just -- it just doesn't feel right and the burst; they are like hybrid horses. They have to be feeling right, and they weren't. You could tell. They will try to fight through it and say, I'm good coach, and they go out and you don't see that, what they are capable of.

Q. LeShun said he wants to be a three-down back. What does he have to do to be a three-down back?
COACH WHITE: Well, I hope he could. I'd love to have a guy who we could just put in there for all three downs.

We've talked about this. He needs to work on his pass protection, which is, you know, he's extremely smart. He's detailed. Just a little bit of the fundamental part of it, I think that's one.

And again, that's a concern that hopefully Derrick Mitchell will be back and Derrick did a nice job and LeShun has really, really improved on catching the football out of the backfield. But he's a big, muscled-up type guy that ball is over his head, balls that are moving a little bit, he had struggled with early, but he's gotten a lot better at that.

Q. Seemed like a button you guys are pushing with Akrum later in the season, I think in the Big Ten title game and the Rose Bowl, using him in space as a receiver; do you see that continuing?

COACH WHITE: Yeah, Akrum's gifted in space, and exactly right, as many ways as we can get him the ball in space, we're going to try and do that.

You know, even out of the backfield, just doing some one-on-one isolation routes with him, he's tough to guard. Our linebackers, he's so quick, he can cut on a dime and he's explosive. Yeah, to answer your question, absolutely.

Q. LeShun and Akrum in together at the same time?

COACH WHITE: I would love it. We haven't really talked about it. But I think that we -- two years ago, we talked about putting both backs in the backfield but we haven't really talked about that lately. We're trying to get the fullback position right.

But I think more importantly, we feel good about George Kittle and the tight ends, and you know, we'll be I think more in what I call 12-personnel, two tight ends and motioning the tight ends back and forth a little bit.

That's a great question I'll ask Coach Davis when we get back. I'd love to get them both on the field.

Q. What's your balance between LeShun and Akrum, bring different attributes, time share or what do you want to see?

COACH WHITE: That's a tough question, too. I couldn't answer that question last year, as well. It's really kind of a feel thing during the game. I think right now, LeShun is our starting tailback, but that really

doesn't mean a lot in the coaches' eyes in terms of how much carries he's going to get, how much time he's going to get.

Each game is different. You know, you've got to play the hot hand. And fortunately last year a guy went down, a guy came in, he got hot. So I mean, that's the beauty, the magic of last year and hopefully we can have the same this year.

I would love to give LeShun the ball 25 times. I would love to see him for 12 games kind of like Shonn Greene, just kind of wear people out. I mean, that would be, I'm sure LeShun would love that and the whole staff would, too.

But unfortunately for him and for us, that has not been the case, but we'll keep trying. He's a talented football player. He's tough, he's smart, and he cares about football. So I'd love to do that. But at the same time, Akrum deserves his plays as well, he's explosive and he's shown that he's taken care of the ball ever since the one in, I think it was Illinois State or whoever it was early in the season. That hurt him. It hurt him, like you've never seen. And he finally said: I'm not going to play, these coaches are not screwing around here. I won't play if I fumble the ball. He's made a great effort to work on that.

Q. How big of a deal was it for Akrum to get over the 190 barrier weight-wise?

COACH WHITE: It's huge. He's still hovering around there. He's plus one, minus one, depending on the day and the weekend and stuff like that. We feed these kids unbelievable now but during the weekend for some reason, they are not getting as much food in their body.

But I think mentally for him, it's big, because I think he feels more physical. His first concern was I'm not going to be as fast. I'm like, that's ridiculous, you're going to be faster. I think he broke the ten record or something with Coach Doyle, and at 190 pounds. He's going to be faster, more explosive, those type of things.

For us, as coaches, we just feel more comfortable with him. More importantly is for the buy-in factor that he's committed to doing what we're asking him to do, and for his future. I told him one day, because he went from like 188 to 184 over the weekend. I said, "Go ahead and Google, starting running backs in the NFL. Tell me how many running backs in the NFL are 185 pounds. Name me one."

And he said, "Oh, okay, Coach." So I mean, he's starting to figure that out, you know.

Q. You said earlier that Akrum has things that you can't coach, and I think we all know what that

means. What are those things from the running backs coach perspective?

COACH WHITE: Well, speed, for one. His start to finish is just -- I don't think I've seen that in college, how fast he can accelerate. And then the other thing is, his jump cutting, his lateral movement is as good and as rare as I've seen, as well.

