

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz

Press Conference



KIRK FERENTZ: We're one step closer to getting on to football, which has been great. It's been great to get started with practice and what have you.

And just try to share some thoughts with you today, let you know a little bit what's going on, in terms of our team, just not only for you, but our fans certainly. And it's obviously been a very interesting and challenging couple months for all of us and we're just all very thankful that the Big Ten has moved forward so we have an opportunity to play and continue this season, get it started.

As I said earlier, we're excited to get started, we're certainly not ready to go, but we're excited to go and whether it be the 23rd or 24th, we don't know that yet, but really looking forward to having a chance to compete, I think our players have been extremely impressive, the last couple weeks, but also throughout this entire period. I think they have been united, I think they have been focused and they have worked extremely hard and we have really seen a change in our team since they announced the season was back on. So it's been really good that way.

Like any pre-season camp, and this isn't like any pre-season camp, the psychology of it is very strange. To be out there and really not face any heat challenges, it's a little bit weird to see the leaves changing colors and wearing sweat shirts and long pants at times that's been a little different.

But where it is like camp there's some good things that we're seeing on a daily basis, some things that aren't so good and that tends to change day-by-day and sometimes even period-to-period. So it is like the pre-season in that regard, and our challenge is to try to pull everything together.

The bottom line is our time is really short right now, we'll have another week of "camp type" preparation and then get into our game prep for the first game against Purdue.

Two weeks from tomorrow we'll be traveling or maybe sooner than that if it's a Friday night game. So that's kind of

where we're at in terms of camp.

One thing I do want to do is just a special salute, a special thanks to several people. I think our strength and conditioning staff have just done a great job, going back to June. It's been a very challenging job for them, everything that all of us have done has been very unusual, uncharted, that's for sure. But for them to try to keep track of what's going on with this player, that player, all that kind of stuff, it's really been a big challenge.

And then nobody's worked any harder than the medical staff, be it the physicians and especially the trainers. Kammy I know spoke earlier, Rai before that or Rai also, but Kammy and her staff have really just gone above and beyond in a lot of regards. They're doing things such as the nasal PCR exams, all those kind of things that I'm sure none of them ever envisioned in their job description.

So they have been tremendous, just absolutely tremendous and really appreciate their efforts going above and beyond for the players. Not surprised. And one thing our players I know are in great hands, they just continue to be in the best of hands when it comes to that.

Also, as you know, we have had two players opt out due to COVID reasons, COVID concerns. Like every player on our roster we want what's best for them and we certainly support their decisions in this regard. So we have had two players opt out.

Also, I know that in the last couple days you've had a chance to visit with a group of players on both sides of the football and special teams and then also the majority of our staff today. So I think you've gotten a lot of the details and I'll be happy to fill anything in that you may have a question about as we go.

One thing of note came to my attention that Cole Banwart's name was not on the two deep that we issued you. And that's probably a reflection of my real kind of lack of concern for a two deep at this time of the year, especially when we put this out. So Cole's definitely in the two deep, he's working, doing very well, want to make sure you guys know he's healthy, doing fine and right in the thick of things. So I just want to go with that.

And just wrap it up with a final comment here. So, you

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know, obviously this has been a really unusual and highly challenging time I think for all of us right now. We, and I mean everybody in the room here, everybody pretty much in our country, have faced a lot of challenges that none of us ever anticipated by any stretch. So I can just tell you we're thankful as a program, we're thankful for the opportunity to be back on the field, really happy about that, it's coming quickly and also I want to let you know that we feel like we have a stronger program today than yesterday and our players and coaches are really united, they're doing a great job and really happy to report that.

And finally, while Kinnick may not be full this year and we may not have any fans in there, we know and appreciate the support and the interest that all of the Hawkeye fans, wherever they may be, have shown for our football team and will show.

So our goal is to get ready for an 8/9 game season and we'll continue working on that end. And I'll open it up for questions at that point.

