

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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## Kirk Ferentz



COACH FERENTZ: Thanks to everybody for being here. Good afternoon. And it's always good to talk a little bit about the signing class. So we're excited about that.

It is a little different, just like last year, in that the majority of our class signed back in December. I think everybody's well aware of that.

All that being said, how you put your class together is certainly important, as you're trying to look towards continued success in the program and we're really excited about the young people that have joined us.

We had 20, as you know, back in December. And we've added two new signees today, with defensive back Jermari Harris and defensive lineman T.J. McCall. So, excited about those guys. The staff worked hard to look to fill some needs and look to some guys we had an interest in over the last several months.

We kept digging a little bit deeper and felt really good about those individuals. And then also we've got a grad transfer that we can announce in Michael Sleep-Dalton joining us as a punter. I know that came out, probably came out sometime last week on social media. But happy he'll be joining us. He'll join us in June.

So it will be good to have those three guys in addition to the 20 that we signed prior to that.

Then the other thing we've gone ahead and published is just the group of walk-ons. And our staff, I think, continues to do a nice job of reaching out to players that might have an interest.

We had them in here a couple of weeks ago. Really good group of prospects and had a good weekend with them. I think they left with a very favorable impression. It is very significant. I think the Outback Bowl is a great illustration of how important walk-ons have been for us traditionally. Nick Easley winning the MVP trophy. And if Jake, Jake Gervase hadn't dropped that first interception opportunity, he might have been up there. It might have been co-MVPs. But Jake certainly had a big game breaking up that last pass, last play of the game defensively for us and coming up with a big interception in the red zone.

I think those two players, the last time out, the way they played, the impact they had in the program is really illustrative of the role walk-ons have had here traditionally. We're excited about the group joining us and anxious to see how they develop as we go further down the road.

And then we'll continue -- we still have some spots open with our roster right now -- so we'll continue to explore all possibilities and avenues that we can and do it just as if we would with normal recruiting to make sure that we're looking at players that we think will fit well with our program and the things that we deem to be important.

So we'll just see how that pans out. We'll continue to be active in that regard. And I probably won't have anything to report on that until we get going here in June.

National signing day is typically -- it's about looking ahead and building towards the future. Certainly we have a little different challenge this year with four underclassmen coming out in the draft as we stated back in December. And that is a historic number for us. We thought it was a lot when we had two guys declare last year. We've doubled that number.

So happy for those four guys. All of them have been invited to the combine. I think it's a compliment to those individuals and our program. Obviously it creates a bigger challenge for us as coaches and as a football team to put a good team out there. But that's just I think a growing trend that we're going to see continually around the country.

And I think just stepping back for one second, probably the biggest three observations I'd share with you, and I talk about college football changing dramatically, certainly this is our second year of having two signing days.

I would still advocate for the early signing being earlier than it is. I would love to see it get moved up to the summertime at some point, and then let the second day stay in February. That's certainly a growing trend or a different trend I should say, this NFL underclassmen coming out in the draft, I think 140, 142

names whatever it may be, that's a record number. And we'll probably continue to see that grow unless some of the statistics that start to pile up maybe affect people in the future. We'll see how that plays out. I think that will be interesting to watch.

The other obvious thing that's changed in college football is the transfer portal which has the potential to becoming free agency in college football.

So I think those three things alone just give you an illustration why it's so interesting to be a college coach and kind of keeps you on the edge of your seat. Keeps everybody thinking about how it's going to affect the future. And certainly we're not any different than anybody else in that regard.

So it's good to have everybody on campus and back here in the house. Our players have been here three weeks. It's good for us to have a chance to get reacquainted a little bit. I think the key thing I tried to share with our team three-plus weeks ago, as we move forward it's a new team and they've all got opportunity.

And I've had the chance to be in the weight room or out the field watching the guys a little bit over the last three weeks. And I think just a casual observation so far, you see a real sense of determination and focus with our team.

So we're pleased so far with what we've seen in the winter program. And we've got a lot of work in front of us, seven weeks until the start of spring practice and then we turn into the summer phase.

