

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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## Kelton Copeland Kirk Ferentz



KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon, everybody. This is certainly an exciting time for our program, our team having the chance to name two additions to our coaching staff. First thing I'd say, it was a really rigorous process for the applicants. Our entire staff did a great job. They were involved in the whole process. I'm not sure I could have made it through, quite frankly, so I'm glad I wasn't one of the people interviewing.

But all that being said, I'm happy about the way things came out. And to me, whether we're recruiting players or recruiting coaches, there are a lot of similar things we're looking for. Certainly, it all starts with looking for people that have character, great values, and obviously the requisite talent, and that's certainly what we've done here.

I'm extremely confident that both Kelton and Tim are not only going to complement our staff, but strengthen our staff and help us continue to move forward. That's what we're intending to do from the onset of this whole thing.

It's interesting both guys were quarterbacks and players in college during their careers. From my vantage point, they've both earned their way every step along their career. Their resumés, to me, were very impressive. And they both have coached multiple positions and that would include special teams as well. So, they've got varied backgrounds coaching-wise.

On top of that, they both come from highly successful programs, quality programs that we have a lot of respect for, programs that we've competed against, and in addition to that, the only other thing that stood out to me, we started to do a little research and started the interviewing process, and both Kelton and Tim surfaced quickly in our minds.

Looking back on this whole thing, I think my mentors, Joe Moore really demonstrated the importance of hiring a good coach, as opposed to filling a position or hiring for a position. And that was the mindset that we had going into this whole process.

Certainly knowledge and expertise are important, I'm not minimizing that, but it's important to get the right

person. A person that's going to be a great teacher, a great mentor. It's a big part of college football, and someone that has a shared vision and approach that we think is important.

I was impressed with both candidates. Both Kelton and Tim have, to me, demonstrated that they're willingness to stretch themselves professionally and expand, not just stay in the safe zone. I think they both have done that.

Our program is operating at a championship level, that's on all levels whether it's citizenship, academics or football. And the way you go about accomplishing that is to try to create a culture that's going to be competitive, and based on continuous improvement. And then part of that is hiring coaches that are going to help our players continue to push forward and reach their fullest potential.

I think we're one step closer now to getting where we want to get, and really pleased again to name the addition of Kelton and Tim.

So we'll go in the order that they were hired. We kind of went through the receiver process first, and Kelton is the first guy we extended a job offer to. So I'll ask him to come up and say a few words, answer questions, and then we'll ask Tim to do the same, and then if you guys aren't tired and still have questions, I'll answer those afterwards.

KELTON COPELAND: I'm extremely excited; my wife and family, we're very happy and words can't express how happy we are and excited to be part of the Iowa family. Looking at this program from afar and getting to know Coach Ferentz before this process even took place, he's a guy I respected in our profession. Basing off what he said about hiring coaches, looking for somebody to hire, we always looked at him as a guy that if you had an opportunity to get to know, you want to get to know him.

When the opportunity came to interview with Coach Ferentz and the Iowa program, we were excited for the opportunity, and full-steam ahead. And here we are, so I guess it worked out on both ends.

**Q. Kelton, did you have any connections with any**

**of the Iowa coaches that helped you get your foot in the door a little bit?**

KELTON COPELAND: Yes, sir. Coaching is always about networking, and a lot of things happen through recruiting. You meet coaches along the way. I met a couple coaches on different occasions, being down in South Florida, met a couple guys, being in Detroit, Chicago, you just meet different coaches on the staff and in different ways you kind of build that relationship. Working with each other sometimes, sometimes even working against each other, sometimes in the recruiting process you get to know each other and that whole deal, and that's how this whole thing started. Just getting to know coaches that way.

Then Coach Kill and Coach Ferentz they have a relationship, and Coach Gary Kill is one of my mentors that I have a lot of respect for, and he reached out. Then I reached out to him expressing my interest and asked if he would help me throughout this process. Then a couple more coaches that knew coaches on this staff and then knew my background and had worked with me and had mentored me throughout my whole process as my career.

**Q. You talk about the experience as a coach, you went from I think graduate assistant to wide receivers and then linebackers and spring coach. You did a little bit of everything down there?**

KELTON COPELAND: Yes, well, long story short, I'll keep it as simple as possible. But, basically, a week after I got done playing, I was on staff as a student assistant. They knew from my third year of playing that they knew I wanted to be a coach. So they started grooming me towards that goal even when I was playing. When the opportunity came right after I got done playing and my career was over, like I said, I was on staff the very next week.

So, I worked my way up, got my graduate assistantship, worked with linebackers, actually, first. That was a totally different world for me. Playing quarterback and being on offense my whole college career, that was a totally different mindset, totally different nature all together. But I took it in stride, learned a lot, and still learning from my experiences even back then.

After that I moved over to offense. They put me back on offense to coach receivers and running backs, and then moved on after that from Florida State.