Q. Coaches are creatures of habit. You're that way too. What's this been like from a personal standpoint, these last nine months, whether you talk about race issues in your program or just not having football, having football, no spring practice. Everything's so different. What's it been like for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's just, it's been strange. And we told our guys right at the onset that everybody's going to have to, everybody's world's gotten rocked, obviously. I think first and foremost there are a lot bigger issues than football that have been more prominent in our country's existence.

And the work that people have been doing in the medical fields, just absolutely amazing, non-stop. So that kind of puts it all in perspective.

And football is really important to all of us certainly, but I think we all realize it's not life and death, it's not the most important thing, but it's what we all like and we're all committed to it.

So there hasn't been any normal in terms of routine or structure that way. And really for the last couple weeks we just kind have been taking it a couple days at a time, three-day, four-day block, trying to measure out where we're at and then what are intelligent steps to take moving forward.

But it's been very, very different than anything I've ever experienced and I'm sure it's that way for all of us right now. Our lives have been different, I feel fortunate that we're actually able to go back to what we do and like to do.

It's still not the same and it won't be the same this year, we know that, we have accepted that.

The other thing for sure is that we're going to face challenges all season long. I shared with our team the other day, the New England Patriots they did their test, six, seven in the morning, Monday, got on a plane, flew to Kansas City, spent a couple hours in a hotel, played the game against the defending world champions and went back.

So that's not hardly a day in the life for a normal day, but that's a good illustration of what could happen to us any week and we just all have to stay flexible and try to make the best of it and do what we think is the smartest on a short-term basis.

Q. Is it fair to say that you'll never take the fall for granted again?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah.

Q. There's a routine involved when you've been in it, especially as long as you have.

KIRK FERENTZ: There's a lot of things that make you really appreciate being able to do what you love doing. And this has been maybe as big of an illustration.

And quite frankly, whenever it was, August 11th, it didn't look like we were going to have an opportunity to play this fall. Then you put your sights on what's the next best alternative. And at that point it looked like January. Late December or January.

So you reset your sites on that a little bit, but this was welcome news certainly and it's just good to be back kind of in a flow, even though it's a different flow. But we're back with our players, that's the most important thing, we're back working together and that's what we all love doing.

Q. You've been bullish on Spencer for a long time. Last year he won the backup job against somebody who is a little more veteran than him. And then he became the starter basically right after the season ended. What is it that you have seen in him that's elevated him to that role and why do you think he's built to be successful in it?

KIRK FERENTZ: Like all the guys on our roster we certainly liked him in the recruiting phase of things. And recruiting's, a big percentage of that is projection, based on what you learn about a prospect and then what you see and then what you think maybe they can grow into. Until you get them on campus you're never quite sure and I think

it was really last November where, at least me personally, I felt like we saw Spencer starting to hit his stride a little bit and gain the confidence and showed some things that maybe would give you thought that he could become a really good player in our program.

So I think we saw that, we saw that continue in December and the fact that Nate's gone now, certainly opens the door for him. But, yeah, we're really pleased with what we know about him, what we have seen of him on the field, off the field, the way he works with his teammates. And I'll echo that, Alex Padilla too, I've seen him in the last two weeks I guess just kind of gain some confidence too and do some really good things as well.

So it's just part of a player's progression and we feel really good about him, but the facts are that he hasn't played yet, really hasn't played any significant snaps. But we can say that about a lot of our players. At some point you get out there on the field, nobody comes here as a veteran college football player.

So I just think he'll be quick to handle it, everything that's going to come at him, knowing that there's going to be up-and-downs just like every position, but obviously his position's a little bit more prominent and everybody's got a few more opinions about what quarterbacks do than maybe some other positions.

Q. You said you guys are closer than ever, obviously that's impossible to measure. What makes you think that?

KIRK FERENTZ: We have all been through a lot and I said it before on record that we had some really honest and raw conversation back in June, I think a lot of good honest discourse, and it just forced us to move forward and really re-examine some things that our program held to be very important. And it's kind of a rehash of the last time we visited, or two times ago, I guess, but I think we made adjustments, we haven't altered our core principles, but we made adjustments that I think are probably a little bit more palatable to a lot of our players.