Now you couple that with a little bit more strength to pull through some inside runs, and you've got something now. You get him in the perimeter, he's going to make someone miss and wiggle someone. Now he can run through a tackle and that's the thing that's exciting to see and hopefully you'll see that this fall.

Q. What do you see in the two incoming freshmen, and do they have a chance to crack this rotation?

COACH WHITE: Well, they all do. As we saw last year, you're going to need them all. You can't have enough good players, specifically in the backfield.

We are excited about both of them. They both are bigger backs, 200-plus. Toren is about -- he's trying to stay at 220. I told him not to get too big. Very productive high school career. And Toks, as well, 205-pound six-foot guy that can run. I think he ran 11 seconds at 100 meters just last week and he was 205 pounds, Coach said.

Q. Will the kicking battle go all the way?

COACH WHITE: Yeah, that's going to go probably till game day, I would think, unless someone just really emerges right now. But it's neck and neck right now. One guy has a good day, the other guy has a good day. We've just got to be more consistent. Outside today for the first time really kicking, and it wasn't pretty.

Q. What you guys were able to do with your fullbacks last year and the way that you formed -- give fans the appreciation for what those guys do and how much of a difference they can make? How concerned are you about that this year?

COACH WHITE: Well, I was concerned going into spring, but I tell you what, the last week or two, those guys, all of them have gone in there and just struck a match on some of those linebackers and just really -- you know, the fullback position is so hazardous. And they get absolutely no love, no sugar. They get maybe a ball in the backfield on a flat route every once in awhile. But they understand how important -- their teammates love it when they go in there and just light up a linebacker.

And our running game, the physicalness of our running game would over the history of this program, wouldn't be the same without the fullbacks like we've had here.

And these three, four guys, they are going to be just as good. We won't miss a beat. They are going to be good players.

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: Talking about the offensive line to open, obviously we lost three players off of last year's team. We lost two guys that have produced a lot for us, played a ton of football. You're talking about guys that have started games over the course of four years, four seasons. And then Eric Simmons who had done a tremendous job in our program of providing depth throughout that time.

We lose three guys there, we bring back five guys that have game experience, which is a positive thing. Wasn't always positive how we got them game experience, but they all got it and they made it through. So we bring five of those guys back. After that, we've got 11 guys that haven't played as much but are all working into the rotation. So what I'd say is obviously you've got Cole Croston and Ike Boettger, we've listed them as the tackles. That's where they are working in the spring. We are excited to see them continue to develop.

Really Cole has probably played the most for us on the edge out of anybody. And then we've got Boone, and Keegan Render getting the reps with the first group on the inside, doing a nice job. Sean Welsh has slid over to center and has performed pretty well there to open.

James is missing time right now; James Daniels, obviously coming off the knee injury. So that's been a little bit disappointing for him but it's allowed some other guys to get opportunity.

And that next group, you've got guys like Ryan Ward, Dalton Ferguson, Steve Ferentz, guys that have been around for a bit of time that are now starting to emerge and get some work. You have guys like Lucas LeGrand and Ross Reynolds, new names, red shirts a year ago, and now coming off their second season into their second spring and making some progress.

After that you've got the freshmen group who continue to make strides: Brett Waechter, the Paulson twins and Jake Newborg and then Mitch Keppy, that's an unfortunate deal right now. He had a little bit of a setback with the foot and wasn't able to participate this spring, so he's had to watch it from the sideline.

That's kind of the snapshot of where we're at. We obviously have a lot of work to do. But we do return some good experience and we've got some good, young guys that we are excited about and with that, I'd open it up to you guys.

Q. What did you see with Boone to think he could make that move inside?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: Well, I know you guys get tired of hearing it, the best five and it gets repeated ad nauseam, but really it's the philosophy that we subscribe to here. It's what we believe in. What we are doing is trying to fit the pieces as best we can.

For us when we look at it, it's not always about who is the best tackle. It's more about who is the most capable of moving inside because it's a little bit different of a position as far as what we're asking those guys to do as far as covering ground, just athletically. Boone is a very gifted athlete. He's very explosive.

On the inside, typically you see us play with a little bit smaller guy than maybe we'd play on the edge. Part of that is just the level range that's required on the inside is a little bit different than the leverage that's required on the outside. We were covering more space.