So a lot of work right now, a lot of opportunity. I think the good news is we start to look forward, we do have positions of strength on our football team. Anytime you talk about moving forward, I think you've got to start talking about what you have. And it's really, I think, a great thing for us on offense right now, we've got a quarterback back for his third season.

I think he's the first guy since Ricky Stanzi to be a third-year starter. Nate's already been named the captain a couple years now. So I think that's really impressive.

Certainly he's built a good base. And the fact that he's back with a group of offensive coaches now that are in their third year together in a system that's three years into it that's a nice place to start.

I think we've got certainly more experience at the receiver position. We've got a couple of offensive tackles that have played well for us. We expect them to continue to improve. And a group of running backs that have the potential to be very good also. So those are the things we know about and we can build from there.

Defensively, I think the same thing, we've got a lot of good players returning, the guys that have shown that they can play out there on the field at all positions. And the biggest challenge right now I think defensively is for us to build depth and get that established where we can have an ability or capability of playing a lot of players, whether it's five, six DBs out there, rotating defensive linemen and continue to rotate the linebackers.

So all that's going on. And that's part of the fun of it now as we move forward and look forward as a staff and go back and critique what we did last year, really kind of detail things out and then also see how we can put together a formula to make this season successful for us.

And the last thing I'll mention, it was great this past weekend to have an opportunity to go to the Super Bowl. And it was fun to be there as a parent but also fun to just be there and get a chance to touch base with former players. We had a bunch of former players on both sides. Unfortunately, I didn't get to see Austin or Henry on the Rams' side, but had a chance to see Cole Croston and Riley McCarron and James and Adrian Clayborn. So it was great to see those guys, get a chance to visit with them and also reacquaint with Coach Belichick on Saturday and Sunday.

And I think probably the biggest thing that you take away from the whole thing if you step back and look at it, it's a great reminder of the value of building a culture, whether it's in high school, college or pros, having a culture that really allows you to put a winning team, a team that has an opportunity to win out on the field, getting the right guys out there, getting them to all focus on a singular goal. And then most importantly, put them on the field in a position where they have a chance to have success.

So it really doesn't change. Obviously the players do and the ages and all that kind of stuff, the challenge, but I think the overriding goals remain the same no matter what level you're coaching at, and that's certainly something they've done as well as anybody over the last two decades. So it was really impressive to watch them compete and play a great game on Sunday. So, happy about that.

**Q. Do you anticipate a three-man punting competition now?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's all we got. So, yeah. But, yeah, very fair to say. And this spring it won't be. We'll have two guys out there competing.

It's like anytime we add a new player, they're welcome to come in and compete, whether you're an incoming

freshman or older guy, grad transfer guy or Mekhi last year as a junior college transfer. So whoever is out on the field will compete and that's where jobs really get decided.

**Q. What did you like about Michael that led you to bring him in?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think one thing that was reassuring to us, it's different. We're not normally in this -- you don't get this opportunity to look at players playing against college competition. And certainly the weather, the climate that he played in were a little different than the climate in the Midwest especially in November.

We had an opportunity to see him play at the same level of play that we play. He plays in a competitive conference on a competitive team. Got to watch him in real action.

So we're impressed with that, what we saw in terms of his production, very impressed with him as a young man. Getting a chance to visit with him a little bit. And so I think we're all really excited about what we think he can add to our football team.

Ron Coluzzi, a very similar type comparison, I guess, from a couple of years. Ron came in, did a great job and that will be Michael's job to come in here, first of all, adapt to everything here and go out and do it in a way that everybody can respect.

**Q. 43.8 yards a kick. That's an impressive number. Did you view that as pretty legit, 43.8, as you studied this guy?**

COACH FERENTZ: Averages are one thing and all that. But what really tells you the picture, you factor in hang time, directional punting, all those types of things that we ask our guys to do. So there are a lot of challenges that punters go through.

But I think also Sunday night is a great example. The punter from New England did a great job. His plus-50 punting, that's a big, big part of being a successful football team. They were playing great defense that night. So those two things helped contribute to their victory. Those are the little things that don't always show up in the stats column. When you go through tape and have a chance to watch a guy, it really is helpful.