Social media's the easiest example to give you. I probably just stuck with that one too long. I think my heart was in the right place on that one, it was just trying to protect, be an over protective father or grandfather I guess. But that became apparent to me that it was time to adjust that policy.

But I think we had good conversation and more importantly I think we have had good followthrough and the key thing now is to continue to move forward.

Q. What is the most challenging in preparing for a season like this, just because of all the uncertainties? When you guys started practicing again, all you had to adjust, are you able to not really do some things that you normally would any other season or are you able to speed up several other things just because these guys didn't have a spring?

KIRK FERENTZ: I would be less than honest if I said that I was totally comfortable with starting practice this year. It's the hardest camp we have ever had, only because we weren't sure where our guys were physically. And the other component is we had a lot of guys at different levels.

We clearly, when the season got pushed or punted, that clearly affected our football team. It was reflected in COVID numbers everywhere in our state, particularly two counties, with kids coming to campus, but I think our guys, their attitude changed. There was really nothing to focus on.

So to that point you have guys coming out of quarantine all those kind of things and really hard to quantify where we were at. So we really went slow at the start. We really tried to be as cautious as we possibly could, as smart as we possibly could, trying to avoid any injuries that would be avoidable in a normal season. But I do feel like we're starting to catch up right now, I think our work capacity is a little closer to what you would hope for a college football team. And I think our guys' attitudes have been good all the way through it. But all that being said we still have a lot of really important work to do between now and next Friday, next Saturday, to even think about being ready for a schedule.

It's been a really unique challenge that way and I think anybody that would try to minimize the importance of a summer conditioning program and the work that athletes do in the summer, and really it's year round, to get ready to play this game, they're not paying attention.

Q. Phil said you guys had like a mini-scrimmage of some sort yesterday or something. How much, how important is that to start to have those, because at the end of the day football's blocking, tackling and you have to do some of that?

KIRK FERENTZ: No question. That's what football's all about. You can't -- you heard me say it before, you can only do so much in a meeting room. And meetings are important, they're great. Walkthroughs are great. Jogging around in shorts and all that stuff's really neat too and it's fun and all that.

But at some point you have to play football, but you have to be in shape to do that and you got to know where the limits

are to those types of things.

So, yeah, at least we're getting some semblance of it and we'll do more this weekend. We'll be in Kinnick for the first time and do some live work, but ultimately that's how the game gets played. If you can't tackle it's going to be hard to be a good defensive football team and if you can't protect the football and those things offensively it's hard to think you're going to win many games.

So it starts right there. If you're not doing those two things it's going to be hard to win ball games. I think I read a quote Monday morning from an NFL coach of a team that's struggling, and he cited right off the bat, and this is Game 4 for them, turnovers and basically nonexistent defense. And a lot of times that means you're giving up big plays.

So we got to do that work, I don't know that we're going to get enough before we start playing. But that's the way it is, that's the cards that got dealt to us and we'll just try to do our best to get ready.

Q. What have you seen from Coy Cronk, how does he fit in your offensive line and you seem to have a lot of competition there and at the guard spot.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, Coy's done a really nice job and he's been great since he joined the program in January. It's really strange in some ways, we haven't had a lot of grad transfers come in, so you're getting a guy who is mature, right, he's a college graduate, older guy, and in Coy's case has played a lot of Big Ten football.

But then the other sidebar with Coy, when he came in, he's coming off that ankle injury that he had, which was significant. So he really wasn't in very good shape at that point because he had been in a long rehab physically. Really would have been beneficial to see him in spring football and at least let him start working, I don't know if he could have been a hundred percent at that point.

So I'm going on, on this whole thing, when we got on the field and I think we put pads on a week ago, a week and a day for the first time. He hasn't played football in over a year. So he's got work to do that way.