As a 6-5 guy goes, Boone is as good an athlete as we have. So that was why it was a natural inclination for us to move him inside. But also, and I'll just -- I'm going to go off-topic a little bit on that because I think, and this bugs me even now.

You look at a guy like (Brandon) Scherff last year and there's so much made about, is he a left tackle; for the draft, you're going in the draft right now is this guy a left tackle, is he a right tackle, is he a guard, can he play center. Outside of center, you want some length on the edges. You want some guys that can cover space and play that position.

But I just think there's too much made about this guy is a left tackle, this guy is a right tackle. Everyone we play has good pass rushers and they can move from side to side I've noticed. Or you'll play a team like Michigan State where Shilique Calhoun is a field player for them. He plays to the field. So that means our left tackle and our right tackle have to block him and he's a premiere pass rusher.

They had Lawrence Thomas on the other side who is also a good player. But I know whether you're a right tackle or a left tackle, you're going to play against premiere pass rushers, guys that can get off the ball and rush the edge of speed. If you're a guard you're going to see pretty good pass rushers, too. Because defensive guys aren't dumb. They sit around, and they are going to find the weakest link and they are going to put the best pass rusher over that guy.

That's why you've seen the influx of our radar package, Wisconsin was really the first one in our league to go to that pretty exclusively on third down. It's also part of Michigan State's package. They have not used it as

much because they have had really good edge rushers. But you look at the teams where they play some different fronts and mix personnel groups, that's just about creating match-ups and those can be on the edge or those can be on the inside.

Long answer to a simple question. But that's why Boone was moved inside. We just saw him as the most capable of moving inside. Not that he's not a great tackle. If history is any indicator, I think we'll see him back on the outside probably before the season is over, unfortunately for everybody.

Q. Talk about Sean's development?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: It's been good. Sean's a natural football player, which is why he was a candidate to slide to center. If a year ago it was a concern about tackle depth, which that would be accurate, this year it's concern about depth on the inside. We haven't really addressed that. We haven't had to; we've had essentially two centers for the better part of six year, seven years.

So if you look at that and then Tommy Gaul slid in and did a nice job for us. But we haven't played a lot of centers. So all of a sudden, now we are looking at the first off-season where we don't necessarily have a guy there with a lot of experience, so you take a guy who is a natural football player like Sean, which is why he slid to tackle and why he's done some things for us. You slide him into center and really, you just count on his football aptitude to kick in because there's a little bit different when you're snapping the ball and you're blocking guys, that's a little bit different.

But he's adjusted nicely. There's some things that he still needs to work on. He's going to have to continue to work on those things but I'm pleased with his progress this far and if he can continue that progress, I think he's got a chance to be a pretty good one.

Q. When you say natural football player, what do you mean?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: I mean things happen very naturally for Sean Welsh. That is not a good answer to that question.

When you coach a player, there are certain players that are more instinctive than other players, if that makes sense. It's easy to see in a linebacker because linebackers come downhill and they hit the ball carrier, right, or they don't. And if they don't, then they are not very instinctive. It's harder to see in an offensive lineman because blocking people is not necessarily a natural act.

Run blocking is more inherently natural. You really are just asking guys to come off the ball and hit people,

which if guys are football players, they are generally pretty willing to do that. Pass blocking is much more difficult because it goes against every natural instinct. There's nothing natural about pass protection. When you find a guy that's a natural football player, those things that seem a little bit unnatural just make sense to them.

And I think I've used the example before with you guys, Rob Gronkowski was that type of guy. He probably couldn't diagram for you or talk intelligently about it; all due respect to Rob, he is a bright guy. But football-wise, he wasn't going to be able to explain to you the difference between cover two man and cover two. But he would find the hole in the coverage and he would get open.

You may say, well, what kind of leverage was this, how did they play you and he would just look at you. And you would just say, well, that was good, do that again. So it was natural for him. That's all I mean with Sean.

Q. With Welsh, how many guys have you had that could play, potentially start games at guard, center and tackle, in basically a calendar year? It's pretty rare, isn't it?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: Since I've been here, this would be the first one. It is pretty rare. You look at guys, the only other guy that comes to mind and I didn't coach him, but has that kind of versatility and unflinching versatility, would be (Marshal) Yanda when you look at what he's done in the NFL.

I guess it was two years ago, they all run together for me, it was either last year or two years ago, I'm watching them play the Texans. Would have been bowl prep for us, late in the year, and their right tackle goes down. And J.J. Watt is having a field day anyway, but the right tackle goes down and they have to put a guy in that I think they had just activated him. He had been on the roster but he had not played.