**Q. How would you say you fit into the Iowa culture? Because that's an important thing?**

KELTON COPELAND: That was huge. In the interview process that was huge. That was something they hit on quite a bit, and that question came up quite a few

times to be honest with you. Honestly, I can tell you, our values, our core beliefs are parallel. Like I said, it started before any of this opportunity came about. When I watched these guys play and I watched and I hear about Coach Ferentz and how he runs things and how he treats not only his players but his staff, the core values run parallel together.

The things you're talking about, winning off the field. Only winning on the field, yes, that's important, but developing young men, right? Being honest, being loyal, doing things the right way, treating people the right way. And when I came to my interview process and we started talking and we got to know each other a little bit, we found out pretty quick that our core values were similar and parallel. So to me it was an easy fit.

**Q. What was your perception of Iowa football before you started the interview process?**

KELTON COPELAND: It's a program that I respect. Put it this way, when I was coming up, Coach Kill is a big mentor of mine. I played for Coach Kill and he used to always say we want hard-hat, lunch-pail-toting people. It's that blue-collar mentality. That's the way I was brought up as a kid, that's the way I was brought up as a player, and when you watch Iowa football, that's how they play. It's blue collar, hard-nosed, tough, physical and relentless. That's the way I love to coach, and that's the way I love watching guys play.

**Q. What about Iowa City? Have you been here before?**

KELTON COPELAND: No, sir, I haven't been in Iowa City a whole lot except with the exception when I was at NIU and we played in 2013 here. But as far as getting out and about and seeing all of that Iowa City has to offer, I have not had a chance yet.

But I've heard great things and I'm looking forward to getting my family moved here. So if you have any ideas and spots that I need to be looking at to get us moved in, let me know because my wife's grilling me right now.

**Q. I know you've come this far with your job duties here, but where do you feel comfortable recruiting, and where do you see yourself recruiting?**

KELTON COPELAND: I feel comfortable in all aspects, to be honest with you. I've recruited, obviously you've checked out my bio and my resumé, and I've recruited a lot of different areas: South Florida, Chicago, Kansas, Kansas City area, Detroit, Indianapolis, so forth and so on. So to say is one more area more comfortable for me than another? No, absolutely not.

I'm born and raised in Miami, Florida, so obviously if I have the opportunity to recruit down there, so be it. I'm

totally fine down there. If it's Chicago, if it's Kansas City, wherever Coach Ferentz and the rest of the staff decides to put me, I'm confident in my abilities. I know what we're looking for. I know what our goals are with this program and the type of kids we want here. And wherever I'm placed, I feel like I'm going to do a great job getting those guys here and helping us win championships.

**Q. What kind of challenges does recruiting players to the Midwest present?**

KELTON COPELAND: The biggest challenge is distance and lack of knowledge is probably the easiest way to put it. Myself, I take myself for example, when I was a 17-year-old kid coming from Miami, Florida and you would have said Iowa, first of all, I probably wouldn't have been able to point Iowa out on a map, and, secondly, I would have thought that's the other side of the world.

So that's probably the biggest obstacle getting them to understand, yes it's a different way of life, but it's still a good way of life. In a lot of ways, to be honest with you, it's a better way of life. So that's probably the biggest obstacle.

**Q. You're taking over a position that was pretty maligned last year at Iowa City. What was kind of your pitch in your interview about how you could make the receiver group better?**

KELTON COPELAND: Anytime you walk into a room, it's always a challenge for the first time. These guys are looking at you, and you're looking at them and they're wondering and you're wondering, the whole deal to me is everybody gets a clean slate. Doesn't matter what you've done good or bad, what I've done good or bad, this is the first time we're meeting, right? So the first impression is always the biggest impression, the most important impression.

So the biggest thing moving forward when I walk into that room is going to be how can we help Iowa be better? How can we help each other be better, how can we get on the same page and work toward one goal? That's all that matters.

**Q. What do you know about the style of the passing game and how it's evolving or changing from last year? Has that been discussed or is it still kind of in the new stages?**

KELTON COPELAND: It's still in the new stages. We were just talking ball all morning. Finest morning I've had in a long time just talking ball and just bouncing ideas off each other. But, no, we're not even close to even talking about or addressing where we're going with the pass game or anything else right now. We're just bouncing ideas off each other and getting on the

same page.

**Q. You were recruited by Jerry Kill at Saginaw State initially and then Emporia State, you played in a league that was probably the best in Division II, 15 years ago or whatever. What did you learn specifically from Jerry and then your playing days in a league where the disparity between revenues and what have you was pretty wide?**

KELTON COPELAND: Well, you talk about what I learned, how much time have you got? I mean the list goes on, he's a guy that I respect, and quite honestly I love quite a bit. Him and I talk to this day, and still, every day, like today when I talk to him, I'll learn something new from the man. That's just how I feel.

As far as my playing experiences there's always something to take away, whether it's good or bad. We had championship and then some not so good seasons. No matter what the experience is, good, bad or in between, there's always something to learn from. Like adversity, and when we started this interview, talking about loyalty. Coach Kill was huge on loyalty. If I'm going to be loyal to you, you have to be loyal to me back. We cannot break that trust, and it starts with being honest with each other.

