

**November 3, 2009**



**An interview with:**

## **COACH FERENTZ**

**COACH FERENTZ:** I will start by sending our condolences to the Evashevski family. Everybody got that news over the course of the weekend. Our thoughts are with the entire family. Gary Barta is there with the group from the Department and the University. Paul Federici is representing our staff.

I don't think I have to say much about Coach Evashevski's career here as a football coach. Anybody that knows anything about Iowa football is certainly well aware of the great success he had as a head coach and what he did for the university and the attention that he brought to the program.

Our sympathies go out to the family. We'll figure out some way to recognize Coach Evashevski's career here in the upcoming weeks.

Going back to last weekend, again, we're just certainly thrilled to get the victory. We made it a little bit tougher than we had to. Indiana played an excellent football game. Just happy to get the victory there and pull that thing out in the second half. It was a great effort by our guys in the fourth quarter in particular. So, just happy to get that. Now we move forward to this weekend.

Health-wise, probably the only thing to note right now is that Adam Robinson and Dace Richardson are still out. But we were hopeful Colin Sandeman might have a chance. I don't think that's realistic. At this point though, we're probably looking at next week with Colin.

Right now we've got a lot of guys banged up like everybody else. But Colin has a shot to make it for Saturday, so we'll see how that goes.

Our four captains will be the same. Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds on the defensive side of the football. Tony Moeaki and Rick Stanzi offense. And we're facing a very good Northwestern football team. A team that's had great success against us, and great success certainly in recent years. That's first and foremost.

They're a very good offensive football team, leading the conference in a lot of different categories. They throw the ball extremely well, and are very efficient. They've done a great job there. I think the biggest thing I would recognize about them a year ago was their defensive improvement. I thought that was a big part of them being a 9-1 ballclub last year and taking Missouri right to the wire in Alamo Bowl.

We see them continuing to play good defense right now. They're a little bit like us. They've had their share of injuries, and probably fair to say, more impacted on the defensive side of the football than offensive that it's taken away from them a little bit. It's a wee bit along those lines.

We expect most of the players that have been out to be back this weekend, including the two veteran safeties that are very good. And up front there has been a great player that's missed some time earlier, and it seems like they're catching up there.

Their kicker does a good job, too. So they've got a very good football team. They've been involved in a lot of close victories. Had a great one over Indiana two weeks ago before we played Indiana. It's going to be quite a challenge for our team. So our sights are looking to Saturday's game.

**Q. Rick comes out in the fourth and plays great. What is it about this kid? Most kids probably wouldn't be able to do that.**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, the first thing you would identify when you talk about him is the resiliency that goes back a year ago. This ballgame a year ago unfortunately. He does have a rare ability when he struggles to come right back and keep pushing for it, much like a relief pitcher or a corner or that type of thing. If you're in a high risk position, you have to have that capability and certainly he demonstrated it Saturday.

I'd just throw in there he got a lot from his teammates. The bench was supportive of him. And you know, everybody on the team believes in Rick Stanzi.

But, again, as I said, it's a lot easier to encourage someone than it is to be that guy who has to deal with the repercussions. He's really done a nice job with that.

**Q. Last year in this game you guys had four chances from inside the 10-yard line to win the game and couldn't get it in. This year you seem to be getting those chances and capitalizing on that. What has your offense learned from that game that they're now using this season?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think we not only learned from that game, but from all four of our losses last year. We had winnable moments in all four of those ballgames. Bottom line is we weren't good enough. The difference between winning and losing is the way you convert those situations. And if you can, you win. If you can't, you're going to lose.

It's about as simple as that. We've progressed from this game at least a year ago, and this is a lot earlier in the season. I think it was our opening Big Ten game, if I'm not mistaken, so we've progressed. Doesn't mean we're out of the woods. But every week presents its own challenges. We're certainly dealing with the close game a lot better than we were up until last year's Penn State game.

**Q. With that in mind, you talk about Northwestern's spread offense and stuff. But they seem to be maybe a little more physical team than people give them credit for. Did they take on Coach Fitzgerald's personality a lot?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, I think so. To me, Pat has done an outstanding job. And first and foremost in very tough circumstances, as we're all well aware. It was late in the summer, just a tragic event. It wasn't like Pat was expecting to transition into that role, certainly. Why would

you? And the way you have to transition into it, there is no handbook for what he had to do.

So I think it starts right there. Another chapter in that book was bringing the team in winless in the Big Ten in '06, and beating us start to finish, 60 straight minutes. I've just been very impressed.