**Q. Would you prefer not to have two punters on scholarship, or does it matter? Is that something -- because it used to be you'd have 130 scholarships, and punters --**

COACH FERENTZ: It would be great to have no punters on scholarship. Not to pick on punters.

**Q. It's changed?**

COACH FERENTZ: It has. It's just something I think you have to consider. And I really -- I've told this to people with young boys. Get these guys punting the ball, because it's really kind of a lost art. Nobody really doesn't seem to want to grow up being a punter now, other than maybe Australians, I guess. And they're smarter than we are.

But that and a deep snapper, Casey Kreider might play until he's 50, realistically. He takes care of himself and he's really good at it. And they're not allowed to hit those guys. It's a really good position. But it's kind of a lost art.

I'm not saying kickers, good kickers are easy to find, but I think with the popularity of soccer, it's probably a little bit of more of a natural transition. Whereas punters are really -- they're becoming more and -- I think more and more hard to find or challenging to find. And it's just not something that people really gravitate towards for whatever reason.

**Q. Is it harder to get them to walk on these days? The old days seems like they mostly did that?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes and no. You can go through routes. There are groups that are going to be recruited as scholarship players and then the other route maybe be a developmental type punter and think about Dave Bradley who was really a high school quarterback, but a good athlete. A lot of times the best punters I've seen were pretty good athletes in their own right.

You think about Reggie Roby, probably would have been All-Big Ten in about four sports and in football maybe All-Big Ten in about four positions, but I think he made the right decision focusing on punting.

**Q. Outside of Reggie Roby, what do you want out of a punter and how do you want it to be different in 2019 than 2018?**

COACH FERENTZ: Compare any punter to Reggie Roby, it's back in the '80s. It's like, this guy is like another Ronnie Harmon. No, he's not. Or Andre Tippett. I'm sorry.

You know, it's really -- it has changed a little bit, I think. The value of directional punting has changed. Rugby punting is obviously entered into it. But the biggest thing is being able to come through when you need them to come through. And I always flashback to these historic moments, but I remember Marv Cook ended up punting for us in '87. We were in a tough spot against Indiana, they had a good team; they were like 18th in the country or something.

But anyway, we were in a tough spot. We had lot momentum out there in Kinnick. We were on the north end zone here and he knocked one 80-plus yards. And he might have had, like, averaging 25 up until that point. But it was just, that's Marv. Like Marv is a clutch player. When you needed a play, he found a way to make a play.

And I'd venture to say it was the best punt of his life. But that's what you're hoping for with any player when you need it. Hopefully they can come through and deliver it.

**Q. What do you think he can do for your team this year that maybe you were lacking last year, if he's the one that wins the job?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, whoever wins the job I think the goal is consistency. You guys follow the team closely. You see as much as I do. And I think that's what we're asking for, hoping for at every position, just consistency.

We did some really good things in the punting game this year but we also had some that were -- made it a bigger challenge for us defensively and just as a team.

If we can gain an edge, that's great. But I think the thing we're hoping for with all of our players is a pretty consistent level of performance. Everybody has bad plays. I'm not minimizing that. But as far as trying to level those out. I think that's the beauty of experience.

We're hardly giving up on Colten and hardly giving up on Ryan. Both those guys are right in the thick of it.

And I really think -- I haven't seen Michael yet in person performing -- but I think both of those guys are capable. It's just a matter of when it's going to happen for them.

**Q. Been good at getting solid defensive backs late in the process. Does Jermari fit the mold, does he have those characteristics?**

COACH FERENTZ: We hope so. Yeah, that seems to be a good formula for us finding guys in January. He was here in December. We had an open practice before the recruiting period shut down there. Came to a bowl practice with his mom and grandfather. And we've all been really impressed with him throughout the whole process.

So what ended up happening with Amani coming out, we decided that was an area we would take another scholarship player if we had the right guy. It really got down to about three or four guys. And Phil went out and went through his process and tried to gather as much information as he could to make sure, A, that we

could find a guy that we felt really good about and, B, hopefully that would mesh up with what the player was thinking, the prospect was thinking. And we're happy the way it turned out.