So those are the two biggest values I learned from Coach Kill right off the bat. And that was something that I learned back as far as I can remember as a kid, because my parents were along the same lines.

So, like I said the marriage between my parents being raised, to go with Coach Kill and him taking me from being that boy to being a man, and now in my career, those values have not changed. They have not changed one bit. I still believe in them and coach my guys to believe in those same values.

**Q. What did he tell you about Iowa?**

KELTON COPELAND: First, he told me that Coach Ferentz is a heck of a guy, and if I get the opportunity I better take it or he's going to kick my butt.

**Q. What's your career goal?**

KELTON COPELAND: My immediate career goal was to get this job, to be quite honest with you. Like I said, this was an opportunity that I knew if I ever got a realistic opportunity at this, I was going to do everything in my power to fully obtain it, and we did.

Now when you get to a place like this, to be honest with you, you have to reset your goals. A lot of those things that were important before, may not be as important now. Because, in my estimation, this is a place where you can be a long time, be successful, and be comfortable.

So, to be honest with you, that was my goal and I reached it. But now we have to set some new goals and move forward.

**Q. Would you like to be a head coach some day?**

KELTON COPELAND: We'll see. We'll see. I'm a little young in the process for that, but if that opportunity ever arises, we'll cross that bridge when we get there.

**Q. What did you learn in your days of coaching at Coffeyville, where I'm sure you wore, just like at Emporia State, a lot of hats and did a lot of things?**

KELTON COPELAND: The thing I took most from Coffeyville was don't take anything for granted. Honestly, that's the place where I wore the most hats. I did everything from strength and conditioning, I taught classes, I ran our indoor facility, I was our equipment manager, and, oh, yeah, by the way, you have to coach a position, too. So there was always something to do.

But with that being said, the experiences and lessons that I learned at Coffeyville, I wouldn't trade them for anything else in the world. Like I said, I learned the value of hard work. I learned the value of trusting other people, because when you have that many hats, you have to trust somebody to help you out. So you have to be able to delegate. That in itself taught me life lessons that I'll never forget.

**Q. What did you teach?**

KELTON COPELAND: Every semester was a little different, but it was always some type of health or physical education class.

**Q. Had you met Brian Ferentz before this process?**

KELTON COPELAND: Yeah, actually I did meet him one time before. He probably doesn't remember, but I met him in passing. Guys are always trying to get to the next school or get to the next coach and so we were just in passing. It was literally a handshake, "how you doing?" and moving on.

**Q. What were your impressions in the interview process of working for him?**

KELTON COPELAND: Very sharp guy, very sharp. He seems like a genuine person. You know how they say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree? Not to kiss Coach Ferentz's butt or anything like that, but the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. He's very sharp, he's genuine, and he knows where he wants to go with things. He's very poignant on that, and he's going to let you know what he's thinking. But at the same time, he's going to do it in a way where it's not threatening and make sure we're all on the same page.

**Q. Your name shows up on the Palmetto Raiders**

**website. I imagine football has not been very far out of your life ever?**

KELTON COPELAND: Ever. I didn't know that, by the way. That's awesome. Palmetto Raiders, that's where it all started for Kelton Copeland back in, I can't even tell you what year that would have been.

But I think like 135 pounds, yeah, probably 135 pounds or maybe 90 pounds was my first team that I played for. Back then it was all weight limits. That's your first experience in real football. Everybody thinks they can do it running on the street, especially down in South Florida because that's all you do year around, and everybody thinks they're Jerry Rice or Barry Sanders. Those were the guys back in my day.

So everybody thinks they're those guys, but when you get out there and there are pads on and it's organized football, people get exposed pretty quick. That's what I remember most. It's not as easy as I thought. It's not as easy as it looks on TV. These guys are going to hit me in the mouth, so I better have a plan.

**Q. What is your philosophy of coaching receivers and how will you build them up from the ground?**

KELTON COPELAND: My philosophy is simple: be straight up, be honest, have a plan, and let them know I'm going to do everything I can in my power to help you along the way. Not only to make you a good football player, but help you become a good man.

One of my core values is honesty. That's the most important thing to me. If we have a true relationship where we can trust each other, we have something to build off of. No matter if you played every down of your career here, or if you don't play one down here. If you're honest with me and loyal and we're working toward the same goal, we'll always have a great relationship.

If at any time that trust gets broken, then we'll have an issue. In my experience, that usually doesn't happen. If they trust you, they'll buy into what you're coaching.

**Q. How do you know what you have until you get them on the field? Do you look at film and try to see what you have?**

KELTON COPELAND: You study film. I watched games from last year, getting ready for the interview process. You get a feel for this guy has this talent level, this guy has this talent set, but at the same time, you're right. You don't know exactly what you're getting until the lights come on and then you get to see.

There is a big thing about potential versus production. A lot of people have potential, but when the lights come on, you have to produce, that's when you're going to

find out what's true and what's not.