

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz



KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon, to everybody. Just a couple things for you and I'll answer some questions. Couple things newsworthy. The Iowa State series, being renewed. Happy about that. I think it's a really positive thing for our state and for football in our state more specifically. It's good to see that and learn that's going to continue. Regarding the spring game. Certainly happy about the partnership of the Big Ten Network, the exposure that way.

As part of our thinking about doing the Friday night game, having an opportunity to do that, hopefully good from a recruiting standpoint, but also eager to see just what the fan experience is. Seems like night games over there have been received pretty favorably. So try it in the spring and we'll gauge it afterwards what it feels like.

We'll play it as a game without live kicking. We'll just place the ball. We will punt the ball but not return them. We'll kick field goals, that type of thing. Planning to play 15-minute quarters, running clock, outside of two-minute situations. We'll get a chance to practice some two-minute situations, and if we have to manipulate things a little bit, we'll go ahead and do that.

Injury front, we've had two surgeries with Brandon Snyder and Dalton Ferguson, so those two guys are both going to be out for a good while.

Then, like every spring, you have guys that have been nursing injuries or have sustained some injuries during the course of. I'm not sure how many guys will be held out on Friday night, but we won't put anybody at risk for obvious reasons.

All that being said, we'll have a lot of guys getting good work and eager to get them on the field one more time for their final practice. Positionally mentioned that Noah Clayberg has moved from running back to free safety. He's made a nice job, nice job adjusting. And then last week, Drew Cook transitioned from the quarterback position to tight end. And he's got four practices under his belt now. He's done a nice job too, and he's got a good future at the position. Both those guys have great attitudes about it, and we're really receptive to the changes. So happy about that.

Just a couple words about spring practice. I think

we've seen a lot of positive things out there. Lot of good growth, lot of improvement. But that being said, we're hardly a finished product and we've got a lot of improvement to make yet. That's every guy on our roster that's capable of improving. We need that if we're going to be a good football team next year.

So typical spring ball. It's more about the individual parts and segments than it is things being pretty collectively. We'll focus more on that in August. But that being said, we're going to keep pushing forward. We have another practice tomorrow in shorts. It will be a shorter practice, and nonetheless, very important, same thing Friday night.

You only get 15 practices overall, 12 of those are padded. Somewhere in the next decade we may not have padded practices at all in the spring. So you need to take advantage, I think, of every opportunity because the game is played in pads and this is where guys really get a chance to learn how to play football and execute their techniques and fundamentals that are going to help them.

So, that being said, every opportunity out there is important for our guys and hopefully we'll do a good job the next few days with good concentration, good effort.

Last thing I'll touch on and open it up for questions. Some of the NCAA legislation that's gone through. It's really broken down in two segments and makes it very different. The recruiting legislation has been passed. I just want to go back and compliment everybody that's been involved. Conference-wide we've had a lot of discussion over the last several years about some of the legislation that went through. It didn't come out exactly the way maybe we had hoped it would be shaped as a Big Ten Conference. But for the most part, I think a lot of things were reflected in the conversation, the dialogue, and it was healthy. I've done this for a while now, it's probably been the most collaborative effort I think I've seen.

Then the two-a-day thing is probably the exact opposite. It's something that's been passed down, from my vantage point, zero dialogue of people that work in football, out on the field, that type of thing. I worry about that a little bit. So we'll adjust with it, we'll make it a positive certainly, but the removal of two-a-

days, to me, personally is maybe a little short sighted. I think I understand what the end-game was.

I've read the reports about the suggestions. But, to me there are other ways to get at this. There were other ways to get at this. When we talk about making the calendar better for our student-athletes, that we've taken their Thanksgiving break away. That's not coming back. I understand that. We've all made that adjustment.

But now we're going to lengthen the time they're in camp and shorten the break in between the summer conditioning and practice time. I just don't feel it's necessary. Me personally, I'm not a doctor. You can check my resumé. I never went to any kind of graduate school, let alone medical school, but I do understand contact. I think it would have been a little bit easier, perhaps, to say one contact practice if there is a two-a-day.

Fact is we only had four two-a-days last year anyway. So a lot of different ways. But bottom line to me, there wasn't a lot of conversation or dialogue in it. It is what it is. So, the thing is about the recruiting changes, I think we'll learn about the impact of them as we go on. I'm not sure we can all predict that right now, but we'll learn as we go along. I can't say the same about the two-a-day policy. But it's the same for everybody. So we'll make it through and try to take advantage as we move forward.