I wrote in a notepad up until that time I was aware of his play as a player on a couple of outstanding teams, and a lot of the traits that made him such a dominant player at Northwestern, and made him a great coach. He was a great fit there. He's an outstanding football coach.

I'm not going to call him a young coach, because I think that's degrading in some ways. But he's done a fantastic job. They play hard and they play the full game.

**Q. Why did the information department send out an email tallying the strength of your schedule against some of what the naysayers have said. Is there lobbying for the BCS the same way?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not for me. I promise you. I don't have time to do that stuff. I don't even know who is in the top 25. I was just asking Phil that as we were walking down the hall. I really don't look at that stuff. I assume we're in there right now. I know that we are. And, you know, I'll say the same thing, we still have three conference games to go, a little more focused on that right now. Then we'll all be a lot smarter here in three weeks, I know that, as far as who belongs where.

But all I'm worried about is where we're at Saturday. That's about all the further we can look right now.

**Q. Do you think that your words can cause harm with regards to what you said last week thinking this is not a top 10 team?**

COACH FERENTZ: I am so uninterested in that right now. I'm just so uninterested in that. We'll probably end up where we belong at the end of the day. The drama and the suspense is not killing me. I can assure you it's not killing me. It hasn't been.

And, you know, the suspense about this week, that's a little more prominent in my thought right now, in my thought process. I'm expecting it, that's a safe bet.

**Q. Do you get the feeling from your**

### **players that in the fourth quarter?**

COACH FERENTZ: I feel a little better this week. It seems we're certainly building in that regard. It's not like there are any switch kits there or anything happens magically. But it's just our guys, as far as these games go the full 60 minutes, and sometimes they go longer than that. One thing I don't think we do or at least we haven't done so far is panic.

We're not dwelling on what happens during the game. I don't think we fixate on those things. We try to just keep looking for it and getting better with whatever's in front of us with every opportunity.

You know, we've done a lot of things not so well this year, but that is something we've done well. We've kept looking for it, and stuck together. Hopefully found a way to play our best in the fourth quarter, because a lot of times that's where you win or lose. It's like the running game. Lot of times that's where you get your most production in that second half, particularly in the fourth quarter.

### **Q. Do you expect Kafka to play?**

COACH FERENTZ: Doesn't change us at all. But, yeah, we are expecting him to play. The reports I read last night said that's their plan. You know, for us to think anything else, that would be a mistake. If he can't go, they'll go back to Kafka last year at Minnesota. He's a guy that stepped in last year in relief and did a great job up at Minnesota. And Persa looks like a talented player.

We were aware of him in recruiting. Good thrower, good runner. He has a lot of the same attributes, just doesn't have the same experience. But that didn't hurt last year when Kafka stepped in and helped in the Minnesota ballgame.

My guess is seems like whoever we've seen play quarterback for Northwestern over recent years has done a great job, and I'd expect the same thing in this case.

### **Q. Are you concerned being on the SI cover?**

COACH FERENTZ: I haven't thought much about it, to be quite honest. We're not on the cover, are we? Oh, we are. Oh, Geez, thank you. So what game was it with the black cat running out? Was that Penn State? We survived that.

You've got to be kidding me? We're on the cover? Isn't the World Series going on right now? I do know the second baseman hit five home runs, four home runs? Five. Okay, wow. Chase Utley, right? I figured he'd be on there a little ahead of

us. We're talking baseball, now we're cooking. That's good. All right. I'm going to go to a World Series one of these days.

### **Q. A few years ago Chris Leak called, any calls from recruits?**

COACH FERENTZ: Some guy wanted to sell me something. We haven't had any good calls lately, no. That was a good moment, yeah. Didn't workout.

### **Q. Do you think with the commitments increasing over the years and as commitments come earlier in a season, that this helps you keep what you have here?**

COACH FERENTZ: You always worry about that. And we've had some people knocking on the doors of some of our recruits. Imagine that. Some conference schools, too, how about that. That's football, and it's fair game. Nothing's official until signing. So I'm not upset about that in the least.

But the fact that we're doing okay on the field helps. Everybody's feeling good. All our recruits are feeling good, so that's a good thing.

### **Q. It's not hard to do anymore. You go one day in practice, and I imagine you probably turn and you can only rotate a few guys on punt returns. Just how hard is it to find that guy when that guy goes down?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's tough. I mean, if that's it, we're down to number three. We had two guys doing a great job. Colin's doing well. Paul's doing well, and Andy graduates, it will be our running back situation.

