

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

Tuesday, September 6, 2016

## Kirk Ferentz



COACH FERENTZ: Welcome, everybody. It's really an important week for us as we prepare for our second ballgame of the year and against our in-state rival, so we've got a lot of work to do.

But before we talk about the Iowa State game, I just wanted to say a couple words about the contract extension and make a few comments.

First of all, I'm just really pleased and very, very proud to continue on as the Iowa head football coach well into the future. I've always considered this to be a tremendous privilege, as well as a responsibility to lead the program. So just really excited about getting this completed.

I'm really proud of our program, our players, our staff and our fans, they have been absolutely outstanding. I certainly appreciate the trust and the confidence demonstrated by athletic director Gary Barta and president Bruce Harreld. I'm looking forward to carrying on our winning tradition.

That being said, the last thing I'll just say is Iowa has really been home to me and my family. My wife, Mary, our five children have all been raised here. So after 26 years, I can tell you I really appreciate what it is to be an Iowan and what it is to be an Iowa Hawkeye.

The only other comment I'll make, I was asked about this in the teleconference. The date goes through 2016. I don't consider that to be a cap; that question was asked. I'm not big on caps in any sort. We'll just continue to take it week-by-week and year-by-year.

All that being said, really overall pleased with last Saturday's effort by our football team. Certainly it is good to get the win. I thought we played hard and we played with good energy and effort and for the most part played clean, at least administratively, so that was good. Certainly our crowd was excellent, so happy about that, as well.

And now as we prepare for Iowa State, we have got plenty to work on, certainly. And I'm sure like every team in the country, we're focused on improvement and there are a lot of things coming out of Saturday's game off the tape and things that were very visible that we have to work on right now. So that's where our focus

has been since Sunday and we'll continue to push forward as the week goes on.

This is my 27th game involvement-wise in this series, so I can tell you I appreciate fully what it means to so many people in our state. If you look at our football team, half our two-deep, I think it's 45, close to 50 percent of our roster, were born and raised here, too, so they grew up watching this game. I know they appreciate this series and what it means and I know they are excited about having a chance to compete in it, as we are as coaches.

It's an important game certainly for both sides of the field. I think one thing, if you look over the last five years, you can predict a close game. I think over the last five years now, it's an average of six points differential in the games. Doesn't seem to matter if it's home, what happened the week before, all that stuff. Really what it gets down to is who plays the best on that given day. That's the challenge that's ahead of us right now.

The other part about it, I think it's really rare to have a rivalry game like this where you involve two major conferences. So I think that really makes it unique to our state, certainly, and I think it's a great thing for our state. We are excited about the challenge ahead. We know we have a big challenge on Saturday night and also know we have a lot of work to do between now and then.

### **Q. Injury update on Jay Scheel and Parker Hesse?**

COACH FERENTZ: Jay I think has a chance, he's moving closer. Hopefully he had a good day today. Hopefully he'll be able to make it by game day. Encouraged on that front.

Parker is probably going to be day-by-day. It's not maybe as bad; you know, you're always curious coming out of it. So it's going to be day-by-day. He didn't do a lot today. He worked with the trainers. He'll have a chance, and I know the way Parker is wired, if he does have an opportunity, he'll be out there competing.

I skipped over our captains, too. We have the same four captains: C.J. Beathard, Matt VandeBerg offensively, and on defense, Desmond King and Josey Jewell.

**Q. How much different is it preparing for Iowa State this year, with Campbell in, seen one game tape on.**

COACH FERENTZ: It's always a challenge. Any time you go through those kind of experiences; first games are always a little bit of a challenge anyway, no matter who you're playing, and whether the staff is new or not new. You're just never quite sure what to expect.

And then same thing here with the new staff obviously. We've done work on what we saw on Toledo but it's always a challenge when you look at a set of games from some other place and then you try to compare that to what their players are going to do. We have one game exposure, which is helpful.

But the one thing I would tell you, the thing that jumped out about the Toledo film, a couple things, Coach Campbell has had great success in his career, as a player, assistant coach and now as a head coach, both at Toledo, and he'll do the same at Iowa State. They are a really well-coached football team. That's one thing I would say about Toledo.

Second thing that jumped out at me is, you know, they really played hard. Really hustled and played hard and I think we saw some of those attributes with their team certainly on Saturday.

**Q. With Desmond, would you consider moving him around at all?**

COACH FERENTZ: We're open to anything. You know, as we plan and scheme, we'll try to do what we think gives us the best chance. But you know, one thing about them, they are really good on the perimeter. All their skill players are really impressive, especially looking at the offensive team. If you load up too much, it's like basketball, if one team has a great scorer and you try to take that away, it really opens up some other people, too and they have got a lot of guys that can do a lot of good things, both run and pass.