Q. Is the two-a-day thing, from your standpoint, hurt the developmental program or what is your main beef with that?

KIRK FERENTZ: My main beef, and I haven't given it a lot of thought, I've been focused more on what we're doing and I'm not a great multi-tasker. I have a couple scenarios in one of my folders, but I haven't looked at it hard. But one thing I'm for sure of, our guys are going to come in earlier than they would have if we had the two-a-days in there.

It's interesting, if you talk to some of our players and apparently some of our players have talked to players at other schools, very prominent schools. The players are not in favor of it. I can tell you that right now, an informal survey of our veteran guys, they actually prefer the two-a-days because they're shorter times on the field. We're on the field, we're off the field, they go back and rest and it's the same thing.

Right now what you're allowed to do, you could be on the field three hours, which we never are. But you could be on the field conceivably three hours during the contact period and then another two hours in walk through. And I can tell you, I've never participated in two-hour walk through and don't plan to in my lifetime.

It's like the Burma Road right there. So you're talking about five hours potentially on the field, and we've never done that ever.

So, to me, it would have been simpler saying two and a half hours of contact practice and then an hour, hour and a half for walk through or non-contact practice, which would still allow you to have timing and do some things without putting players at risk. They just mandated that we have to take a day off, a total day off in camp. If you talk to our medical folks, they kind of describe the bell curve as the camp goes on. That middle section there is the point where fatigue sets in and injuries tend to go up a little bit.

It would make sense to take your days off back-to-back somewhere in the middle. Just take that natural break. So I think there are other ways we could have done this without effecting the calendar, and I'll worry about the calendar for our players.

I'm not sure it's necessary. I think there are other ways we could have maybe addressed this without altering the calendar. First and foremost, it's the player's schedule being interrupted. Or more time in summer school and practice. Like that's just kind of silly.

Q. You've always been an advocate for an early signing period. What, in your eyes, are the advantages for Iowa? And then also you've had players that you've gotten late that were previously committed to match schools like a Desmond King or Micah Hyde coming up that maybe you wouldn't get if they signed early?

KIRK FERENTZ: Two things on that. First thing, my personal preference would be an earlier signing period than December. I'd like to see it pushed forward a little bit somewhere after the June period or just before September, somewhere in that ballpark.

But, yeah, that's one of the things to your point about that. We're going to learn as we go. How is that going to effect how you make decisions? Do you have to dig up Micah Hyde earlier and make a commitment to him earlier than later? Desmond King the same way. Those two guys right off the bat. We've had a lot of guys that way. Then, conversely, are the prospects willing to tread water a little bit? One thing for sure, things will be more clear after the December signing period we'll know where people stand in terms of really being committed as opposed to saying they're committed.

Q. Does the change to two-a-days have a greater effect on the "physical" teams?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, not necessarily. I don't think they're going to alter how much contact you can have.

I don't think that's a big difference. When they start doing that, anything that involves more combine-type practices than football-type practices favors the team that's got the best players. If you've got the best talent, a player that is ultimately gifted or really gifted physically, doesn't need to be as technique proficient. They can make up for it by being athletic if you are really gifted endowed. And a guy that isn't endowed can make up for gaps by being more proficient and efficient in what he does and maybe more tenacious. So anything that favors talent, I don't think that's what this game is designed for personally.

The biggest thing I have is the length. It's going to be boring as can be. I think we're going to have to have monopoly tournaments. Things like that. It's going to be a lot of waste of time, and quite frankly to me, camp is about keeping guys on the clock, being efficient, making sure you're moving and just that's part of the mental part of the camp too. You've talked to guys who played in the NFL, some of our players -- Marshal Yanda goes home every night. He's an old married guy. He goes home and sees his kids every night. That doesn't feel like preseason camp to me.

It's not so much condition. Our guys are in great condition, they are because they train, which that was interesting years ago when they had the heat issues. One of the proposals was to take summer conditioning away. Well, that's a good idea. Okay, guys overweight, let's send him to the Dairy Queen. That's perfect. Good idea. Good suggestion.

Q. With official visits moving up, do you see yourself using that maybe more often and maybe using the spring game as a big official visit weekend?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's another big discussion point. When do you want to use that bullet? I think there's going to be a lot of strategy involved in that. We've had our discussions already, and we'll probably, you know, we're very prudent in our use of in-season visits, and I think probably some of our decisions will parallel what we do in-season-wise. Because there are real advantages to bringing guys in early, and being able to bring people in that maybe normally couldn't get here. But then that's a long race between spring time until the next signing period.