We're not a team that has five guys in inventory, so we just go to the next one. It's like a lot of things. You're not quite sure how guys will react until you get them in game situations. It's a little easier to do it in practice and what have you. But we'll be fine. We'll get through that. Of it's not going to keep us from being successful. We've got an open mind. We'll see what happens here. Take a look at it this week.

### **Q. For Brandon, he got the majority of the yards in the second half last week. How much of that was just the awareness of the line?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think Brandon's pretty comfortable and has been. I really do. I

think he's been good there. Before the game, and I think in the running game I heard Tom Osborne say 20-some years ago, he always talked about the running game being more successful in the second half. So you have to be patient. I think that's offense in general. You have to have patience and a lot of people don't.

If you stick with what you think is good and make some adjustments, you have a chance for some good things to happen. But to happen Saturday for us is a big factor in that last 15 minutes.

**Q. Do you try to monitor the number of carries you get him?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. I don't really have many options right now, so. He's tired, he'll come out. Otherwise, we're down to three games now. As a football team we're trying to be careful with what we're doing during the week. But when Saturday comes we have to do what we can to try to win. But, we're not running them into a wall, that's for sure. We have to be careful there, too.

**Q. Is Greenwood going to be able to play and how about Cato?**

COACH FERENTZ: Cato will be fine, I can't promise you anything about Greenwood other than we're optimistic. We thought we had a chance last week, and he felt fine, but he just didn't feel like he could tackle. It was a play he came up and tackled and it just didn't -- it wasn't feeling good. He's not at risk or he wouldn't be on the field. He's been cleared medically.

The best way to describe it, it's like a sprain. So there's inflammation right now. There's soreness, that's the issue. So it's a matter of that getting worked out.

We're hopeful and optimistic it will be this week, but we're preparing like it's not. We're ready to go both ways.

**Q. Even with him out, you still went to the nickel and dime. Are you still comfortable going to those?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. Our safeties aren't as involved. It's more using corners as our sub guys, if you will. So that doesn't impact us as much. But we're a little thin on options in the back there. That's a concern. But we've got a couple of those on the board right now, so that's the way it goes.

It's late in the season. We've got the same issues they've been dealing with in the last couple of weeks, as well. And they're still playing good football. You just keep working. Somebody steps in and gets it done.

**Q. He's come up with a lot of good plays this season, and a good one last week. Does it ever surprise you that he's doing all of this?**

COACH FERENTZ: No, and again, I don't think of it in those terms of the last year he was a first year player. So, last year there was a little sign coming into his time and feeling his way around. But once a guy's played a significant amount, which he did last year in Greenwood, but the year before then, they should be out there playing with a lot more confidence. I think we've seen that with Tyler this year. This is fantastic.

That was a huge play no doubt about it. The other thing I'd point out not to get lost in that equation is Brett Moses' hustle play. Tackling the guy that had the pick and allowing us to go out and play defense.

To me it's a little bit like we chased down the draw this year against Arizona. Ended up being a field goal rather than a touchdown. Mitch, drawing the holding penalty last year, and putting them in a long yard situation. Gave us a chance to get the pick after that.

So, those are things that sometimes go undetected. They're not in the stat column, if you will. But it gave our defense a chance to get on the field, and sash comes up with a huge play.

So, there's a lot more to it than just one play. But tower's doing a great job for us. He played a great entire game, not just that play.

**Q. What is it about him? Personality, skill?**

COACH FERENTZ: He's a good football player. He fits the mold of the guys we've had. We've been very fortunate. We've had a lot of good safeties play here. And he's working his way up on that list, which is fantastic. Helps to have good safeties when you're trying to play good defense.

**Q. Do you feel like you have to have a certain amount of luck going your way to get some breaks?**

COACH FERENTZ: To have a successful

season, I think, and to certainly to have a real successful season, you're going to be in situations, you know. I can't remember. The ones I've been around where that wasn't the case and somebody has to step up.

I think first about Greenwood making the tackle up at Minnesota in '04, which pushed the field goal back five yards, six yards whatever it may be, and they end up missing the field goal.

So, you have moments, tough moments where somebody's got to step up. But this season we've already had our share of great efforts to allow us to maybe pull something off. And if that's the way it goes. If we weren't making those plays, you're losing those close games.

