

April 15, 2015



An Interview With:

REESE MORGAN

REESE MORGAN: We're a work in progress this spring. We've got two experienced players at end and inside. Jaleel has had an opportunity to play a little bit, but other than that we're working with a young group of guys. We really like the group of guys that we're working with. They really care about each other. They're working hard. They want to get better, and they're extremely coachable. It's a really good group. This is practice No. 10 tonight. We certainly have a lot of work to do, and we are making some mild improvement, but we have to have a little bit more sense of urgency about improving these next six practices.

Q. How has Nate Meier impressed you?

REESE MORGAN: A year ago at this time the big concern was can Nate be an every-down defensive lineman with his size. He answered those questions last spring and last season. We still have to detail things in terms of his technique. He's an undersized guy that thinks he's bigger and tougher than he is, and you love that about him, but he's making some progress, and the nice thing about him is he's doing well in all areas of his life right now. He's really doing well in the classroom and doing extremely well on the field, and he's really focused right now on trying to improve.

Q. Matt Nelson seems like a guy that's really made a lot of progress as a redshirt. Just talk about where he's at.

REESE MORGAN: Matt had an opportunity during bowl prep to really take a step forward, an opportunity to work with the second group, and those reps are starting to show right now. We're kind of expecting him to play both sides, both the left and the right side, and he's a

very talented young man, highly motivated, intelligent, and I think he's got an ability to help us on the field next fall for sure.

Q. Can he be the third defensive end?

REESE MORGAN: You know, with six practices left you hate to anoint anyone. They have to earn it and so forth, but I think Matt has got a pretty good opportunity to be that guy. Now we've got to look for another guy, and there are some candidates, Melvin Spears and Parker Hesse and some other guys that are working towards that opportunity.

Q. What do you see evolving at the tackle spot?

REESE MORGAN: Right now we're starting with Jaleel Johnson, who's our most experienced inside guy; Nate Bazata, who's extremely reliable, plays the blocks well. He just really adds a lot to that group; Faith is -- the last couple practices, last two practices, he's stepped forward and if he can keep maintaining the same type of effort and tempo and improvement in the next six practices, that will really earn the trust that you're looking for.

And then Kyle Terlouw, No. 61, is really an intriguing guy. He's going to play for us next year. He's going to get on the field. He's very tough. He's a junior college young man out of Iowa Central that had Division I scholarship opportunities, chose to come here, and we're delighted to have him. He's a work in progress, now. He's a pickup truck with some used tires on it, but he's a great young man that really cares about football.

Q. How about Darian Cooper? What do you expect will be the challenge for him after being out?

REESE MORGAN: I'll tell you, it's really tough. He still has not been cleared by our

ASAP sports
...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

R. Morgan - 4.15.15.

medical and training staff, and Coop, if you recall back to when he was a true freshman, he was really a dynamic, exciting player and so forth, and he's endured multiple injuries and surgeries on those knees. Until he gets cleared, and he's working in that direction, and he's in every meeting, his attitude has been great, and our medical staff is amazed at his mental and physical toughness, to go through what he's gone through physically, our surgeons are just amazed at his pain threshold quite honestly.

Q. What drives you as a coach?

REESE MORGAN: That's a pretty philosophical question. I think when you have an opportunity to do what we do and to be around young people and to be able to help -- to be part of something but you're just a small part of it and you see the development of a person, whether they improve a little bit, you watch tape one day, you point it out, all of a sudden the next day they're trying to, all right, you're heading in the right direction, then the next day it's a little bit better, then the next day you take a step back. It's that constant ongoing process of growing and developing, and I'm not just talking about on the field, either.

One of our young men told me he got a B+ on a statistics class. I was so excited about that because he is not a stellar academic student, but he really has been working hard and spending time.

I guess to see the daily improvement, to be a part of something, to be around the guys that are on our staff, I mean, going into our meeting room, if you guys could come into our meeting room and just see the kind of passion that guys have and the kind of commitment they have to the players and to the sport, it's pretty amazing.

You like doing it because it's not work. I would assume most of you have a passion for writing and for reporting, and it's a very thankless job, and there's a lot of times you have to do things that you would prefer not to do, and write stories in a way you don't like to do, but you have to do it because that's your job.

We're lucky. We're just lucky to be here.

Q. You've spent some time trying to find the two offensive tackles you guys have now, that's your recruiting area, you probably initiated with Ike and definitely with Boone. How did you find Boone and how did you find these guys?

REESE MORGAN: We knew about Boone for a while, watched his tape and so forth. His tape was not spectacular, but what was really amazing about him was he was a multi-sport athlete that was doing extremely well. We saw him at the state track meet, watched him run. He's doing some things there that are pretty unusual for a young man of his size.

And then getting to know him, his high school coach, Coach Howard, and just knowing the type of program, they ran a single wing, he's a tight end, a single wing, which you might as well be a tackle. You can see some things; he's athletic, he can run, he's tough, he's smart. Probably the thing that really caught the eye was the night I went to watch him play basketball, they played Waverly High School, and a young man from Waverly was going to play basketball at UNI, and Boone guarded him, and Boone is not a basketball player but he's a tremendous competitor with a lot of pride. To see him compete and the production that he had -- right away you knew.