**Q. How did you guys find McCall?**

COACH FERENTZ: Same thing, he's been on our list. He's a guy we just kept working on and did some research. And with Anthony coming out, just kind of seemed like a logical thing for us if we could find another defensive line prospect that made sense.

Same thing as Phil did, recent, and KB went to work and just kind of went through the process. We had several guys we really zoned in on there. And T.J. was a guy we really felt the best about for our needs. All three of them, I think, looked like good prospects. All a little bit different. But he was a guy that we felt the best about and when he came up with his mom this past week I think everything went really well and fortunately it meshed up for both sides.

**Q. I'm sure a prospect from Florida, you're not really concerned with who else is in the race for them necessarily, but the fact that Army and Navy were two of the other schools that were heavily involved it kind of does speak to his character, if nothing else?**

COACH FERENTZ: It does. You just watch those teams play and it's been an amazing series over the last decade. But especially the last five years. But I've got, I think all of us have tremendous respect for the way those players are coached, the way they play and the common attributes that most of the service academies -- and throw Air Force in there too, what those players have.

The fact that he was on their recruiting list, that said a lot to us, I think about a lot of things. And he's a player that we think has his best football in front of him. And then it really gets down to the player's attitude, what he's going to do with the opportunity when he gets here. And I think we're all convinced he's going to come in here and make the most of it and really take this opportunity and run with it. So we're really excited to have him join us.

**Q. Seems like you guys are trying to be more active in Florida. Is that fair?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, turned out that way. And I had a friend say something to me about that a couple of weeks ago. And then I guess I forgot how many guys we had actually. I was one short on the guys we signed. That's before T.J. signed.

But we're going to go where we think we can get good players and recruit good players. Just so happens right



now I think with Derrick joining our staff that gives us a little bit more natural access here between he and Kelton. They both have experience in the south in general and Kelton obviously being a Floridian by nature.

So I think that helps. And I guess if we had somebody from our staff from California we might spend some time out there. But just didn't work that way right now. We'll try to go where it makes sense for us.

**Q. Do you have some concerns about what this transfer portal may turn into?**

COACH FERENTZ: Huge concerns, yeah. Huge concerns. And it's really interesting. It's not as much the portal, although it's just really caused a lot of transparency. And that's probably a good thing.

The bigger concern to me is just transfers and what -- the trend kind of got started a while ago. We had a player leave a non-Power 5 conference. Came to one of our Big Ten member's institutions and it was a player that ended up getting immediate eligibility.

And the rationale was that they changed the system at his previous school, offensive system. Seems like an ambiguous criteria to me. I'm not sure, is it 46 or 45 percent run pass? Where is that line of demarcation? So to me we opened up a Pandora's box.

And recently a notable player transferred to our conference last year and got immediate eligibility as an underclassman. I'm not sure the rationale. Doesn't really matter.

My sense of this thing, if you get the right lawyer you might have a pretty good chance of becoming immediately eligible. And I think we're just kind of -- we're getting into some real gray area in terms of what would cause a guy to have to sit or a guy to be eligible.

And it sounds like some opportunistic lawyers might have an opportunity to pump up their business. 10 years ago, 15 years ago if you had a sports hernia there's really one doctor to see in our country and he had the market cornered on that pretty well.

I could see the same thing happen with a prominent attorney or two that can specialize in this and create causes why that player should be, compelling cases why the player should be eligible immediately. And pretty soon there will be a bunch of folks doing it just like you can get a sports hernia repair. There's more than one option now in our country.

I think we're opening up a door to maybe some scary territory. It's concerning. And again it's just the more gray area we have in interpretation, I think we really

lend ourselves to some interesting scenarios.

**Q. Where do you think the Big Ten will go with this? You can still block a guy if he wants to go to say --**

COACH FERENTZ: It's about two years too late on a couple of them, or three years too late on a couple of them from my vantage point. Let me say this, I'm still ticked off about Drew Ott. I'm for a kid. If he has a compelling reason to become eligible, I'm all for it. I'm not mad at the institutions; they're just trying to win.