**Q. Are there any negatives associated with being undefeated?**

COACH FERENTZ: I can't think of any right now. I'm trying to think of that one, no. Norm on had a pretty good point. How many times in your life have been you been 9-0? I haven't thought about it, maybe in baseball. Those are probably the only good teams I've been associated with are baseball teams.

I can't think of any negatives. It's not that we sit around thinking about it. We just know it's easy for us. All you have to do is look back to the last Saturday, whatever week we're talking about, and you know it's going to be tough. It's going to be tough again this week.

If we're lucky, we'll put our feet up over Thanksgiving and say, "Boy, this was a good year. This was a good year." But we're not there yet.

**Q. How is Parker doing?**

COACH FERENTZ: Doing well. We're gaining progress and making ground. He's got a sense of humor. It's a good one. It's what he thinks about. No, he's doing well.

**Q. So will you see him on the practice field this week?**

COACH FERENTZ: No, we're keeping him off his feet. We're keeping him in the box. I don't know if it will be the whole season or not, but we've been pushing the envelope. And, we just need to get him through this season right now, that's the most important thing.

**Q. Do you think whenever there is one team, and this year it's you guys that have come to the forefront of the conversation that people want to have about the BCS and playoff**

**bids. Are you concerned at all about that? The way that conversation has shifted and has taken away from what you guys have actually done on the field?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not worried about that. We'll take inventory after the season's over where we're at and what we did. And, you're not going to hear anybody in our camp, I hope, crying about it, because I don't study this stuff. But the one thing I have noticed casually listening and paying attention over the years, usually the first team to complain is the first team to get beat.

So, if that's prominent in your thoughts, you're really thinking about the wrong things. I think I speak for our team, you have to ask them, I'm sure you will. But I don't think anybody's worried about it right now. I think we all realize we have three really tough games waiting for us.

I guess it's fueled for the fire to the discussions. But we're hardly the team that's going to go out there and wow anybody. That's just not our deal. We just need to keep thinking about what we have to do to find a way to win.

**Q. At this point, how do you guys define adversity or redefine adversity is probably the better way to put it?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's challenges. Challenges that get presented, that's all. What comes with challenges comes opportunity. I assume that is the same. Most of those things are true. But that's football. Again, it's conference play.

I said on the teleconference, I doubt the experts picked the 12-10 score for the Tennessee-Alabama game, but that's what happened. Took a heck of an effort to save the victory for Alabama.

When I think of conference play, that's what I think of. When you go into a conference game you better expect that kind of competition. And I made mention period of time 13-13 score in the Mississippi State-Florida game that same week. That's just conference football.

I know a lot of the people that give style points don't appreciate that or want to hear that, but I think that's the reality of college football.

**Q. In the season like this coaches probably try to do something to switch up the day-to-day activities to keep things fresh. Do you find yourself having to do that?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, we have a thing we've done, a schedule that we, it's not written in permanent ink, but it's something we've done since '99. We try to go into every season with a plan. If we don't have a bye week, we have a way we like to approach things. I think November's certainly a different time of year than September. So, we have a way that we do things. I'm sure every team does.

We try to stick to it. If we were losing, we'd try to do the same thing. It's kind of like your game plan. You try to think things out in a good environment, and not let the emotions of the game or how the season's going affect it too, too greatly.

**Q. Do you have thoughts about looking ahead to Ohio State or down the road?**

COACH FERENTZ: I like the maturity of our team. Again, we talk about things that we are doing well or things that we do have, there are a lot of things that we don't have maybe. But this team plays hard. They've played hard. They've demonstrated that.

I think we're getting great leadership. I think the team overall gets it. I'm not taking anything for granted. But I think they understand, you know. We're going to be up against it week in and week out.

I can't imagine any game we played this year being any tougher than Saturday's game. I just can't imagine. Or the one before that. The one two weeks ago was as physical as it's going to get. We're still paying for that. And emotionally, last week's game was really a tough game.

But, again, that's conference football, and the teams that can handle that do well. Teams that can't shows up eventually.

**Q. Would you rather be ranked fourth?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't care. It doesn't matter. I do understand there is a reason coaches politic or people politic, because I guess it does matter. But I'm not worried about that.

I'm just not worried about that. If we end up beating Auburn or whatever that year that was, if that ends up happening to us, in some ways I'm not going to be too upset. Because I don't know how you get too upset when you're undefeated. But that is so far down the road, wow. I'm just, you know, just hope we can get by Saturday.

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