With Ike, the first thing you noticed was his size and his intelligence. He was a quarterback and a DB and they played him at tight end and then he's played in the offensive line and an athletic guy. These guys are going to be good players, they're going to be very good players. First of all, they're extremely well coached. They're going to be extremely well coached. Brian does a tremendous job with those guys, and these guys are good athletes and they're really committed, and I'll tell you what firsthand, they are a handful. You come out and watch practice or watch tape. These guys are getting better, and they're improving.

Q. What's it like when you -- because Boone was a walk-on/UNI guy. What's it like when you pull one of those guys in and think we might have trouble getting him as a walk-on. What's it like when you score that win?

REESE MORGAN: First of all, what you're trying to do is provide as much information about the opportunities here, about the situation here, and so forth. It's up to the student-athlete and his parents and the mentors involved where they choose to go. To be able to get him here was really a great accomplishment -- was something that we were excited about because of his potential and the great ability that he has. We've

got a history of guys like that.

Q. You first saw Brandon Scherff at a track meet as I recall. What are you looking for when you see guys playing other sports?

REESE MORGAN: When you're out, it's great because being a high school educator and coach for several years and coaching multiple sports you can see some athleticism in different arenas, on the basketball court, on the wrestling mat, in the track area, so you can identify guys that you think are really good, and you think they have the ability to do it, and if then they come to camp and they show that they have the toughness, the passion and the work ethic, then you're lucky to have those guys.

But there's a lot of different things that you're looking for, and I think with our staff, the intangibles are extremely important.

Q. You've got two or three guys who played eight-man football on your defensive front. Is that just the way that worked out?

REESE MORGAN: I don't know. I have a hard time counting to 11, so it's just difficult. Right now we've got three guys from eight-man football starting for us, and it is -- they're the best guys we have right now, and that probably doesn't say much about the guy coaching them or the guys coaching them. And first of all, I need to recognize Broderick Binns, who's helping us up front right now. Brod is a GA here. He's been on the special teams side, and we're very, very fortunate to have Brod's knowledge and expertise with us, and he's making a huge difference with our guys.

Q. You find these eight-man guys, you're the one finding them. I think Nate was Southwest Iowa and then I don't know where Nathan was, but you're still finding these guys.

REESE MORGAN: There's other people recruiting them but not Division I schools. You know, football players can come from anywhere, and it has nothing to do with whether you're eight-man, nine-man, anything else. It has everything to do with the type of person you are. There's a profile for those types of guys. If you go back and look at them, Nate Meier was an all-state running back, was a state qualifier in track, was a really good multi-sport athlete. Drew Ott was the player of the year in the state of Nebraska in basketball, was state champ two years in a row. He was the Gatorade Player of the Year. He was the state shot-put champ. Bazata was the state

wrestling champ, state shot-put champ, only lost, I think, five matches in four years in high school, two-time state champ.

So these guys all have those other things and characteristics. That helps reinforce the argument for trying to take guys like that.

Q. Do you recall going to Decorah a few days before signing day and offering Josey Jewell a scholarship? As he recalls, he thought you offered him in person that day.

REESE MORGAN: I can't remember going quite honestly, but I do know this: When we were visiting and talking about things, I said, I want you to understand right now, we're recruiting you as a scholarship athlete. You understand that? I think he though, 'you're just trying to get me to walk on.' We're just glad he's here right now because he possesses that competitive spirit and drive that you want in players, and thank goodness that he's on our football team right now because he's going to be a good player.

Q. You recruited and coached Riley Reiff. Now you're coaching Brady. What has he shown you so far and how do you compare those two?

REESE MORGAN: That's not a fair question at this time, but quite honestly, two different types of guys with different abilities and so forth. Riley was a bigger guy coming out. Brady is smaller, probably a little faster, and the one thing they have in common is toughness. They are both extremely tough guys, and they're very quiet. They don't say a whole lot, and they just kind of go to work each and every day. We're fortunate to have those guys, and they come from a great home and a very disciplined background where education is important, but I think they'd probably rather be on the field than in the classroom.

Q. You said Matt Nelson has a chance to be in the three. How has Matt grown his game? What has started to work for him more?

REESE MORGAN: I think he's extremely detailed. If you looked at his notebook, his notes are detailed, and when you see him do something in practice, he's having problems with something, the next day he's trying to correct it. It's identifying a correctable mistake and then having a plan how to correct that mistake and then having the confidence to keep working and working and

working regardless of the outcome that, hey, I'm going to get things corrected, and he's kind of like that. He's just kind of gradual, and believe me, he has a long way to go. But for a six whatever, 6'7" guy, 6'8" guy, he's really working hard on leverage. If you really watch him, you'll see him in great leverage positions, which is hard to do when you're that tall.

Q. When you look at your defensive ends they're outweighed sometimes 50, 60, 70 pounds by their opponents. Getting separation has got to be the key I assume. Do you use violent hands or quickness off the ball, all of the above? What do you think is the most important?

REESE MORGAN: That's a great point. I wish you'd come to our meeting and share that with our guys because we're trying to reinforce that all the time. I think it's all those things. When you're undersized you have to try to win the leverage battle. You have to be lower and you have to be inside. The other part of it is you have to have separation. You have to have separation, and Brian is teaching the other thing. He's trying to close the distance, and we're trying to get away from it, and it's an ongoing battling, and that leverage battle doesn't just happen initially. That thing could go on three, four, five seconds throughout the course of a play where you're repositioning for leverage, and that's both sides of the football, and you'll see it on tape all the time.

With Meier being an undersized guy, you'd like to see him be more detailed with his technique, but the one thing about him, he is explosive. He has some violence to him, which is good.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports