

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Kirk Ferentz

Press Conference



KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon, everybody. Appreciate you being here. Just looking back quickly, as I said Saturday, we are really happy to get the win. We certainly got stressed and put in some pressure situations by Colorado State.

Just overall pleased with the response of our team, especially in the second half. I thought they did some good things and were able to do some good things, especially in the third quarter. That was good to see.

You go through the tape, and it shows some things. There's an awful lot of details that we need to keep working on. I don't think anything specific other than it's just a cumulative effect. It's really what the slide edge concept is all about. It's trying to build and see if you can't at some point get things to go the way you want them to go.

Overall, good weekend. One side note, just happy for Jack Campbell. He played an excellent game. Happy to see him get recognized by the Big Ten, certainly worthy of that. He's playing at a real high level, so happy about that.

As we transition out for the Maryland game, our captains are Tyler Linderbaum, Matt Hankins, Jack Koerner and then Jack Campbell will be the fourth captain. Those four guys will go out for the toss.

Certainly a tough challenge on a lot of levels. First of all, it's a short week. We're playing a night game, being on the road, playing a Big Ten opponent. That's the biggest factor is that we're playing a good Big Ten football team no matter where it is, but certainly with the other conditions prescribed, it makes it a big challenge for us now.

Coach Locksley has been there now, third year in the program. They've got a good staff. They've clearly recruited with a vision, recruit a lot of good athletes. They've got good size, good speed, and their schemes are really what they're looking for and what they want. I think 37-plus points a game right now, giving up 14. So clearly, they're in good shape there and doing a good job on special teams.

As we look at it, it's going to be a big challenge. I think first and foremost, you start with the quarterback. He's a really good football player. If you think about it a little bit, I remember I don't know where I was that they played a Friday night game. I think his first game to open the season a year ago, and it wasn't a good outing for them or the quarterback necessarily.

Just look at over the last year and a half, how that thing has just changed and he's playing at a real high level right now, as is their team. So tough start to the season a year ago, and the transformation they've gone through is really, really impressive.

Again, short week for us. We started cranking pretty hard on Sunday, I'm sure just like they did. Things get squeezed down. Our off day will be on Saturday. We're trying to get a lot done right now before we have to travel on Thursday and then wait around for the game.

All that being said, we know we have a big challenge and hopefully do a good job.

Last but not least, our kid captain is a nine-year-old from Des Moines, Braelynn Krisinger will be our kid captain. Our best to her certainly. Throw it out for questions.

Q. What is the biggest challenge with a condensed week? Obviously, some experience with Nebraska, but that's a new class situation.

KIRK FERENTZ: You try to steal notes from that, but the biggest thing is you still have the same amount of work you would normally do, just less time to get there. It's not quite as bad as playing on a Sunday in the NFL and turning around and playing Thursday. There are a lot of parallels.

I think you have to try to figure out quickly what it is you want to try to do and your plan is fairly concise because the biggest thing, it's like any week. You've got to make sure you can get the information across to your players where they have the chance to execute it.

The other thing is you want to get as much work as you can get done, but you don't want to use up the same amount of energy on a game week because there's not that recovery time from Wednesday on that we typically

enjoy.

Q. When you look at the running game right now, it seems they're either overwhelmed with numbers or sometimes one person is not making their block. Is that just due to inexperience right now? And in what ways can they grow and become a better fit?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's offense in general. It's usually a group thing. Just right away, one thing I think of is one of the disappointing plays. There were several on Saturday. Looked like we had a little momentum, then we tried running around and the ball ends up going backwards, I think 15 yards or whatever it was. We lose yards off our run total.

The bigger issue there is that's a play we've executed without issue in practice and we didn't do it on Saturday. That's the only day that counts. So just a good illustration, I think part of that is concentration. That ticks into your run totals.

Bigger issue there is it kills momentum. We had a little momentum at that point, just to the big play. Now we go back, however many yards it was, kind of takes the air out of the balloon a little bit. Luckily, Caleb came through with a good field goal attempt at that point.