You know, I think what we have to do is try to stay within what we do best and hopefully try to contain some of their best players and do our best on that.

**Q. What impact do you think the contract extension can have on recruiting?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't want to talk a lot about that today, but I think certainly any time you demonstrate stability, I think that's something that prospects and their families are attracted to, that's usually a good thing.

**Q. When you look at Greg's performance the other day, you look at the raw numbers, he was on the side of the field when the passes were completed**

**but when you looked through the tape, what did you see from him? Was it as rough as it appeared? Was there more nuance to him that maybe we couldn't see?**

COACH FERENTZ: The two biggest takeaways for me from the game Saturday -- defensively we can't give up runs and rushing yardage like we did the other day. They came too easy in my opinion for our opponent, and that's not good. You don't want to let people run the ball at will and they did that too much against us.

And then probably my biggest complaint or criticism would be in the passing game. We blew a coverage and gave up a big play that to me could have been coachable, avoidable, etc.

Those are the things you've really got to focus on. And the little things, little nuances, those types of things for every player, those are the things you work on daily, weekly and hopefully you see improvement as the season goes on.

You know, Greg has played a lot of really good football for us. He's missed a lot of time. He missed the spring and he missed some time early in camp, so he's playing catch-up a little bit. He's a quality player. He'll be hopefully ready to go this Saturday but he's going to have a good senior year, I'm really confident in that.

**Q. How hard is it to not overreact or over correct some of the things that didn't do well?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, it's a process. Everything you do is a process. And there are things, certainly offensively, things; on special teams, too, little details that sometimes you get away with in a game. They don't show up maybe necessarily in the box score or in terms of results, but you see them on film and you know at some point that you're going to pay a price for that.

So those are the things that we're continually working on. It's all about how well you can run the race, how well your players take what they are hearing on Sundays from the corrections and then take it to the field and work on that independently, and those are the things that it's a big challenge. But you know, good teams know how to practice well. They know how to take what they see and hopefully move forward with it, show improvement.

And typically with us, at least, if our teams don't show improvement as the course of the season goes on, we're not going to have a good season. Those are the things we really try and emphasize and stress.

**Q. Last week we saw Daniels and Wadley -- is that the hope moving forward that with those two**

### **players, you ride the hot hand?**

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, let's play it as it goes. But we come into the season feeling like we have two pretty good backs. Both those guys are game-experienced guys. They are older guys that demonstrated consistency through our program. Probably LeShun a little bit more of Akrum.

Although, again, we have the luxury of seeing Akrum practice over a long period of time, and you got to see him Saturday, so he's growing a lot. We have got total trust in him and we have got total trust in LeShun. So hopefully in a perfect world, we can play both of them, let them complement each other and probably work Derrick into the mix, and go beyond that if we have to.

### **Q. With all the outside noise and you guys are a heavy favorite, do you have to remind your players that this game was tied late in the fourth quarter last year?**

COACH FERENTZ: I mentioned, I've been in 27 of these and it's really hard to predict what's going to happen, other than the team that plays the best in the game is usually the one that wins. It usually works that way.

You can take all the circumstances, all the rhetoric, all the stuff that people mix into an outcome, typically it's been pretty much, you know, who does what on the given day.

Last year is a great example and that's kind of illustrative of our whole season. There's only one game where we relaxed at all in the last four or five minutes. Otherwise, it usually is right down to the wire and that's a great example. That score is totally deceptive. It was back and forth all the way. That's what we're expecting this week.

### **Q. When you look at what C.J. did that second quarter, where he narrowly avoided a sack and stretched the ball over the goal line and took off, ran 45 yards, flipped the one to Canderi, hit that pass; it seemed to separate him from being, at least for the public eye, maybe a guy who is pretty good to wow, this guy is something special, unique. What was your vantage point through that series, and what did you think as he was progressing?**

COACH FERENTZ: I've said it before, the thing you're never quite sure of, what a guy is going to do in game circumstances, especially the quarterback position where we don't let our guys get hit. I mean, he had played a couple games so we had seen him in game experience, but not as necessarily the starter for the season and all that, and I thought he really handled our opener well.

And then in that game, you're playing in a really hostile environment. That's a tough place for us to play, every time we go. Some of the plays he made, you don't bank on those. You hope he's going to play well but some of those plays, we would like to say we coach them but we don't.