But it really is hard when you have a lot of gray area there. And I know there's a million legal -- life's really complicated, but it's just -- our whole world will continue to get a little more complicated as we go along. We all know that. But somehow, some way we've got to get this figured out because in essence we could end up with free agency real quickly. And I'm not sure that's a world we all want to live in. And we'll see where it goes.

**Q. Can you block guys within conference? Do you still have that option?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not sure if you do. I haven't checked recently. We had one guy transfer within the conference. I was perfectly fine with that and supported it.

And that could have been sticky had we played that team. Been a media circus all that stuff. I'm for the kid. I'm for the kid.

But in his case, he was a graduate. I get that. It was clear that he wanted an opportunity. I get that. If a guy's a graduate, that's a little different circumstance. But when underclassmen start transferring, becoming immediately eligible, I've got to go back and look at the rule book, maybe it changed in the last 20 years.

**Q. Is a big part of the concern the fact that, the first sign of trouble leave? That's going to be the answer now. Things don't go your way right away just change.**

COACH FERENTZ: We teach that lesson, reinforce that lesson: If it gets a little bumpy bail. That's not something any of us want to teach our kids at home. The other thing, it opens up the door for third parties to be involved. And I'm not sure that's something we really want to open the door to. We're always going to be involved with those people in every walk of life; you always have that. But the more you open the door to get third parties involved, I'm not sure that's healthy for anybody.

**Q. Another signing day -- while you were talking about transfers and stuff, any update on Daviyon**

### **Nixon and his situation?**

COACH FERENTZ: We're still hoping he'll be on our football team. That's our goal and our hopes. Let time dictate.

### **Q. Another signing day first, at your press conference you've talked about six guys that are already here, freshmen --**

COACH FERENTZ: How about that? Willie O'Hara also, yes.

### **Q. Maybe your early impressions of those guys, like, I won't name them all, Justin, Ezra --**

COACH FERENTZ: Yes all of a sudden those guys are doing really well. It's not something that we request of first-year guys. I know a lot of people are probably encouraging that. We don't. But if a player is really vested in doing it and really is excited about doing it, and we're convinced he's not going to be homesick and all those kind of things, have problems academically, socially, all those kind of deals.

I had a niece who went to college when she was 15. I think that's hard to be with -- but she's got that kind of age differential.

But it's all worked out beautifully. They all seem they've really taken to it really well. And some are Midwestern and some aren't Midwestern, but they all seem they've formed a good collective group together. They're bonding with each other.

The other guys have done a great job I think reaching out to them. I go back to '81. I was really impressed in '81 just how the guys on the team were really inclusive with younger players. It's been a great tradition here, not one we started but it makes it really helpful. It's been great. Great to have them around here.

### **Q. Is this the month -- this is the month where you kind of game plan for the next season, analyze your personnel -- obviously low on tight ends, for example. Is there discussion --**

COACH FERENTZ: Two things. First and foremost, we're going to go back through our tapes and really kind of dissect them and talk about our system and what we might need to adjust, where we need to be tweaking, looking all that type of thing. You do research on things that might be advantageous for us to consider working into our schemes and all that. And then you have the other part, how does it all mesh with what our team looks like.

And it's continually changing and evolving what the team looks like now in February. It's going to look different hopefully by the end of April and then you go through another phase and all that.

So it's really not until you get out of camp where you really kind of have a grip on things sort of and they start playing and it's like, ooh, okay, slow down here and accelerate there. That type of deal. It all gets intertwined at some point.

### **Q. On the Super Bowl, I know there's a lot of questions I have on it. But first Adrian, for him, all the injuries that he dealt with early in his career and came close when he was with Atlanta. What was it like to finally see him finally get that Super Bowl ring he's proud to wear?**

COACH FERENTZ: I'm not happy to say his mom Tracy is injured right now. I'm not happy to say it, but better her than him. She's got a cast on. She's got an Achilles injury from the fall actually. It was great to see her, but she was having a hard time getting around.

But to see him, he was on the short end of one two years ago when he was in Atlanta. To be on the victorious side it's fantastic. And the best part about it, like he hasn't changed at all. He's married now. So he has changed that way. But he's still the Adrian Clayborn all you guys got to know. He's just a humble, appreciative guy. And he was always that way. He really worked hard and did it for the best of the team. That's what you see from him now.

It's kind of a perfect marriage. The Patriots do a great job identifying players that might be able to help them. Right now I would call him a role player. He's out there with their nickel defense. They had him involved in some games, but a big part of his deal is just to try to push the pocket and he did a nice job of that. Not exactly glamorous but it's a big part of what they do to be successful.

I think he's a great illustration of how they work as an operation. They don't have a lot of Pro Bowl players -- they have the greatest quarterback of all time -- but they don't have a lot of pro bowl guys. But they all do their jobs extremely well. And he's just one more piece of their puzzle that makes them so successful.

### **Q. For James, this is his second one. For you, what's it like to see him just continue to fight for those roster spots whether it is practice squad or being one of those reserve players but he still finds a way to be on a team?**

COACH FERENTZ: Personal aside, if I was a GM, I'd get him on my team. That's three out of five he's been in. He's got like a rabbit's foot.

But it's really nice. And heard a lot of nice compliments from people in the organization about what he does every day. And that's his job is to help the other guys

get ready. And if he's called upon, then he's got to be ready. But we talk to our players all the time about having a role on the football team and he's embraced that. He's worked extremely hard. The most important thing is get respect from your peers in anything you do that.

He's done that, whether it's the players, the coaches down there. That's the same thing all of us want, whether we're coaches or players just to have everyone in your organization look at you say this guy, he's committed.

**Q. How would you characterize this third round of recruiting after this signing day, you guys kind of had a James Butler and a couple of grad transfers, are you still, do the wheels do they keep rolling that way? And you obviously have to be looking for defensive line bodies?**

COACH FERENTZ: Absolutely. If we see, if something comes along that's an opportunity for us that would benefit our program, our team, then we're going to look into it for sure.

But that being said, I made the reference to free agency. It is a little bit like free agency. And I'm old enough to be -- I was there in the first year of true free agency in '93 in the NFL. Salary cap, when free agency kind of took off. There were a lot of mistakes made during that time period, and I think you see less people rely on that now.

So I think lesson learned there it's about getting players that are not only good players but players that are going to fit into your program. And we've tried to do a good job of that in recruiting. Tried to be as selective as we possibly can. We'll do the same thing as these opportunities might present themselves.

But there's certain areas we're looking at. But the bottom line, it's like anytime, if you can help your team within the team framework, then we're going to explore that just kind of see where it takes us.

**Q. Is it because maybe you find a guy a different running back and then you have six running backs, you gotta kind of introduce them to the group?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, there's certain positions we probably won't even consider. Absolutely. But we obviously have some areas of interest right now. And so we'll just see what time brings us. But I think everybody on our team understands we're always going to try to do whatever we can to be as competitive as possible.

We also I think everybody understands going back to that first question about the punter, whoever might join

our team, whether it's true freshman or fifth year guy, they're going to have to earn it. They're going to have to do it on the field.

**Q. Walk-ons, Lucas Amaya, is he maybe the closest having a shot at being on the depth chart next year?**

COACH FERENTZ: We graduate Miguel. So there's an opportunity there. Be it as field goal kicker or kickoff, Miguel did both those roles very well.

So there's two jobs, really, that have opened up right now. And just like the punter, the guys on campus have the first shot at it and best shot at it. But whoever joins our team, we've got until the end of August, really, to figure this whole thing out. So it will be an open competition.

And we'll let everybody compete, that's for sure, when they join the team.

**Q. Some of your incoming freshmen have position flexibility, Logan Lee being among them. You have deficiencies in certain spots where people could fit that role. Has there been any thought or discussion about, say, Logan Lee maybe moving to defense and other people that are currently on your team that may be flipping over to the other side of the ball to help out?**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure. That's the first thing, what can we do in the most immediate future because that's what's most important at this point. So Austin Schulte has gone back to defense. I think I mentioned that. Ben Subbert moved over to defense, look at him as a defensive lineman. We'll tinker with that stuff a little bit and we'll look at our incoming personnel and try to keep an open mind in terms of how they can help us.