So now this poor kid has to go in and block J.J. Watt and the next series which didn't surprise me at all, Marshal slid out to right tackle and they put the other guy in there at one of the guards. They shuffled the line and so I remember talking to Marshal afterwards and just saying, hey, what happened there. He said, hey, look, I wasn't going to get the guy go in there. The best thing for the team was for me to go out there and block Watt.

I think that's a little bit uncommon for a couple reasons in the NFL. No. 1, NFL players don't want to be embarrassed. These guys are in the business of paychecks and how it looks and how they play and how they are evaluated. And especially at that time, it must have been this year because they are not a playoff

team. They were not even in the conversation. And most guys in the NFL wouldn't do that. They are waiting to get their golf clubs out and play.

So for Yanda to do that, I think that was really impressive on two levels. That's what Sean reminds me of as a football player. I'm not saying that he's a Pro Bowl guy or he's at that level, but as a football player, he's a team-first guy and he's willing to do things that maybe are a little bit uncomfortable because they come pretty natural to him and he doesn't give it a whole heck of a lot of thought. I bet you I was more nervous the night before the Northwestern game last year than he was. It didn't faze him very much. I was petrified. I was scared to death of what was going to happen.

Q. Austin Blythe, what do you see from him in the coming years?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: Yeah, I would draft him. Tough, dependable, reliable, experienced, smart, go down the list, athletic. And I know in the NFL they get caught up on measureables and value to the team based on what position. The guy can play center or guard and he's done it at a high level at a good program and he's got pretty good pedigree, I would take him.

I don't know where I would take him, I'm not a decision maker in that realm, first round, second round, third round. As a center, I would feel pretty good about him against the other guys that are out there, and I think I said that, last time I talked to you guys, December, or whenever that is when they voted for the Rimington and all that, for me he was the best guy. That's how I would answer that question.

Q. What about Jordan (Walsh)?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: I think Jordan will have a chance, I really do. It's a little bit harder for a guys that's really only played one position. I think that's probably the biggest knock on him. When you're an interior guy, if you haven't snapped the ball and you're not 6-5, that can be a little bit of a problem. But he's a tough guy. He's played a lot of ball. Same as Austin. He's done it at a pretty high level. He was an all-Big Ten player last year. He'll get an opportunity.

I don't know that he'll be drafted. I haven't seen that kind of conversation, but I know he'll be in a camp and he'll have an opportunity to compete and make a team. If you look at our guys that are in the National Football League right now, they all took a little bit different path.

Obviously Brandon was the fifth overall pick. You have Marshal who was the first pick of the third round. You had Riley (Reiff), you had (Bryan) Bulaga, guys that were other first-round guys. But we have a whole host

of guys that were undrafted that finished the season on rosters last year, and some of them started games.

There's a lot of paths to the NFL, and I think if Jordan could get into a camp and showcase the skills he has, he'll have as good a chance as anybody else.

Q. Last year you talked about Cole Croston as a walk-on needed to come through for you. He came through in a big, big way. What was maybe the tipping point for you?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: He was a walk-on. I know we awarded him a scholarship but to me if you come into this program without one, you're a walk-on till the day you leave here. And that's a badge of honor. That's a good thing.

Cole is a guy that traveled with us to Michigan his freshman year. He was red-shirting. We took him and Ryan Ward. We had some depth issues. Those two guys went, really had no intention of taking a red-shirt off of either of them but you never knew if it was going to happen.

He's been mature beyond his years since the beginning. He just physically had not caught up, came in, 220 pounds, probably will play next year somewhere around 310,315, so a guy that physically has matured a great deal. Even in the last year, he's really grown leaps and bounds.

But last spring he certainly made a case. He was in that competition for one of the tackle spots. I know you guys get limited glimpses of practice, and we're very aware of when you're there, too. So you don't always see what we're thinking about, and we all know the game gets played.

He was the guy that was in the competition and, in the end he we just felt like the other two guys were better options and that's the truth. Now, when we lost one of those guys, when Boone went down in the North Texas game, Cole stepped in and never stepped out. I think that's a credit to him. And what he did was he stepped in and he demonstrated to us that we had made a mistake. Not that necessarily he's better than anyone but he deserved to be on the field.