I think it was in that game where all of us had a feel that this guy has got the right stuff. You know, he just kept on verifying it since that time. I don't want to say it was a turning point but it really was like, you know, this guy is pretty good.

### **Q. Did you even bother sending the Josey hit to the Big Ten?**

COACH FERENTZ: We moved on. I mean, first of all, it was great hustle play on his part. He was rushing the punt punter and working his tail off to get back there. I don't want to speak for everybody else but looking at it, there was no malicious intent on that. And a lot of these calls are going to be bang-bang calls, but this is 2016. It's a point of emphasis.

We've got to try to do a better job of educating our guys, what they have to be alert for, but it's hard too. You don't want to defang a guy, too, that's a pretty aggressive player. You want to be very careful about that.

It's just one of those things that happened unfortunately. Everybody was healthy and we're all able to move on.

### **Q. Minnesota had three targeting calls. It seems like these calls are a little more of a trigger point this year.**

COACH FERENTZ: I heard about those, but I didn't see them.

### **Q. Is there a little more of a trigger finger this year?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think there's just been a lot of talk about it, so I think that's going to be a natural outcome.

The thing we try to alert our players to is, you have to know the ground rules. It's like playing baseball, you play in one stadium, they have different ground rules than the next, and you can't be tone deaf to where we are right now.

So it's a big point of emphasis. We have to try to be smart. Typically those involve someone holding the ball, so that was a little bit unusual in that regard.

But again, he was trying to make an aggressive play. I don't think anybody's ever accused him of being a dirty player, but he is an aggressive player, there's no

question about that. Josey is a very aggressive guy.

**Q. What stands out on film when you watch?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, where do you want to start. He's got great size, great athleticism. I don't want to pretend to be an expert but it seems like he grows with every step. He's just an outstanding football player. Tough to defend, when you have that kind of size, ability, attitude, all those kind of things. He's just a really productive, tough guy. The size is a great advantage. It's tough to simulate that.

**Q. Facing a new coaching staff and you've faced a few, what is your protocol? How far back do you go to pick up on tendencies?**

COACH FERENTZ: Typically you just go back a year, look at what the team did a year ago. Sometimes you have to go searching a little bit, that type of thing. Probably the best comparison I could give you on this case would be if you want to look at a comparable when Gary Andersen went to Wisconsin. You look at the Utah State film, those guys were with him there, and boy, they were a really well-coached football team. What we saw Utah State did, they did it very well at Wisconsin. Not exactly the same schemes, but the way they played was very similar as what they did at Utah State. I think that's kind of what you do, look at the past season.

**Q. How far back do you look at Toledo?**

COACH FERENTZ: There's a reason they won all those games and they won a lot of them when he was there. Everywhere he's been, they have won. He's a sharp, young coach.

**Q. How do you feel like the Nelsons played off each other on Saturday?**

COACH FERENTZ: Well, unfortunately Parker (Hesse) wasn't out there as long as we'd like, but we came into the game feeling like we had the potential to have three good defensive ends, and then we'll work to build on the depths. Brincks has done some good things, too.

But those three guys are clearly at one level right now. If Parker can't go, that means we're down to two at that level. We're really pleased with the progress of all three of those players. Based on what we saw Saturday, I think it was a good start for those guys.

**Q. The joke about a law firm nickname -- do you like that type of stuff?**

COACH FERENTZ: That's a realistic goal for all of those guys. They might move to the front of the class. They are smart guys, really smart guys.

**Q. In last year's game against Iowa State, you lost a couple key guys early. If God forbid something**

**happened to C.J. is Nathan Stanley ready to lead?**

COACH FERENTZ: If that happens, we'll find out. That's football, though. You just play the circumstances as they arise. Not only in that game but the entire season, we had a lot of guys in and out of our lineup last year, and that's one of the reasons, really proud of that football team. They responded to those kinds of challenges, and those are the things you never know what's going to unfold as the season goes on, be it this week or weeks ahead, injuries, just things that can happen in sports and happen in football in particular. It's really more about the response and if that happens, we'll find out real quickly and go from there.

**Q. What was Tyler's response to him kind of moving in?**

COACH FERENTZ: Unbelievable. Cody Sokol kind of went through this a couple years back, and I can't say enough. And I've already said it, but I'll say it again: Cody is one of the most amazing guys we've had.

And same thing with Tyler. Talk about smart guys, Tyler is another guy that is a tremendous young man, great attitude. And this is hardly a closed book. We're going to let everybody continue to compete at all positions, not just quarterback.

**Q. Your concerns about the rush defense, how much is based on tackling techniques or how much of it is schematic?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, I guess the thing I would say just watching from the sideline and then just watching the tape, it seemed like we were thinking a little bit too much. Just kind of overanalyzing. I don't know. It didn't seem like we were letting it go the way you needed to let it go. Hopefully we can correct that and address it. I'm confident we will. I've seen us do it really well this practice. But it didn't carry over last Saturday to the degree we want. That's the biggest thing.

Positive thing is nothing broke out of there for long plays, big plays. But you know, five yards, five yards, five yards, that's just not good football.

**Q. One guy that kind of dropped off the radar for us was Mends. He was the starter and he wasn't in the top five on Saturday.**

COACH FERENTZ: I would just go back to comments I made in August and spring. Depth charts are really pretty fluid. That's why we're practicing. We're trying to see who does what in different situations.

Aaron, it's like Tyler, talking about Tyler a minute ago, Aaron is a tremendous young guy. He's made such improvement in the last two years, in all phases, just



everything about him. He's just really operating well. I think he's going to be a really good football player here. He's just got to keep his foot on the gas and keep learning.

It's a little like Anthony Hitchens. Anthony, his breakout year was '13, took three years to get there, but boy, he just took off. You never know when that is going to fall in place for a player. But if a guy works hard and has a good attitude and has the ability, has the requisite ability, he has a good chance. I'm really optimistic Aaron is going to do the same thing, just really take off one of these days.

**Q. Defense, you generally don't flip fields, you play a left end at tackle -- and corner, too, what's the thinking there?**

COACH FERENTZ: You keep all possibilities open. But some people play boundary people and field people and that type of thing and flip-flop their inside guys, one technique, three technique. For the most part we have left and right, and then we may rotate guys, and so they might go left, right and same thing with the offensive line.

It depends how you want to approach it. Some people do that with the receivers. Keep them left and right, and there's arguments both ways. But that's been our presence preference, but we also will keep the door open for any options if we think it gives us an advantage competitively.

**Q. It's been 15 years since 9/11 and we all remember where you were that day and in your case it was preparing for Iowa State, a lot of fluidity that week, trying to figure out whether you were going to play or not. What do you recall of the process to go from whether or not you were going to play or not and then ultimately deciding to postpone the game?**

COACH FERENTZ: You know, it's interesting, Dan McCarney was here last Friday, as you know, and was in my office looking at pictures, myself and Joe Moore, and he asked when that was taken. It was actually the Friday night post 9/11 because our game got canceled. I flew back to Pittsburgh and watched the high school game, and so we were just talking about that event and just memories from that week, etc.

I remember like it was yesterday, being called into the video room, Matt Engelbert called me in to watch some of the footage. I mean, how could you even -- at that time, couldn't fathom that, and just unraveled from there.

You know, it was just really a unique time in our history, I guess probably the only comparative would be when

JFK was assassinated, I guess in '63 it would have been. Those are those moments that I think all of us remember where we were and what we were doing. Way beyond football, just the impact it's had on all of our lives since that time.

**Q. Since it's a bus trip, you're not flying and going through all the logistical issues. If I remember right, you were one of the last games to call it off. Was it in part because of the bus?**

COACH FERENTZ: I can't remember the dynamics behind it but I think it was a Thursday when the decision was made. We were talking about that last Friday. I think it was Thursday morning, afternoon, when they made the final decision. But again, things like that just are so much bigger than what we're doing here.

So you know, it's just a perfectly logical decision. I can't remember why it took that long to get there but it was the right decision certainly.

**Q. When you talked about your longevity as coach, you said you had to have your wife's blessing and family blessing. What's the reaction in your camp about this extension, and can you see yourself coaching past 70 since there's no cap?**

COACH FERENTZ: Honestly I'm not sure anybody even knew that this was (signed) over in my family (before) it got announced today. My wife knew. I share most things with her, not all but most.

We'll just take it year by year. I've never felt better physically or mentally. That's a big part of it. Just kind of keep pushing forward. But yeah, most of all, what's good about it is having a chance to play in a game like this, a series like this.

This is the time of year, quite frankly -- cut the machine off so my wife doesn't hear this. But this is the time of year we all love, because it's 13 weeks where you're just kind of right down the tracks, and every week is a unique challenge and that's really the fun of it. So we are kind of finally in our game week routine. Last week took forever to get to kickoff, and now things are really flying by.

There's no way to describe it. It's a really unique thing and I just feel really privileged and honored to be able to do it in such a great place with so many great people.