Q. Did the 10th coach being shelved until January change your plans a little?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not really. We had two plans on the board. I think we're in good shape there. My preference would have been April. But at least on that one, we had notification that it might not work. The other one kind of got dropped out of the sky. This was out there a month ago, right, and then it was said it was

recommended. Then recommended became strongly recommended or mandated. So, yeah, depends on how you want to say it. But it's mandated now.

Q. The Iowa State series, are you happy about it being extended? Do you envision it going to an 11th Power Five opponent?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not me personally. I don't get the final vote on that one either. I think playing ten is pretty representative. There are a lot of conferences that don't do that. I think one thing that's maybe underestimated by people that don't understand football really well, like, when we play out of state, it's a pretty intense game. At least it has been since I got back here. It wasn't when I left, but the last 18 years it's been a tough series. It's been a really tough series.

Both teams will probably tell you that. I don't want to speak for them. But it's an interstate rival. It's been a good rivalry. Teams are both playing at full speed out there. So you take that, plus nine conference games and what I would suggest is one of the tougher conferences in football. I'm not embarrassed by that. I'll put that up against anybody.

I think all that stuff is a lot of rhetoric, personally. If we had Alabama's players, maybe we'd play 12 BCS teams, but they don't do it.

Q. Looking back now, the Big Ten decision to expand to nine, do you like it? Do you like the fact you're playing teams you've historically played, or would you rather play somebody different outside?

KIRK FERENTZ: I've already been candid enough on my comments today. So on that one I'll defer. I'll just say it's a silent vote. But we made the decision to play nine. Which is fine. The one thing I think that is not good is obviously you have the home-field advantage one year, the other you don't. But we play on the road anyway, so we're used to that one as well.

But it is what it is, so you deal with it. We've got ten BCS teams that are power five, however they describe it nowadays. Ten power five opponents every year. I think it's a pretty full schedule. Bottom line, you need to win them all. You need to try to win them all. There are no easy games on any schedules anymore. That's the way I look at it. For the most part, people are capable of beating people. You've got to be ready every week.

Q. How about the tight end, that's something that's been speculated on for years. Why did that decision come about? How did that come about? Did you approach him before the spring?

KIRK FERENTZ: When we started looking at Drew, that was one thought we had. If he isn't a quarterback,

he could potentially play another possession. But that was when he was a young man. He's gotten better as a quarterback each and every year. He's still doing a good job at that position.

be at a major conference school. So, from the outside looking in, it looks like a great fit for both parties.

But we have a young group right now and there is a little bit of a divide that way. Rather than having him stay in that competition, we threw it out as a possibility to him. I think he can help our football team win sooner at that position than the other. It's just a decision we kind of came to as a staff.

He was really excited about it and engaged in it. He's done a really good job out there learning right now four practices into it. So I think he's got tremendous upside. He's got great attitude. That one commonality that he and Marv have. Obviously, when Marv played, they're different players, different people. They both are driven by a really strong attitude.

Q. Also, do you feel comfortable that all quarterbacks will be here next fall no matter how the competition goes?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. It's really close right now, and I see this thing going into camp, probably midway into camp before we have to make a decision. But if we had to do it right now, we'd be throwing darts.

Q. Can you reflect a little on Gene Taylor and his move to Kansas State?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I'm really happy for the folks at Kansas State. I've only been there once in my life. Obviously, I worked with Bill for eight years and have such great respect for him. He's been a big part of their athletic department. To me, just knowing Bill and knowing Gene, I think it's going to be a great fit. North Dakota State got on my radar years ago. Watching them on tape playing Minnesota is the first recollection I have. What a football program they've built up there, but they've been good in other sports too. Basketball teams in the NCAAs, et cetera.

I've known people years ago before Tim got here that have coached there, talking about the leadership that they had on campus. So when Gene came here, to me, it was a great benefit to our department. He and Gary had a relationship through the years and at least knew each other a little bit. Just when you are an athletic director at that level, and I worked for Kevin White at Maine, at the FCS schools you understand every part of the department, how things work. I think Gene brought some of that working knowledge here, the practicality, positive attitude, et cetera. I'm sure he'll do a great job at Kansas State.

It's a loss for our department, selfishly. But it's a great opportunity. When Gene came here, I think that was kind of his hopes that he would have an opportunity to