The guy started every Big Ten game and I would have put him up against most guys in the conference, I really would have. He's played on the right side, the left side. He just needed an opportunity. And some guys are that way. Sometimes the best thing for us is that we can't keep a guy out of the game because he goes in and he never leaves, and that's a good problem to have.

Q. The pass protection, there's so many variables

to it, and easy to point to the offensive line to blame, I know it's not always that way, but pass protection; is that something you want to improve?
COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: Sure, you really did a good job of equivocating that question, too.

Well, we gave up 32 sacks last year, so we gave up seven in the bowl game. I think we gave -- we may have only given up three in the Big Ten Championship game but it sure felt like more than that. I'd like to sit here and tell you that they were all the quarterbacks, running backs and wide receivers faults but we all know that's not true.

I would say, yeah, absolutely, that's the No. 1 priority now outside of developing our roster and our depth is improving our pass protection. We went from two years ago -- I know in 2013, we ended up giving up 15 maybe, 15 or 16, including the bowl game.

So to double that number in two years, I think that's alarming and certainly when you look at what we did down the stretch, that's alarming. Two different things happen: I alluded to it earlier with some of the defensive packages, what defenses do a good job of now is isolating your weaknesses. Or putting their best guy on your worst guy in a match up. Same as you would do in the passing game or something like that.

So what happens to us a lot of times is in the Michigan State game, for example, our No. 1 problem in that game was hard rushes and that's not an indictment of the tackles. I mean, they are blocking NFL players and at some point if you play 70 snaps, you're going to get beaten.

Unfortunate thing is you may win 20 of your 22 head-to-head battles but the only two that are going to matter to everybody, including us, are the two you lose. What we need to do is probably give them a little more help. Do a better job of formation, chipping, motioning, some of those things, to protect those guy. I wouldn't put that on them. That was bad coaching in my opinion, starting with myself.

In the bowl game, I think what you saw more of was -- they did a very good job. They went back to the Wisconsin game, Wisconsin, Indiana a little bit, but those were teams that did a very nice job of -- you know, a lot of times, if you don't have just a great guy, you'll get into some games and movement and stunts and you'll find a way to get three-on-three but give yourself an advantage.

And they did a really good job of studying our protection, getting a bead on what we were doing, and probably again, bad coaching, we were maybe a little too predictable what we were going to do on third down

from a protection standpoint and then isolating three-over-three with a game or pick or stunt designed to put stress on that. That's been a point of emphasis, and that's been something we've talked about in our room and went back and studied and looked at. Because I mean, I'll be willing to bet it's going to happen again. We open with Miami of Ohio; they have studied that tape. Iowa State is watching that tape. I know they are hungry to beat us. So they are watching that tape. North Dakota State certainly is not real impressed with anybody because they are a really good outfit; they have been watching that tape. Go down the list and then our nine Big Ten opponents are probably all studying that tape. Obviously that's been a point of emphasis.

Q. How much of a handle do you have on what James Daniels can give you?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: I think that's a fair question. Not a great handle because he's never played center. I think we've got a decent handle on what he is at guard, at tackle. Would have loved to have this time to work with him.

But going back to the bowl prep, we knew that an issue was going to need to be addressed, so we tried to make sure that we maximized our time with him when we were going to have him back in December. And practice and do those things so that we got a really good look at the center position.

But certainly, you'd like to have him out there on the practice field right now and in that developmental mode. We'll get him back in the summer and we'll go to work. I think we've got a handle on what he is as a guard. I think we have a handle on what he can do at tackle. Hopefully we don't need to do that again this year, but you never know. As a center, we'll give him more work in there.

It will just come back to the original point of what are our best five. If he is in that best five -- is he a guard, is he a center; I don't know that. We'll figure that out, and it depends on what Welsh does or doesn't do. There are too many variables right now. I'm just happy that we've got five guys that are practicing right now. I'm pleased with that.

Q. Is Render six at this point?

COACH BRIAN FERENTZ: I would say right now if I had to make a clear-cut declaration, that Render would be six right now. I think he knows that. That could change. That could certainly change by August. I'd like to play six or seven. We'd like to do that. We've preferred to do it in the past. We've been forced to play more than six before.

Six is a good number. If we can get six in the

conversation where they have to be on the field, and then you can develop a little bit of healthy competition, I just think it raises everybody's level. It would be good for everybody. But right now that six is probably going to have to come on the inside because our third tackle is really starting at guard right now.