But he's a really quality young guy, he's a good football player and he's going to help our football team, there's no question about that. Just these next two weeks are going to be really important for him just to get back into his rhythm and groove, because I don't care if you're a 37-year-old veteran in the NFL or in his case probably 21, 22, 23, you have to practice, you have to get your skill set back and that's what he's working on. But he works hard he's got a great attitude he'll be a really good football

player for us.

Q. What impressed you about Jack Heflin and what kind of impact do you anticipate him making for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: Kind of the is same story. You talk to Jack, you feel like you're talking to a guy who is 45 or 35. I wish he lived next door, I think he would be a great guy to have as a neighbor. He's got a great personality. Like Coy he's more mature, he's been -- he's an older guy. So it's a real contrast to incoming freshmen I guess is the best way to put it. Like Bret Bielema, farm kid from across the border there, and he's fit right in. He's been extremely comfortable in the program. Unlike Coy he came in and was perfectly healthy so when he jumped in the strength and conditioning program in June just had a great attitude and I think a guy like him, coming from Northern Illinois really appreciates his opportunity, he's excited about it and it shows out on the field too. And for both these guys they're having to learn our system and just we have a little different way of doing things maybe than what they were used to where they were at. So he's been going through that process, but he's done a great job and we're really thrilled he's on our football team.

Q. A normal year, 15, 16 days from the start of the season, do you feel like you've still got a lot of ground to make up to get to where you would be normally without the spring practice or have you caught up pretty well, do you think?

KIRK FERENTZ: We all kind of just dismissed the spring practicing, we told our players to do the same thing, it's not going to, we didn't have it and we're not going to have it, so don't worry about it.

Just to put in perspective, like normally this would be our second scrimmage coming up this weekend in a normal camp. It won't be, it will be our first time to really scrimmage and be in the stadium. So not as big a deal for our older guys, but for the younger guys this will be a big deal to be in Kinnick and trying to figure that out, even though there won't be fans -- this is one time it will actually be simulating like a game, because nobody's going to be here, so that's a plus, I guess.

But, yeah, we're playing catch up. And the other part of the equation is everybody else is too everybody's playing by the same rules. So that part, it is what it is and we tried to encourage our prayers and coaches to, let's not worry about what we didn't have or didn't do, let's just try to focus on what our opportunities are, what can we do and how do we best maximize the time that we do have, the time that we have had so far and then moving forward.

But that being said we're not looking too far down the road, because it almost changes day-to-day.

Q. Your wide receiver corp has developed, do you feel like this could be one of the most diverse offenses you've coached here?

KIRK FERENTZ: Somebody asked is this going to be the best receiving corp in the history of Iowa football or in the country or something like that. I would be happy if we just play good, first of all, and if we were like in the Top five in the Big Ten.

But in all seriousness we have a good group of players at that position, certainly with Ihmir and Brandon, who got thrown in probably, not probably, but before they were ready to play and played successfully. But I think that experience has ended up paying off for them because they have made it pay off for them. They work hard, they're both doing a good job out there and so it gives us two seniors that are really well established. Nico certainly played well last year. Tyrone Tracy's a young up and coming player.

So I think we're on the right track certainly and to your point, I think our skill positions are, outside of the quarterback where we're inexperienced, but our skill positions are experienced and we feel good about the guys playing there and hopefully we'll have a balanced attack and I think that's really important because you just never know how people are going to attack you defensively week-to-week. So if you don't have answers you're going to be in a problem and it's good to have receivers.

Q. Last few years you lost two really good rushers to the NFL, Anthony Nelson and then AJ. How do you compensate for that and I'm sure it's going to be by committee, but who kind of fills some of those roles especially for the pass rush?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's next man in. First of all. The other illustration is -- and AJ came in as a guy who is, AJ was a pretty dominant player as a young player. Just a really unusual skill set. But most of our guys grow into roles. It's usually how it works. Our best players, I just talked about two receivers that were okay as freshmen, but they're pretty good players now. So most of our guys grow into the role. And that's -- you talk about Chauncey Golston, a guy who was 210 pound or 215 pounds, when we recruited him, but the way he's worked, the way he's matured, he's not only a really good football player, but one of our team leaders, in his own quiet way. We're counting on him to really have a good year.

