

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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## Kirk Ferentz

### Press Conference

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, it's good to be here, and good to be live and in person with everybody. Appreciate everybody being here, welcome to media day, certainly. Selfishly, this is a really enjoyable time of the year to be a football coach. It's a one block of time be it usually two and a half, sometimes three weeks, where you get just pure football. It's us and our team, and outside of taking the garbage out -- I still took the garbage out last Tuesday night, otherwise you're pretty much off the hook for everything else going on. So it's one pure time where we are just with the players. We have their attention for the most part. They're not worried about academics, social life, all those kinds of things. So it's a really enjoyable part of our year. The other part about it, it's really about pure teaching right now, just trying to teach the game, teach fundamentals and see how quickly and how much we can grow, see what kind of growth and improvement we can have. That's usually the task at any camp you have, preseason camp, and certainly fits our team this year. Like most years, we have a mix of veteran players. We have a bunch of guys we feel really good about and have a lot of confidence in based on what they have done out on the field already and what they've done off the field, just the way they do things and the way they continue to work out there and lead our football team. And, needless to say, we lost a lot of really good football players off last year's team, so there's always holes to fill. A big part of that is just seeing how all the pieces fall together, how guys meld together a little bit, and that's a big part of the camp. So that's what we're looking at right now. That is the beauty of college football in my mind. Each and every year -- I say it every January, and it's really true -- it's truly a new team anytime you start a new venture, and that began back in January. This is a really important phase. I think, as I mentioned back during spring, too, one thing factoring in a little bit, coming off of COVID year where there really wasn't -- first of all, there wasn't a spring practice a year ago. There wasn't a good consistent summer training period where guys were -- I always think about Petras being I think he was quarantined 30-plus days last summer, even though he never contracted the virus. So guys missing a lot of time. And this is one thing right now. At least we're getting the benefit of a lot of younger guys having a good normal year, at least going back to January 25 or 26, whenever we began. So that's one thing you have to factor in a little bit.

This is the start of camp, and what's really important about it is now for us to figure out what our identity is going to be, see how it shapes and see how guys are moving along. And it's day to day, I can assure you that, like it is every year. It's a process, and there are good days, bad days. Some days -- not that guys aren't trying, but some days it seems -- and yesterday was one of those things where a lot of things seem to go wrong. So that's stuff we have to push through. We're going to have to do the same thing during the season, and we're experiencing that a little bit right now, but today was a little better effort. But the bottom line is really we won't have a clear picture probably until a week from Wednesday next week, two-and-a-half weeks into it. That's kind of where we get out of a camp mode, if you will,

and have a better read on our team. Again, I think with all the younger players that we have on the roster, we expect to see a lot of change in growth and development. It's going to be critical for us if we're going to be successful during this period. So that's kind of where we're at right now.

The one thing I do feel good about, I know we released the leadership council or the player council this morning. I feel really good about those 16 players. Those guys are guys that have been committed; they've done a great job. 12 of them are Hawkeye champions, championship captains during our out-of-season competition, and the other four guys are all representative guys at other positions. We wanted to make sure every position is represented. But the 16 of them have one common bond. They're all really truly committed. Done a great job since January giving our guys leadership. So that part's really encouraging.

Just a couple of notes. I think it's good to have a good summer program and have a full one. So as we entered camp eight or nine days ago, we came into camp in good shape physically. If you train hard during the course of the summer, you always have some setbacks, soft tissue things, that type of deal. As we came into camp, we a couple of guys still recovering from surgeries back in the spring. We're confident they'll all be ready to go when game time comes around. Got some guys with camp injuries right now. You won't see some guys out there tomorrow. You'll notice that, so the guys that aren't out there, basically we expect them to be ready when we open up the season. The one exception, the one new addition, the one exception is Kyler Schott, who had a really good summer, and unfortunately, had an accident or a setback during the course of our guys had a week off before we started last Thursday. He was at home helping bail hay, and I think he's the first guy, at least in 23 years, I can remember that got injured bailing hay. Jump off a bail and landed on his foot and had a foot injury. So he's probably going to miss some playing time early in this season. I can't tell you when, if it'll be the second week, third week or fourth week. But we expect him back somewhere in the first portion of the season, but he will not be ready early, at least I think that would be a real long shot to expect him to be ready for the first game. And you'll see him today. He'll be on crutches today, so no need to ask him that.

As far as the schedule a couple of notes about that. We really don't talk much about the schedule. But our guys read the paper and I think they know who we're playing. Our guys aren't stupid. They're pretty good football minds. So, you know, right now our focus is on our team. That's really where it's at, and that's where it will be for at least another week and a half, and then at some point we'll shift into our first opponent. But I think it goes without saying, one thing that's very, very obvious we play two teams that are highly ranked going into the preseason polls, very highly ranked and for good reason. They're both coming off historically good seasons. Both teams, their arrows are definitely going up. They have a lot of veteran players coming back in both cases. So we're starting right off with a really tough schedule. And then to me every game we play is tough and competitive, and that's kind of what it is in college football. You better have that attitude or you're going to be in for some disappointment, that's for sure. That's just what we're preparing for right now. I think the bottom line is it's a real razor thin edge, margin for error when you talk about playing college football games, and I think this year the margin is even that much thinner. So that's really the mindset that we're going to have to have when we get focused on opponents.

And last thing of note probably just is the COVID situation. It really has been our main opponent since last March when things start getting shut down at the university and certainly impacted and affected last season. Things have been a lot better this year, but I'm about nine days out from watching news, thank God, and so I know there's a lot going on in the country and nobody can predict where it's all going. I did make a comment back in Indianapolis about our situation. I think I said we're in the mid 70s.

That number has gone up. We continue to educate -- that's our No. 1 priority, to educate our players about what the protocols are going to be and just what we all feel is probably in their best interest. A lot of guys have responded real favorably, and I think when September 1st rolls around, we still have guys that are in the process of getting vaccinated. We have at least a handful, if not two, tomorrow that are going to get vaccinated. So when September rolls around, we expect to be in a pretty good position. But that remains our players' choice what they choose to do. We're not going to mandate, but we are going to continue to educate, and I'd encourage all of our fans to consider doing the same thing. There's nothing any of us want more than to have a full house in Kinnick each and every week, and hopefully everybody will do their part to be part of that. So feel good about the direction we're going there.

And a couple other things here I'll just mention. I don't pretend to be a close personal friend of coach Bobby Bowden. I did actually drive him to a golf outing when I was at Pittsburgh before I came here in 1981. We had played him in the fall of '80, and then he came in and played at a golf tournament Coach Sherrill hosted, so I drove him from the airport to Fox Chapel Field Club Golf Course. That's the extent of my knowledge with him. Known a lot of people that did know him and know him well, and I've never heard a bad word said about Coach Bowden. As a young coach, I can tell you this. He's one of the people I really admired. When you looked at what they did when he went to Florida State, Florida State had a very average program at that time, and they went on the road. Not only did they play really good teams, they went on the road and did it because people wouldn't go to Tallahassee and didn't have to. So back in those days he would take their team and travel, and they had a really lot of marquis wins, and they did it in a really impressive fashion. I remember watching on TV, whether it was at Stanford, Lincoln or Columbus, a lot of really impressive victories. And then we had the pleasure -- that's the only game we lost in 1980 was in Tallahassee. Tremendous environment. They were a tremendously well-coached football team. We had better talent. I can tell you that right now. We had better talent, but they beat us that day and -- that was a night game. That was our only loss that season, so I've always had great respect and admiration, and certainly send condolences to everybody that is in the family and played with him in the program.

So I wanted to say that. And the other thing, just one other thing, I guess, in my notes here. Preseason honors, it's great. We've had a couple guys recognized. Probably could guess those guys if I paid attention. That's really nice. It's a nice compliment for the work the guys have done so far. But preseason polls and awards are kind of like polls, right? They really don't matter a lot. And we're kind of on those guys that got mentioned, and hopefully other guys can enter the fray to play their best this fall. That's what it's all about.

So we're eager to get started. Certainly eager to be in Kinnick tomorrow and honor the Kids Captains. Going to do it a little different way per request of the hospital folks, which is perfectly understandable and commonsensical. We'll still have a chance to celebrate and honor those folks and all the kids that show up, and hopefully our guys will respond to having a crowd out there. So it will be good to be back in Kinnick and in front of people. With that I'll open it up for comments.

**Q. You've been here 20 years now. What gets you out of bed in the morning? Is it the teaching part, getting teams to get better, a combination of watching the players develop?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably all of the above. I mean, what coaches like is coaching. The best part about coaching is being with your players and the staff, the people you work with, everybody in the building. I have a tremendous support staff. There are so many people involved if we're going to have a good operation. I mean, everybody -- standing here thinking about there's a book I read this past year. I'm not

reading as much as I need to but Mike Hayes wrote a book about Never Enough. And one of my favorite parts -- I was commenting to Mike about this the other day. President Kennedy asked the janitor at NASA like what his role was, and he said, I'm helping try to put somebody on the moon. And I think about Doug, who's our lead custodian, we have people in there that are really committed to taking care of our building. I just throw that out. That's the kind of teamwork that we have over there. There are a lot of people behind the scenes helping our guys get ready. And then the hard work is for the players, the real hard work. But there's so many people involved, and that's the fun of it all. It's good to have a break, and it's also good to be back at it a little bit. I just gotta figure out a way not to have to take the garbage out. I'll have it all figured out here. But haven't figured that one out yet.

**Q. Where does offensive line sit now with Kyler out? Is Justin Britt healthy? What's kind of your staffing situation?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. So Justin jumped right in and played the right guard position. You never want injuries to happen, but that is a good reminder for all of us. I tell our team all the time this could happen anytime. It could be a Friday before a game. You just never know. So people have to be ready. And Justin Britt has jumped in there. But both of our lines right now, we have some really good players up front on both sides, but we also have a bunch of guys that haven't played much. Justin would be in that category. He's missed a lot of time -- I say a lot of time -- significant time during the course of his career with injuries. So it's tough to get better when you're not out working, but the good news right now is he's gotten a lot of quality work in these seven or eight days that we've practiced, and every snap is so valuable for him. And that bleeds in to the other guys that haven't played. I think Justin is a guy, like Nick DeJong -- like the guys that are rotating at tackle. We have a rotation going, (Jack) Plumb, Mason (Richman) is in that rotation, DeJong and (Connor) Colby. Those guys are all young guys that haven't played much, and every snap is important. But we're I don't want to use the word unsettled, but really don't have any idea. I couldn't tell you who's going to be starting when we get the season going here. Have a better idea when we have our press conference before the game who's going to be at least the two deep, but right now it's wide open for everybody to compete. It's pretty much the same on the defensive line. I expect Zach VanValkenburg, I expect (Tyler) Linderbaum to be in there playing, but after that it's wide open.

**Q. Coach, who is your No. 1 field goal kicker coming into the season?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. So it's an interesting situation. We're probably about as veteran as we've been at the specialist position. Usually we have some question marks there. And I know Caleb (Shudak) wasn't our starter, but we feel like he was. And it literally -- and I've been saying this for two years. It literally was almost flipping a coin between he and Keith Duncan. They've practiced -- especially last year. They were on each other's tails. They were really close. There are some things Caleb did a little better maybe than Keith. He's been here, I think, six years. I think this is his sixth year. I've lost track. He's been here a long time. But he really performs well in practice. Did a nice job on kickoffs. I have total confidence he'll play like a veteran player for us, so we really feel like he is a returning starter. Tory (Taylor) obviously is. Charlie (Jones) at the return position. And we're going to start working on kickoff returns probably next week, but guys are fielding them in practice, and we think we have guys -- we're losing a really good guy in Ihmir (Smith-Marsette), but we feel like we have a bunch of guys that are going to have a chance to emerge. That is one position on our team where we feel like we've got a pretty solid situation.

**Q. The NCAA practice guidelines changed back in May. How have you adapted with that scheduling in scheduling your practices this fall camp?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, we're ahead of the NFL. I talked to my son yesterday, and I think they had had four padded practices and played last night, which to me seems ludicrous, but what do I know? That's probably why I'm in college instead of the NFL. But it hasn't dramatically changed anything we're doing. If I could make one suggestion -- I'm not making a complaint; I'm making a suggestion, taking a little more positive approach to this whole situation. I think the next step -- and the SEC was on this this spring -- just give us a little bit more time to practice. If we truly care about players' well-being and safety and recovery and all that kind of thing, which I think we've seen a lot of improvements the last 15 years that way, that's the next step I think they could take. You know, I have the luxury of coaching at a Big Ten university where we have a little bit more flexibility in our budget than we did when I was at the University of Maine. And to me I see no downside, because if you're coaching at Maine you may not get those couple three extra days because your budget won't allow you to, but I think here it would be a really good thing for our players. I think we'd have better quality practices. And one thing about camp, you want to push the guys a little bit. You want to have them tired and a little bit fatigued. That's part of camp. That's part of preseason. But you also, I think, want to make sure you really have quality and you want to give them good recovery time. I can tell you right now there's no way we can -- I think we're down to 25 or 24 practices, whatever it is. We're not going to hit the max. We can't in my mind and do it well. So we'll give up one practice, and that's the way it is. You want to keep your team well, too and be able to do the things you have to do. That would be my one suggestion for the NCAA to consider. Just think about it. Six years later we'll get it done.

I'm going to take credit for something. Okay. I've done two things in 23 years, okay, that actually are in the books now. We actually have they'll review kickoffs, onside kickoffs after we've gotten the short end of two of those, and I've got murdered, obviously, because, what are they doing? We got screwed on an illegal play. But at least now they can review those. So that's one thing. And I don't know if you guys noticed. This year they slipped the spider pads. They call them spider or whatever. We call them shells. They slipped that in very discreetly. Anybody notice that? So I've been advocating for that for I don't know how many years. Probably more than six. So maybe -- how old am I right now? 66. If I'm 75 we'll probably get those extra days. Anyway, I'm on a tangent. I'm sorry. Okay.

**Q. You lose some key wide receivers a year ago. Tyrone Tracy is obviously the No. 1, but behind that who are you looking at as stepping up into some of those key roles?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, that's a great question. Mentioned both lines. So those are obvious things to talk about, and the other area right now when you have two guys like Ihmir (Smith-Marsette) and Branden (Smith) go to the NFL, those are two big holes. Luck, whatever it is, but two of the guys that came in January, you know, the younger guys, both Keagan (Johnson) and Arland (Bruce), have really done a nice job. Keagan got a little boo-boo yesterday, so I don't think he'll work tomorrow. We'll see. We're not ruling him out yet. But he couldn't go today, but he's done a really nice job, did a nice job in the spring, and Arland has done the same thing. And when I say nice job, they're doing a nice job on the field, but also they've really been impressive in regard to the way they kind of handle everything. Everybody comes in differently. Everybody has a different way to react into the loads of taking 14, 15 hours to the workouts, the practice, all those things that you do in the spring and then the summer. And both of them have so far just kind of taken it in stride. Really haven't seen them have a meltdown or anything like that yet. That part's been pretty impressive. So they're definitely in the picture. We consider Nico Ragaini to be a starter. Charlie Jones was a really good returner last year. He's made strides as a receiver and done a lot of good things. Couple of young guys out of the exposition, Desmond Hutson and Jackson Ritter, are both making strides and Brody Brecht is not with us. He had a thumb injury today. So you're going to see him probably wrapped up at media day. He'll be out for a while, and he's a little behind

because he's been really focused on his baseball, and rightfully so. So I think we have a healthy group. Jack Johnson is another guy that's caught our eye, young walk-on guy from Des Moines. He's done a really nice job. We're just going to let it play out and see what happens. We're not there yet, but I think we're going in the right direction with that group.

**Q. What would it mean for this team to have a healthy guy in Ivory Kelly-Martin?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's going to help a lot. He's really looked good in practice. First of all, he's a veteran player. He really knows how to play. And just like I kind of mentioned about those younger guys, Ivory is a veteran player. He clearly knows how to operate and just how to do things. He's been a really good leader on our football team. He does it in a very quiet way, but he's a really good with our entire football room. He's also really good in that room, because it's a fairly young group. Tyler has played a lot, but he's still a younger guy, third-year guy. So that gives us a good strong, I think, one-two punch. He's come off the injury. We were very cautious with him through the spring and summer, but he seems to be at full speed right now and really doing well. So we'll be smart about getting him to the season. And both he and Tyler have played a lot of football like we've done with other backs that have been tackled in games. They're not going to get tackled much in practice. I don't see any need for that. But we'll get him ready.

**Q. Is there any concern with the vaccination rate?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Apparently it was a big talking point out there to the public, which I guess it is everywhere. That's the sad part about all this stuff. It's become -- good news is I'm back to work, so I don't have to listen to any of those stations. It's such a polarized. Everything is so polarizing right now in what we're doing. And I have heard one -- and I'm sure there's way more than this. I've heard really one compelling reason why one person has chosen not to. I fully get it, and I understand. So I'm not a big one for judging other people. But where it's different for us is we're all involved in a team activity. And it's kind of two-fold as I look at it. Whether you're a coach or a player, you only get limited opportunities as a coach and you only get limited opportunities as a player. Players' windows are a lot smaller. So that's pretty precious time, and to give it up for -- you know, if you sprain your ankle, sorry, nobody can do anything about that. But for something that might be avoidable, that's a deal. And let me preface that, too, by saying that I realize like nothing is foolproof as far as vaccinations, but I do know, at least at this point, if you're vaccinated, you're free from contract trace, which is huge, and that's where that was a thing we really had to deal with last year. So I think there's a lot of advantage to that. And, you know, so that's the deal. And then the second component of that is it not only impacts you, but it impacts the whole team, just like anything that any of us do involved with the program. And there is a responsibility being part of a team or part of an organization. I'm not putting that the vaccinations quite in that category, because, again, there might be compelling reasons. But when you're part of the team, whatever you do or whatever happens to you impacts everybody else. That's a reality. So just I've asked all of our guys to consider that a little bit and keep it in mind as they make decisions.

**Q. Joe Evans comes as a walk-on with no promises. What did he do to in your eyes earn that scholarship, first of all; and, secondly, how does it make you feel as a head coach to tell a young man he's on scholarship?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's funny. I listened to the radio coming home -- or going home and come to go work, and that was on the radio this morning. They were talking about the DYU NIL deal. And I actually got to thinking about that. People are doing creative videos and all that kind of stuff. I normally have just told

guys independently. I remember telling a couple, three guys in the locker room over at Lincoln two years ago. Kyler Schott was in that group, I believe, last spring -- or last fall, excuse me, three more guys, I think. And that was one of the -- I don't want to call it a complaint but a suggestion from our -- yeah, a suggestion, right, like the NCAA. It was a suggestion from our guys, why don't you announce it to everybody, the whole team. So Nick DeJong was the most recent guy. Joe was last December, I guess. But, yeah, we don't do any creative videos or any of that stuff. Nobody jumps out of a cake and hands a scholarship paper to guys. But it's a great feeling. It's a really great feeling, mainly because you're just saying thanks to somebody who's really demonstrated taking the initiative and really doing a great job. And Joe has just been going hard ever since he got here. He just has such a high motor. And then the question was is he going to be big enough to do some things and all that. But I remember out here, I'm thinking of the Minnesota game in '19 he helped give us a little juice out there. And he's just one of those guys. He just goes hard. Everything he does is first class. So he just continues to keep getting better and better. It's fun to watch those guys develop and grow.

**Q. On defense you've turned a lot of experience players on the back end. How is good is Xavier Williams to fitting into that puzzle?**

KIRK FERENTZ: He's still feeling his way. He's not a first-year guy because he's way older and a lot more experienced, but he basically missed everything in the spring, unfortunately. And it just takes time to get used to the terminology, all the techniques, those types of things. But he's an unbelievable young guy, really impressive guy. And he's learning every day. He's one of the guys I'm anxious to see where he's at here in 12 days, see if he can get into the next little bit. We do have a little depth I was going to say issue, but it's a good thing right now. We've got some depth in the back end. That's probably our most veteran position if you look at all four positions together, but hopefully he's going to help make us stronger. He's a great young guy.

**Q. You mentioned the first two weeks you're playing two very good teams. What kind of pressure does that put on these next couple of weeks?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. Top 15, I think. That's what somebody told me. I'll buy it. They're both really good teams. So like I said, the margin for error is always tight, and we traditionally, you know, have not always been sharp early or at least where we need to be. Last year is a good example of that. It's a good reminder for all of us that we don't have time to waste. And not every day is going to be perfect, but we need to be working hard. We need to be trying to improve and then, you know, at some point we have to figure out how the pieces of the puzzle go together. And we talk about the spring. We're not really worried about cohesion as much as just individual growth. We're kind of still in that individual growth period, but at some point we're going to have to start putting it together and making things look harmonious, and it's really going to be true this year because nobody can guarantee both of those teams are going to be playing at a top level, but I would imagine that's going to be the case. So we gotta be ready. Both of them have veteran quarterbacks to start with that that have played really well. So that's a good starting point for them. But we have to be ready.

**Q. Consistency. How big is it having a punter you can trust in and is there a point he could be considered for a Heisman?**

KIRK FERENTZ: He'd really been playing conservatively if that happens. Reggie Roby would have been a candidate in 1981. He fit just so well who we were. We had a really stout defensive team. We were more ball control on offense, and then Reggie just kept getting field position and at some point we'd

score. Hopefully we're not in that situation, but you never know. Punters are so valuable, so valuable. And part of the best thing about him, it's kind of like the wave. You know, the wave just happened, and it was pure and it was, you know, just not commercialized, all that stuff. I mean the fact that Tory never played a football game, American football game until we were in West Lafayette makes the story a lot better in my mind. Probably the biggest surprise to me was his ability to plus-50 punting. I didn't expect that. I thought maybe that might be an issue actually, but it became a strength of his. He has a great attitude. He's improved. He's in better shape now. He's been in the program for over a year, and he's got a great attitude. He's not commercialized, at least as far as I know. He's just kind of -- every day he just really appreciates the whole deal.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned Brody Brecht playing baseball this summer. I know that's something that you really encouraged. What makes you so open to having kids still playing with their high school teams in the summer as compared to getting them on camp?**

KIRK FERENTZ: There's benefit to guys coming in January, and I think the two receivers, certainly they illustrate that or they are illustrations of that. Connor Colby I mentioned earlier, and I'll throw him in that mix, too. He's in the mix of things right now. He's competing for playing time, and there's no question that's helped those guys advance a little bit. Typically when I talk to recruits -- maybe this is old fashioned, but I just tell them really the bottom line is it's about your last three years on campus. Those are going to be your best years. And if you're a fifth-year player or four-year player, Desmond King being a four-year guy, my point is whenever you play that first year, it's going to be new to you. You're going to be feeling your way around a little bit, and some guys handle that better than others. But all of us, if you're a good player you enjoy those last couple years better more because, just like high school, you know the drill. You're kind of at the top of the heap, and that's kind of fun. It's fun to play that way and be competitive. And I always use Josey Jewell as an example. Didn't seem to derail his career or growth or anything else. The thing that hurt him that year is he busted his hand. I think that was his first camp, had a broken bone in his hand. But he came in as a football player and he did just fine. I just -- I think there's -- you know, it's good to enjoy your high school experience. I know that's going, like everything else, that's kind of going by the wayside a little bit right now. But those are fun times. If you like playing athletics, that's a fun time. So why not do it? It's the last chance you're going to get. And it's hard to do two sports in college. It really is. He may have an opportunity. That's a good match is being a pitcher and a baseball like that works, I think. But if he's going to be a hitter or something like, that that's really difficult. Not saying he can't do it. But why not enjoy that? And I feel the same way about your college career. Why not maximize it and enjoy it? That's a personal choice, too.