They've got to be on board if we do request. It's like a veteran player, if we ask a guy to switch over, we're going to talk to him first and see what they think. That's the first question for Tyler Linderbaum would you be open to it and we'll tell him why we think and let them make that decision. We'll be foolish not to do that.

And you never know, Parker Hesse was a high school quarterback. Ended up being a pretty good defensive lineman one of our best players and best leaders. You never know how those stories are going to come along too. That's the fun part about college football. You're wondering what stories are going to emerge.

Right now, what story on our football team, the guys working who is going to emerge this spring and this summer and also with the incoming guys, how that factors in as well.

**Q. Safety is a position where we see a lot of walk-ons succeed. Can you see something like that with Quinn Schulte?**

COACH FERENTZ: You never know. He seems to do well in every sport he plays. And he seems to be right in the middle of things at whatever sport he plays. Does sound like safety. Tremendous young man from a tremendous family, football background. All those things are pluses.

And we're anxious to get him out on the field, let him compete as well.

**Q. When you go into dissecting the walk-on opportunity too what goes into that process?**

COACH FERENTZ: Really similar to the process we do with scholarship guys. And there's got to be requisite amount of ability, certainly. But we're really more interested about the rest of the resumé. What the grades look like. Can he realistically come and, first of all, can he be admitted and secondly can he graduate from Iowa. That's still number one.

And is he a player we think might have that kind of growth potential and what have you. And then see where it takes them.

**Q. I know you guys have, will have a spring depth chart eventually. Do you start hammering that or December or after January after you meet with the players? When does that --**

COACH FERENTZ: We met as a staff coming off the bowl game. Went through our entire roster. But it's all very -- it's pretty much in pencil right now. And if somebody can beat Stanley out, welcome to it. Shame on Nate if it happens, but so some are fairly obvious. But a point we make to everybody is if Nate Stanley is not a better player next year than he was this year it's probably not going to be good for our football team.

Guys need to be moving up the ladder, not just moving forward. One of those shots. And that's true of every guy on our roster. But we've got a tentative depth chart right now. But you know it as well as I do, really, at this point. What's really going to be interesting is what happens as we move forward and how guys are going to emerge.

**Q. With the guys that won the Super Bowl, how much are you trying to emphasize -- how much do you try to emphasize maybe during recruiting, the way that you guys are able to develop these players into NFL players like a guy like Austin, people value an undersized center and he's a starting guy for the Rams' offensive line and was top, had the highest grades for a while in some of**

**the weeks in the NFL?**

COACH FERENTZ: I talked about Adrian's story which I think is a great story. And Austin's is another great story. Cut, right, recently, by one team. And the Rams' pick him up. So he's in there to be a swing guy inside. They draft a guy who is a center this year. And a guy gets a suspension. They slide him to guard. And I've been told they weren't 100 percent sure he could do it.

To your point their whole line is an interesting study quite frankly. We played against Whitworth in the '04-'05 Capital One Bowl. To put it in perspective, he and Williams, the defensive tackle that just retired -- but so Austin gets in there and never looks back. Plays like crazy. He played pretty well for us. Played center and guard. Didn't surprise us. But he plays really well. The guy got back off of suspension. He's gone. And Austin's got that position now. So I think that's a great story.

And I think that's something we share with our players all the time. First of all, you've got to be there, and secondly when you do have opportunity, you've gotta do something with it. And it's a classic illustration right there of a guy working hard, taking advantage of that opportunity and then running with it and it will be great to get him back in the weight room and it's neat right now just to dovetail there, Josh Jackson's back here training right now, James Daniels they've been here a couple of weeks. Great to have those guys back with us. Even though we won't have him out there on the field this spring we'll be investigated if we do. But anyway, it's just great to have them around the building and back training with us.

**Q. Are they taking classes while they're here?**

COACH FERENTZ: I believe James is. I think Josh is on line. But Josh just wanted to get back into the environment. And I think that says a lot. And I think James feels the same way. And he had a great year.

So I think that's something, me personally I'm very happy about. Yanda's blue truck will be out there, his funky blue truck, and he'll be getting out and training hard. That's how he does it. I think it's great our players feel welcome coming back they want to be back because they know Chris in that room will help them move forward as pros.