But it's got to come from everyone, everybody's got to do

their part and hopefully we're working hard out there and playing hard and we'll see some guys emerge. But you just never know where those good stories are going to come from.

And I can say this, we have a bunch of guys in that group who are working really hard and I think have a chance to be really good football players for us.

Q. How impressed have you been with your coaching staff so far through camp?

KIRK FERENTZ: They have been great. I think when things really got tough there in June, when everything was hitting the fan, I think that even became more apparent to me just how quality they are. So that's something I feel really good about. I've been really fortunate, 30, this is my 31st year coming up I guess here. My entire time at Iowa I worked with quality coaches. That's been a common denominator.

And I would also say the same thing with the players. When I talk to people about my experience here in the '80s, I talk about the coaching staff I worked with, and then also the quality of the players that we had. Whether it's Andre Tippett and Brad Webb, two guys that were the outside backers in '81, my first year here. Knocked on my door, and I was here a week and they're knocking on my door looking for film from Pittsburgh. They didn't want to meet me, they just wanted the film from Pittsburgh.

But we have had good guys in this program and I can't say enough about the staff, I think they have done a great job. Just feel really good about the group.

Q. Brian mentioned something in his comments and I can't quote it exactly, but some kind of epiphany where getting the run game around the edge with the receivers, etcetera. Did you have that same, I guess, realization in the Holiday Bowl, that the run game could be a little bit more, I guess dynamic, versatile?

KIRK FERENTZ: We'll see. In that game in particular we had seen some things on film that led to us believe we might have a chance to have some success out there. But like everybody in the out of season, we were looking at things and looking at other people to do some things. So I think we made a couple tweaks and adjustments, hopefully it will be beneficial. But part of it too is, to have a good scheme and have it be productive and pay off for you, you have to have the right people executing it.

To the point earlier about the receivers, I think we have some guys now that are capable of taking the ball, not only catching the ball, but we hand it to them and they can do

something with it and make some yards. And even that pass in the bowl game was a beautiful pass, right? That should have been a touchdown, but anyway. That gives us a little bit maybe versatility and a chance to open some things up.

Q. What was it like for you in August when you heard that there was going to be no football? I mean, what was that like for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's just, it was strange. Again, like everybody, I'm hardly the only person in America I know that's went through strange things. Not everybody coaches football, but, yeah, it's what we do, so there's a really rhythm to being a coach that -- and that's, I think one of the good things about the job is there's peaks, whether it's week by week, season by season.

After awhile you get into a rhythm, a certain rhythm. Like this time of year this is what we're supposed to be doing. So it's really hard any time you're knocked out of that. And I think for all of us in the country, back in March, I think we all experienced that.

And then the other thing is the unknown, which is really difficult. I think when the season got cancelled on the 11th, that put everybody in a tail spin, if you will. It's really difficult. So the best thing was to have something to focus on, to know where we were going and I think that just kind of really gets everybody going again.

It's just how life is. You have to have something to shoot for and aim for, to work for, and then when you're used to doing certain things in a certain way, it's different. That is just how it works, I don't know, it's strange, it was really strange. Kind of surreal I guess is probably the best word. I use that word with the pandemic, that the experience was surreal, just like those pictures of New York City without anybody on the streets, that was surreal. This whole thing's been like a science fiction movie in some ways and I'm not a big fan of science fiction, so I'll end it right there on that one.

Q. We haven't talked about it as much because of all the circumstances of this season and I know you'll probably say the same thing you say every year, but what are your expectations for your team as far as how they perform and where you guys are going to be in the Big Ten?