**Q. How has the new Twitter policy gone?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think the realization a year ago -- really the thing that pushed me it was two separate requests to do it the Wednesday, last Wednesday of May. And, you know, one was a veteran guy. One was a younger guy. It just impacted me, like okay, it's everybody. It's not just this group or that group. It's young guys, old guys. So I guess I've entered this millennium a little bit. And it's like parenting. So let's open it up. We let them talk to the media. You can get in more trouble doing that than anything, right? And why don't we just shift our attention to education and do a better job that way and let our guys be responsible for what they do. They are in everything else they do. They can make a lot of bad decisions in other areas, but the biggest thing, it's just like anything else: If you act on emotion, if you react, those are bad things to do in life typically, no matter what, unless you're out there playing. That's something different. But even then it usually probably gets you in trouble if you're just overreactive or overemotional about something, it's a bad deal. So we just shifted our focus.



**Q. What kind of development have you seen from Xavier Williams?**

KIRK FERENTZ: So, yeah, he missed everything in the spring. He's able to go through the winter program, but he had an injury that really kind of -- and then he, you know, he jumped out of the gym, you know, after spring ball. So he was feeling a little bit better. But the biggest thing for him right now is just getting a feel of how we play and how we do things. Everybody does things differently. So it's like any new player to our team, VanValkenburg did the same thing. Go right down the list, anybody that's joined the team, Heflin last year. You know, there's a learning curve that you have to go through. And you can do so much in the summertime, but really, it's being out there, practicing and getting in the system and getting the chance. And we'll have plenty of work between now and the first game where he hopefully makes some impact.

**Q. How big of a season is Tyler Goodson poised for? What does he do for your offense?**

KIRK FERENTZ: The first thing I'll just start out by saying if you could watch practice, which you can't because I'm not going to let you. You can watch tomorrow. But we'll watch how much he does. The first thing I appreciate about him is just his energy and the way he practices, and that's something with every player. And we have a lot of guys like this that are good players. You know, he's a good player. He's already shown that and demonstrated that, but he practices really well. He's got a good energy, good effort. Just everything he does is quality. So that sets such a good example and on top of it makes him a better player. He's more experienced now. He's a little bigger, a little stronger, probably in a little better condition than he would have been as a young guy. I don't know how well he can do this year, but he's certainly one of the guys we're counting on. We've got Ivory right there with him. And I'll throw this in there, too. The two younger guys have both done a nice job. Gavin (Williams) has done a good job, and Leshon (Williams) is one of the guys. We're early into it right now, but he caught our eye in the spring. He's better in pads than he is in shorts, quite frankly, which the game gets played in pads. That's a good thing for him. He's off to a good start this camp thus far. So that's a pretty -- you know, the group's been really good, but Tyler is right at the front of it and done a really nice job.

**Q. How about the winning streak he did. Does that in any way boost expectations or morale or do you see that carry over at all as you head into the season?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah. I hope it does, but, you know, we're a different team right now and we have to find our niche. I think the bigger picture, you know, we've pretty much had pretty good success on the field. And I'd say wins and losses. We haven't really just been out of games very much in the last five, six years. So hopefully the guys that have been in the program understand that there's a level we have to be at each and every week if we're going to compete, not that we've won every game, but we've been in a lot of close games. And first of all, if we're doing it right, we'll be in more close games. And, secondly, the whole key is getting it over the hill enough to win and finding some way, whether it's offensively, defensively or on special teams. The guys, we've got a lot of illustrations to point to, and that part's healthy, but the flip side is every week is a new week and every team is a new team. But every week is going to be a new week. And even that first week, I kind of know what Indiana's got and kind of know what we got, but I really don't know what they got. There's a lot of things that could happen up there this month and a lot of things that could happen here, too. You just gotta keep your focus on what it is you're doing, and that's all we can worry about and control. But, yeah, your past is always a good teaching point. Whether you did well or poorly, that's something we can draw upon and learn from hopefully.

**Q. Did you watch the Field of Dreams game last night?**

KIRK FERENTZ: No, but I saw some highlights when I got home, and looked like a lot of balls got hit in the cornfield. Nice guy. I saw that -- in fact, yeah, I think it was on the news or it was on ESPN highlights or whatever. It was on the news. I turned the TV on when I got home. And it was pretty cool. I mean, look, how cool is that. That's really neat. I hope everybody liked it. Wish I could have gone, but kind of tied up in August. It's tough. But, yeah, that's cool. I think it's really cool. Okay. Thank you.

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