Those are the bigger concerns. The little, if you run it up in there for one yard or something like that, it doesn't kill you, but those kinds of plays really kill drives. It's just all part of execution. A lot of it's concentration. A lot of it is just a little more experience and interaction with whatever situation might present itself.

Q. Is Kyler Schott in line for some more reps? How about Justin Britt? Would that help reinforce things this week?

KIRK FERENTZ: Justin's had a little more practice. I'll start with him, so that's encouraging. And looks fine. I think Kyler's gaining ground, so with every week, we expect to see him play more and more. That will help us. Two guys that are a little bit older, certainly, but Kyler especially is experienced.

Q. Is that something you see helping the run game? A lot of young guys out there still.

KIRK FERENTZ: It should help us, but it's not the total answer. We just have to keep getting better. That's the biggest thing. Just keep working at it. As I said Saturday, I think we've got to provide better direction maybe, a little better scheme, and execute better. It's a combination of both things to try to figure out what we can do well.

Q. Obviously you guys were trailing in the second half for the first time last week. I'm sure you would rather lead over Ole Miss the whole time. Tyler Linderbaum said he thinks it was good for those guys to face adversity and talking about the way you guys responded. Do you think it was good to have adversity particularly in nonconference play?

KIRK FERENTZ: There's no downside to it as long as it comes out the right way, which it did. It was a happy ending. But that's part of football. It's really surprising to go four games without that or go to your fourth game before that happens. We're going to go through more of it this year. You play a schedule, anybody that's in conference football, you move into conference football, that's part of the deal.

So we're going to have tough situations. We'll have them on Friday, I'm sure of that. It's going to be a tough environment. Who knows how a game's going to go. You never know that going into it.

So it's good training, and I think the biggest thing is we stayed composed and the guys just kept playing and made some big plays defensively, special teams, and then were able to do what we should do offensively once we got those opportunities.

Q. When you look again kind of offensively, you mentioned the reverse that went backwards and there was probably at least ten yards he could have run positively had he gotten the ball. Then the week before where you have a receiver fall down after catching a tunnel screen on it, that catch whenever it was. You have all these little plays that just -- is it frustrating, or does it show everybody, look, we're not that far away, that things could really move.

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably some of both really. It is frustrating because those are the little things that keep you from really getting into a rhythm and gaining confidence. Sometimes there's a couple of run plays I'm thinking of in particular, like 47 and 52 on our sheet, where we're this close just popping one up the middle.

Close doesn't count, as we know. So there are little things in there, if we're just a little better on an angle or a little bit more delay here as you're coming through on a block, that type of thing, all of a sudden, now the back is up into the secondary, and a guy like Tyler might be able to do something like that.

Those are the little things I think all of us kind of take with us, and we try to get -- you know, make those illustrations

on Sunday to our players. Then the other trick is to go out there and execute those things a little bit better as you move forward. That's the difference between winning and losing a lot of times, it really is.

I just pointed out that one play because that's a simple execution we've done. It wasn't anything above and beyond. You've got to make the routine stuff. You've got to do the makables. You've got to do them well and do them consistently. It starts there.

Q. There's obviously a lot more deep throws. Do you see that happening in Maryland, Penn State, kind of going forward in Big Ten play?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's just part of what you do hopefully. Typically the percentage goes down the further you throw it down the field. You know, it's good football. We had a couple guys beat deep, so good that we could execute those.

To that point, last week was a better week for us completing deep balls in practice whereas a couple weeks prior to that, I wasn't so sure how many of those we were making. In fact, I'm pretty sure how many we weren't making.

That's a concern because, if you're not doing it in practice, it's not going to happen in the game. You've got to hit it in rhythm out there on the field, the practice field first.

Q. Is there a point where you want to settle on best five for the offensive line, and have you reached that point?

KIRK FERENTZ: No. We certainly haven't done that. If that happens, great. If it doesn't happen, that's okay too. We'll play it however it plays out. I would assume, once Kyler gets himself in game shape, he'll be playing more because we've already seen him play and we know he can play pretty well.

But everybody else is doing some good things too. It's just kind of how it pans out. I'm not smart enough to know where we're going to be in three weeks, but I think it's going to be a pretty dynamic process for a while, and we'll take it week by week and see where we are on the bye week.

Q. You try to almost accelerate a good young offensive lineman in there as a rotational guy, I think back to Austin White or Brandon Scherff and a few others at guard and then kind of moved on afterwards. Is that the pace you've got for Connor Colby as a true freshman being able to do that?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's definitely in the mix, mainly because when he was starting in the spring, he didn't look like he was overwhelmed. Not because he looked like he knew what he was doing 100 percent and still doesn't, but he looked like he belongs in the pack, if you will, and he's done a lot of good things.

He's also struggled some out there, which is totally predictable in practice and also on the game field. He had a couple plays the other day that I thought he was capable of making, but it just happened a little faster than maybe he thought. That's part of inexperience and youth. The same thing as the last discussion. We'll just kind of see how it all plays out.

I think he's definitely in that group of six, seven, eight guys and see how it all pans out.

Q. I should have done my homework, but did you ever go to Maryland? I know you went in '14, but like when you were at Maine and Pitt or anything like that.

KIRK FERENTZ: We played Maryland at Pitt, and one of the Tices was the quarterback, big tall guy. I can't remember if they were both on the team. I remember they're from Long Island. I think quarterback, tight end. They had a good team. Jerry Claiborne was the head coach.

Maine, we went to Rutgers, not Maryland, and we went to Hawaii. I think I've only been there once. I think '14 was the only time.

Q. I'm just trying to get a sense. Does this feel like a weird type of game for you?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's still different, yeah. It definitely feels -- they're not new to the Big Ten per se, but they're new to us because we've only been there once. It is different. It really is different, just like traveling to Rutgers was different. That will take a while. I don't know when our next trip out there is. It may take a long while. We'll see. Right now we're worried about three days from now, or four days, whatever it is.

Q. That game in '14, you were probably in a different place than you are now. Is there any value going back to that game and getting take-aways from it and applying it this week?

KIRK FERENTZ: Interestingly enough, a couple of coaches were there during that time, but so much has changed, I think philosophically, and what they're doing -- I'm pretty sure I'm correct in saying Coach Stewart was the

defensive coordinator then too, but totally different scheme. A lot has happened to him in his life and in our lives.

I think the program -- we think -- I don't want to say the turning point was '15, but I think things are a little bit different philosophically. So, yeah, there's really no use going back to that thing.

Q. Tory Taylor said that his Punting is Winning shirt benefits Count the Kicks, which is obviously a cause that is close to your heart. He said that's really a dedication to you and his relationship that he's formed with you. I was wondering how like, when you heard that he was going to sell these shirts for that cause, what that meant to you.

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, Tory is one of the one of the neatest people to come through the program. He's just so different because he is -- naive is not the right word, but it's such a fresh approach to everything because he is brand new to everything about college football. So that's been pretty fun to watch that.

As you might imagine, I mean, I didn't find out about it because it was on social media, right? Somebody showed it to me.

Somebody I'm married to showed me what he's doing, so that's pretty cool. Yeah, I remember the first time Mary met with the folks from Count the Kicks, I mean, she met with them. Hey, I'll only be gone for an hour. It was at Des Moines. I was at my daughter's house. She got back like four hours later. Typically that's how we do things. But I got to watch the Celtics. That's actually the first pro basketball game I watched in quite a while, and it was good. So we had a good day.

But they're great people, and they've done really great work. It's really worth it, should be touted. It's not just in Iowa. It's a national initiative and really, really cool.

So for Tory to do that, that's really a nice gesture on his part. It's a shame he doesn't get to benefit from the NIL stuff, but that's the way he's wired. He's really an exceptional person.

Q. Looking at Spencer 12 starts in now, you saw him last game really throwing the ball confidently down the field. What has it been like, or how would you assess his ability to gain trust over the coaches the last few years that it culminates in him being able to throw the ball down the field and develop the playbook a little bit more?

KIRK FERENTZ: We have felt really good about him and

continue to feel really good about him. There's no issue there. We've had deep throws in our playbook. It's just Saturday they were there. It's great to see him be aggressive with the ball and do that.

There's only one play that really stands out and I think all of us wish we had back. There were several things, not a lot, several things wrong with that play, but one was to just throw the ball where nobody would get it, and it would have been a better ending there.

That's part of the process. He'll be learning as long as he's playing, just like all of us are. We're all learning too. We're very thrilled he's our quarterback. He's doing a good job, and Alex is doing a nice job too in the backup role.

Q. When you first started running cash as the primary defense, that was against Minnesota a couple years ago, and they had two receivers, Tyler Johnson and Rashod Bateman, who are both in the league now. These two guys are somewhat like that, I guess in Jarrett and Demus. How insurmountable is that defense going to be? What kind of strides have you made over three years in orchestrating that defense against good receivers?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's really the way the world's going right now in college football. Last week was an exception to the rule. So Jestin got a lot of work out there. Typically it's Wisconsin, one game a year that we know is on our schedule every year where it's the same thing.

Pretty much everybody's kind of transitioned now where it's three or four wides out there, so it just kind of makes it a little better matchup for us. Not that we don't use our normal 40 defense too. Dane's really allowed us to do a good job with it. He's been really good in that position. So we have confidence with him.

As we look at this week's opponent, that's what we're looking at. They're a team that likes to throw the football. They've got a quarterback who throws it well and really good receivers, a whole group of guys. They've all got single digits. They've got good size. They've got good size besides good athleticism. It's a tough matchup for all of us on the back end.

Q. To Scott's question, when you go four-two-five, it usually pulls Jestin off the field, but it seems like he's playing so well, you wouldn't want to do that. How do you deal with that?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's the tug. That goes back to the 2000 discussion with Norm (Parker) and Northwestern. I was convinced we would go nickel, and the next morning

he said he didn't want to take LeVar off the field. In his mind, it was a matter of personnel. How do you justify taking a guy off the field and playing another?

That's one of the dilemmas in football you go through sometimes. Do you go scheme, or do you go personnel? There's some give or take there. In this case, we just feel like Jestin's really moved on from a year ago. He's really elevated. So it's a little tougher discussion that way. He does a good job in pass coverage too. The other good news is he can play those inside positions.

We'd probably be more apt to put him where Seth plays and move Seth to Jack's spot, if we're going to take Jack out. It's hard to take all three of those guys off. They're really playing well right now, and that's a good thing for us.

Q. A couple weeks ago you were talking about you know the game is coming where you have to score 40. Given the team's offensive stats in the first four games, if that game were to be this Friday night, how confident are you in your offense to do that?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, we never know when it's going to come. I think you guys know me well enough, I hope it never comes because I hate those games. But it's part of football too. We'll just play it by ear.

We'll figure it out. Actually, I was having that thought today. I don't know what made me -- my mind was wandering on the field. We've done some things in practice at times where it looked pretty good to our defense. Maybe it was during the two-minute drill we did this morning.

You know, you do what you got to do, and that's part of football. We don't want to play that way all the time certainly, but if we have to, we'll do our best. I've got confidence in our guys. I think we're certainly capable. It's not going to be our approach coming out of the chute, that's for sure.

Q. Speaking of Jack Campbell, he was just named National Player of the Week this week.

KIRK FERENTZ: How do you know that? What time is it? Is it 2:00?

Q. Yeah.

KIRK FERENTZ: Put the phones away, all right? (Laughter).

I intentionally didn't say it because the memo I got said 2:00. I'm trying to be obedient and mindful and all that

stuff. I don't want to get in trouble.

Q. I voted for him too.

KIRK FERENTZ: Thank you. I appreciate that. I would have if I had a vote.

Q. Along those lines, what does he do so well at middle linebacker where that's the type of frame usually you're lining him up on the edge but he's able to play everywhere, it seems?

KIRK FERENTZ: If it were up to me, he'd be a defensive end or a center probably. I got nixed on both those, vetoed badly. He's just a good football player, and he is an unusual -- he's got unusual size for a linebacker. He just -- like most good players at most positions, like they just have a mindset that allows them to really go. He does things just at one tempo basically all the time.

At least he can't foul out in football, that's one good thing. So some of the issues he had in basketball don't carry over to our sport. He's really focused. He's very coachable. Boy, he goes hard. He's got good -- you know, something that's God given, but he's worked really hard to develop what he has. It's a credit to him. He'll keep getting better because he's got a great attitude.

Q. You alluded to the basketball practice you and Reese went to after Saturday's game on campus. In specific, what are your memories of that? It's, from what I understand, quite the memorable practice.

KIRK FERENTZ: To the point of Leah's article, I don't pretend to be an expert in basketball or any other sport. Baseball, I know a little bit about, but not compared to what these guys talk. I hear people talk a lot about baseball, and I'm like whoa.

You can get a feel when you're at a practice, if the team's into it. And the coaches were highly organized. It really just flowed. It was really just impressive that way. There wasn't any wasted time. They're all doing things, and they're doing things that most of it pertained to fundamentals. So that part was impressive for me.

It's like -- I don't know if escape is the right word, but it's fun to watch other people work and watch them do things that kind of pertain to what we do. So I enjoyed that. And it was a great group of guys on the team too. That was evident. It panned out to be true. That was the year I think they won their state championship.

But you could just feel it in the gym. There was a real good vibe in there and a real positive vibe, but a lot of good work

was going on.

Q. He actually was quite a good basketball player.

KIRK FERENTZ: I thought so. He improved a lot in basketball because he was a foul waiting to happen early. You know what I mean? He was. He became pretty good, I thought.

Q. Going back to Spencer and the plays you referenced early where he should have threw the ball away, is that the next progression in his game, in your mind, not forcing the ball, or maybe another aspect?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm not sure people always appreciate how hard a job it is to be the quarterback. It's interesting. This game you have two quarterbacks that have one interception on their resumes right now four games into it, and that's impressive because they both have so much -- there's so many decisions you have to make, and you want to do well and you want your team to move.

Yeah, sometimes the best thing to do is throw it away, or sometimes you have to eat the ball. That's regrettable. You don't want to do that. So those are hard things. They're just really hard things to get across.

It's easy -- I think I may have mentioned this a week ago Tuesday, two Tuesdays ago, driving home and listening to Brett Favre and Sean Payton talking about it, about just sort of throw it away, and Payton made the comment like it's easier said than done. It's not always that easy. I don't know anything about quarterbacks, but I figured those two guys both knew a lot more than I know.

To hear them say that just kind of reinforces that people don't always appreciate how hard it is to be a quarterback, if you've got a system. You know, we've got a system where our guy makes a lot of decisions. Same thing with the quarterback we're facing this week. He's the same kind of guy.

Q. With Tagovailoa, how much of an added challenge is it that, when he wants to, he can make plays with his feet too?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's a huge challenge. We've faced them all four games, although the first quarterback was coming off an injury and we weren't quite as worried.

The other guys have been guys who were effective pulling the ball down and going. This guy, he'll get outside the pocket. So if we let him outside, it's a little dangerous. He'll do that with ease. It's amazing how easy he gets out there.

But like a good quarterback, he's looking down the field when he gets out there. He will run it, but he's trying to make a play, and that's really scary. Now they force to you stay back in coverage. When he's broke in contain, that's a dilemma for any defensive player.

Q. Is their offense similar then maybe to an Indiana or totally different than anything you've seen so far?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yes, kind of similar. They run the ball. He is the center of it, and they've got a big physical offensive line. They have a stronger group of receivers. The receiver from Indiana is as good as you're going to see. It's a different challenge every time you go. They have good size.

The quarterback is probably the smallest guy, but everybody else on the offense are big athletic guys.

Q. Maryland clearly is better. Rutgers is better. Penn State, Michigan State, Michigan have all bounced back so far. Is it tight in this conference, and if so, is it just rising in the East?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know. I can't say. It's kind of like everything in college football, just four games into it, we know what we know four games into it. There's so much more that's going to unfold here, especially in the next month.

To me, it's always been competitive. We'll know more about who's what and what's what when we get into November. Right now, everything looks tough to me. It's kind of how I look at it, and certainly this week that's what it looks like.

Q. From a defensive perspective and mindset, is there a difference in the scheme and adjustments when you go to a game and everyone's flying around and there are two pick sixes versus a game like last Saturday where the two teams combined for 80 rushes for like 2 1/2 yards?

KIRK FERENTZ: Games have different feels. There's no question about that. You try to steer a game towards the way you want it to feel, but it doesn't always feel that way. You play it as it pans out. That's something that's really hard to gauge going in. You think you know and all that kind of stuff, but you just never know how it's going to happen or how it's going to go. That's why you have to have flexibility in your system to play it out however it may unfold because you just never know.

You never know what's going to happen in a game either.

Sometimes things happen that are inexplicable, but you still have to deal with it. You have to push your way forward and find a way to adjust.

Q. Offensively, Iowa is last in the Big Ten in total offense, but your defense has kind of been the key to success these past four games. How long do you think you can ride out that strategy, and you're hoping to, I guess, reverse that production on offense? How are you going to go about it?

KIRK FERENTZ: As you might imagine, our team goal is not to be last in the league, offensively, that's for sure. To be 4-0 right now is as good as you can do, so we're happy about that. We're doing a lot of good things.

There are things on defense we can get better, too. I mentioned third down, I think the other day, or least I'll mention it right now. So there are things we can do better there. It's every week we're thinking what can we do to move forward? We'll worry about the stats and all that stuff when the season's over. What do we have to do to win this week? But a bigger eye on improvement. That's what our eyes are on.

It's the race we're all running. How good can we become in a certain segment or area? Try to analyze what's not working, what can we do to make it better, and just try to make it week by week.

Q. What's Nico Ragaini like as a player and a person?

KIRK FERENTZ: As a player, he's underrated. He's a really good football player. He's really dependable, and has a knack that way. And it stems from he's a competitive person. Really competitive.

What I didn't know is his dad played baseball for UConn. I did know that. I didn't know he played for my freshman football coach Andy Baylock, a little connection there. So there might be a little genetic competitiveness because I know Andy is very effusive about his dad as a player, just nothing but great things. Nico is all football player.

Q. Quite different than going to Ames, so a different kind of road trip, but what did you learn from your team with what happened with Iowa State that you can maybe take into Maryland and beyond?

KIRK FERENTZ: One interesting thing, to your point, we have two plane trips this year. First seven games, we're out of the state once. That's something I did notice. So this is a little bit unique there.

That's what I told our players this morning. We expect a

hostile environment. Sounds like it's going to be a sellout, a blackout. I imagine the environment we were in a couple weeks ago is as tough as it's going to get, we expect this to be the same way.

The trick is to somehow block that out and concentrate on the task. So that's what we have to do. It's not like we're taking a bus or a stage coach. I mean, that's different. Flying to Hawaii with four stops to get there. That's an away trip. It's not like this is stressful to fly or whatever it is, an hour and 45. Shame on us if we complain about that.

Q. Does playing at Maryland do anything for you in terms of recruiting?

KIRK FERENTZ: It doesn't hurt, I guess. We don't make a living necessarily on the East Coast. It's not in our thoughts right now.

Q. Obviously, this isn't your first Friday game. Are you starting to like these, or do you prefer the Saturday?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm okay. This makes the October deadline, so I'll say I'm okay with October on. I certainly wouldn't like it early season unless it was the first game then you just start camp a day earlier.

There's some disadvantages to it obviously, but we're far enough into it -- but it's going to be a test, how can we handle this week? What's our maturity level that way?

Q. You had short weeks three times last year because you had two Friday games --

KIRK FERENTZ: Betsy Ross did it too, took Tuesday off. I'm joking. I said that to the players when I walked out of the room, I figure these guys have no idea who Betsy Ross is. Then they Googled it. Anyway, sorry.

(Laughter).

Q. You won all three of those games last year talking about your prep. Do you feel you have confidence. Is this something you figured out on this subject? Or you just happen to be better on those three games and should nothing to do with the short week?

KIRK FERENTZ: We played pretty well. Typically, we do. Again, it gets back to how well the team can handle the adjustments. We're all creatures of habit, especially in sports. We love our routines. Coming out of the pandemic, that's one of the great things to get back in the routine.

The facts are it shakes things up a little bit, and you have to be adaptable too, especially in sports. It's easy for me to say, okay, this is what we've done. So we'll just do this again. The players have to make that adjustment, and they've got to handle it well. They have to realize we can't work as hard physically. It's not realistic. We can't put maybe as much time in because you lose a calendar day.

So how do you budget that into all the other stuff that you've got? All the players have a lot -- like all college football players, they have a lot on their plates. It's a challenge for them to prioritize it, figure out how to make it work, and then pull it off and realize we'll all catch our breath on Saturday now this week instead of a normal off day.

Q. We talked to Jack Campbell and he's got a cut on his face. He looks like he's been in a street fight. I asked him, and he said he was in an 18 car accidents on Saturday. Is there anybody watching, making sure that -- how do you handle that, especially with a guy that's particularly physical, on a short week? Do you have to watch out for guys like that?

KIRK FERENTZ: Some players you have to pull back or pull out of practice sometimes. Those are good players. We like to recruit those guys because they help set tempo in practice. That's our job as adults is to figure out how much, how little, and if experience teaches you anything, if you're ever in doubt, do less. It's kind of the moral of the story.

That's true pretty much year round, right now. Certainly in an off week, we're not going to make a difference by going live contact. That's not going to make the difference Friday. Shame on us if we think that is.

Q. Most of your offensive linemen are pretty versatile and can play multiple spots. In the spring Cody Ince was slated for outside but then he couldn't practice, so you kind of left him inside. Has there been any more discussion about shifting him around, or is he pretty much stuck at left guard this year anyway?

KIRK FERENTZ: If we can just keep him at left guard, I'd be thrilled. At some point we've got to get things solidified and figure out what the equation is. It's twofold. I think we have enough guys at guard, and I didn't know what that would look like. None of us knew what that would look like throughout spring practice. Now we're far enough long to where, yeah, he can stay on the inside. He's also probably our third center as well.

So that's enough for him to focus on. But if we get a hole

in the wall or something like that, you've got to fix it. Hopefully, we don't get to that point. I think we've pretty much got boundaries for every guy now, and it's just a matter of getting everybody healthy and getting them the work they need and see how that all starts to move forward.

Q. Your players talked about the importance of rest this week, getting as much rest as possible. I notice that the majority of them ride mopeds to class. I was wondering if that is something that's preached from the coaching level, or if that's just a personal choice by the players.

KIRK FERENTZ: Rest is important. I ask them to be mindful. We played in two pretty warm games early off, very warm games. It took a lot out of us, and you played the other day. There's a cumulative effect. If you're not careful during the course of the season, you get worn down. Young guys think they're invincible and all that.

I think our guys for the most part are pretty good that way. At least they pay attention. What they do after that, I don't know. I think they're pretty good about that.

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