KIRK FERENTZ: Our expectations are always to have a good team. That's our goal, that's our expectation. This year's a challenging year, but again it's a challenging year for everybody. I did come to that conclusion months ago that genetics and having an experienced quarterback

would be two really good things this year.

But all that being said, just watching our guys work, watching them practice, I don't know if we can get there by the 23rd, 24th, whenever it is we tee it up, I don't know if we're going to be ready to go. But I feel that way every year, you're never quite sure you're going to be ready.

But then the good news is that, like you watch our guys work and they're working hard and they're trying and they're together and they want to be good. So can we get there fast enough, can we be ready to go.

But that's the fun of it is the challenge. I think everybody's realistic that we're hardly there right now, we have a lot of work to do, so we'll see what we can do about getting there. And if it doesn't work out in that first one then we'll get back on our feet on Sunday and flush it by Monday and get ready for the next one and just keep going down that street.

But I would like to think we have a chance to have a good football team, but we have to get it done and that's the fun part is the doing.

Q. I'm sure you feel this way every year, but do you feel that because everybody's in the same situation and I'm talking Big Ten, that it is almost really you could say wide open, it was the same thing like we said with Major League Baseball that anybody could almost win it with a short season. I mean, have you thought about it in that way, because you're all in the same boat and just the preparation that you all have, that it really is wide open in a way there is really no honestly favorite or maybe we could think of one or two, but what's your thought on that?

KIRK FERENTZ: The teams I know the most about are on our side. And then Penn State, it seems like we played them the last 16 years -- I know that is not true -- but the teams on our side, I think that's, in a normal year right now, if this was a normal year, I would think we would all be saying that. We would all be in Chicago, it would probably be July 30th and we would be saying anybody probably on our side probably could win this thing. And then that picture starts becoming a little bit more clear as you go.

But then you factor in, in a pandemic year and we have already seen in pro football, like this guy's out; oh, by the way your quarterback's not playing tomorrow. That type of thing. It's one of those years where you just you don't know what to expect and we have tried to share that with our players, I know every coach has, like everybody out there probably said it yesterday, everybody on the field right now, any one of you guys might be Sam Brownlee

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this year, so you need to be doing all you can to get ready. That's all -- because nobody knows.

Q. There was an expected drop off at tight end last year when you sent two guys in the first round in the NFL draft. But late in the year Sam LaPorta especially really emerged and Shaun Beyer seemed to progress as the year went on too. What's your expectations there? Do you see those two kind of emerging as more impactful in the passing game especially?

KIRK FERENTZ: Certainly Sam in the second part of the season made a lot of big plays for us. He's just, he just loves football, he loves being out there, he has got a great personality and great enthusiasm for the game and seems to have a knack of making tough plays, hard play. Probably his best play of "camp" this year was a play he didn't quite come up with, but it was an unbelievable play, and it's like, how do you do that, almost do that. So he's got a chance to be a really good player for us.

And we talked about Chauncey Golston, Shaun's a program guy, did a lot of things in high school and we even had him at the split end position his first year. But he's done a lot of good things too. He's growing and progressing, this should be his best year of football. So hopefully we got a good 1-2 punch and then we got young guys working hard behind them.

So we feel like -- the whole thing is going -- it's like every year for us, keeping guys healthy, we don't have a lot of depth anywhere, but if we can keep guys healthy -- we do have depth at placekicker, I'll re-qualify that. But, yeah, I think that's going to be a real key for us is keeping our guys out there that are capable.

Q. With the eligibility stuff this year, or every year basically, and it's different now with the four games anyway, but do you kind of have any more free rein to play everybody or take some chances, put some freshmen out there and see what they can do?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we do, Matt Lorbeck comes to mind. Matt came in late here and we could have done a four-year redshirt with him and then let him be a senior next year. Well now if he can play more than four, great. Time will tell on that. So, yeah, it gives you a little bit more flexibility. But I'm really more focused on our seniors right now and regarding that, that rule or clause or whatever you want to call it and we'll just see how it goes.

But I've learned in time, too, that everybody's got a clock, an internal clock and at some point guys want to move on. So I'm pretty confident a bunch of our guys that are seniors, they're going to be moving on this season when

it's over and so be it. So that stuff will all work itself out, but there certainly is a little bit of a different strategy involved or a little bit different opening.

Q. You mentioned a couple times now the idea of having a good talented quarterback surrounded by everything you could hope for, that has to be advantageous for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: It is. And that's probably one of the key coaching points for Spencer. You don't have to win the game. But that's really true of a quarterback in any year, it's always nice when you got a guy who can win the game and maybe put the team on his shoulders every now and then and do something really special, but I think especially at the starting point of this season right now it's really important for Spencer to realize, just go out and play your position. We're not counting on you to save our team or make everything happen for us.

Typically in football if you do what you're supposed to do at your position and do it with a little bit of extra energy, then good things have a chance to happen. That's really how good things happen on a football field.

So we're going to encourage all of our guys to do that, even the guys that are more experienced and, you know, hey, I got to do this, make this wild play. No, you don't, they just happen. Just play your position and let it go.

Q. How concerned are you, I mean, with the secondary for instance where you lost two guys to the NFL, one's starting already, and then your first opponent, I mean you kind of notice who is on the field for them. What's kind of your thoughts about the secondary? You got some challenges there.

KIRK FERENTZ: Talking about developmental players, right? OJ. Who, you know, graduated in engineering, end up being, played his best football at the end of his career and you look up and he's starting in the first game for the Broncos. It's just nobody would have predicted that two years ago, I promise you that.

But it's a really a credit to him working hard and just getting better and better and while taking a really challenging imagine on top of it. We have been fortunate, we have had some guys that have gone on and played beyond college at that position.

But we feel like we have some good young guys on our team right now playing. Matt comes to mind right over the bat, Riley Moss is practicing well, Julius Prince, Dane obviously playing that money position, our safeties are doing a good job.

So anybody that plays Purdue is going to have a challenge. It's all about -- talk about great receivers, they have two guys that are marquee guys, not just one. So we fully respect that. They're going to test you the way they play offensively, they're going to test you on defense in any year. It's like Minnesota with those two receivers last year they had, it's just really, every play you're kind of on the edge of your seat if you will.

Q. The Hayden Fry tribute this year on your guys' jerseys, how did that come about, what was the decision-making process with that?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's one more unfortunate thing about the pandemic. We were planning on honoring him for the public back in the spring. And then obviously we had to pull the plug on that. That would have been in April.

What I feel worse there is the family was looking forward to coming up here and interfacing with Iowa fans, Hawkeye fans because, I mean, Coach meant so much to this program, this state, what he did, when he did it.

So to have that opportunity, that was hard. And we still would have honored him on our jerseys, that was the plan. I talked to Robin and the family about that when we were down in Dallas. So we're not able to do that, but this is the next best thing and it's just, I think, a fitting tribute to somebody that really impacted this program just in immeasurable ways. So we're honored to have that on our shirt all season long.

Q. Brian talked about being committed to being more empathetic and understanding. Have you seen him change as a person a little bit over the last several months and how proud are you just as a father of a son that you've raised that is committed to always growing as a person?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I think our whole staff's committed to doing the right things. And one thing about life, we all learn and we all grow, hopefully. And if you're not, then you're really not living, in my mind, and you're not going to survive or do well in life, in my personal opinion.

So I'm 65, and one thing you learn about life is humbling, the sport's humbling, what we do can be very humbling. You have to pay attention, you have to listen and then you have to find what works for you.

So going back to Brian, I think he's done that, I think a lot of our guys on our staff, we have all given things a lot of thought and what can we do better, how can we do it better and still hold on to the things that we deem to be really

important. And that's what life's all about, but I think he's taking advantage of this opportunity, I think several of us have and hopefully we're all going to be better coaches as a result of that and push forward. So, yeah, I'm really proud of him, I'm proud of our entire staff.

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