

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Tyler Barnes

Press Conference



TYLER BARNES: Appreciate everybody coming out here. Just going back to really July of '21 when we were first committing Maddux Borchering-Johnson all the way up to just a couple days ago with Terrell Washington, as years past, this has been two, three years in the making, guys coming to camps, unofficial visits, official visits, game day visits, our coaches spending countless hours on the road developing a relationship with these guys. We're excited about the 23 guys we're bringing in.

One thing I will say, we're not done yet. This is really signing day part one, if you will. We have some spots left. We have a couple spots we'll look high school-wise and then three, four, maybe five, we'll see, spots that we'll look in the portal. One thing that's -- you guys cover recruiting, year-round football, obviously the landscape is changing tremendously.

High school recruiting has sped up. There's earlier offers. There's quicker commits. The thing that's probably even more difficult with this transfer portal window, now the window is being opened up, is the transfers move even faster. Kind of what coach alluded to a little bit is we still want to try and do things the same way in terms of digging on guys. We need to find out who they are, what they're about, why they're leaving.

Some of these guys we recruit in high school, so at least we have a base, which certainly helps, and some guys we don't. You have to act quick, and there's certain red flags that may turn us off on guys, and we'll move on, but there's going to be plenty of guys out there, and I think everybody is well aware of December 5, just the pure number of guys that hit the portal and what happened there.

I'm guessing there's probably going to be somewhat of a small rush again post bowl games, too. Could be wrong on that front, but just kind of going back on history and how things played out, I think we'll see that take place.

But really, just as coach said, our goal is still going to remain the same. We're not going to live in the portal. We're going to build our team through the high school

ranks. I was watching the 247 signing day show all day today in my office, and they kept calling it the draft. This still is our draft, and for us to be sustainable, at least we believe to be sustainable, you still have got to be able to recruit high school kids and develop those guys, and whether they turn out to be first-round draft picks or just pure depth guys, at the end of the day, that's going to be important to sustain where you're at.

Certainly if we have holes, we'll address that in the portal, and I think you've kind of seen that this year, and we're actively going to keep going that route.

Similar to years before, as well, I think you've seen we have a pretty strong regional bias in our class. Seventeen of the 23 guys are within a seven-hour driving radius, and I think now, more than ever, with the transfer portal, that's extremely important. It's just getting easier and easier for guys to hop out and go back closer to home or go somewhere else that may not be regionally from where they're at, but for us we're going to continue to wrap up the state of Iowa as much as we can, and then the bordering states, we're going to treat that almost like in state, as well and then kind of stay in our hot spots.

I think you've seen we have a couple guys from Florida this year, having Ladell on staff and Abdul coming from down there, I think we're going to work out a little bit bigger presence down in the state of Florida. We pulled a running back out of Texas. We're always going to be open, but again, our core is going to be that six-, seven-hour driving radius.

With that, I'll kind of open it up to any questions you may have about the class or anybody in general.

Q. With this being signing day part 1, is there kind of a magic number that you have in mind of how many more you would like?

TYLER BARNES: If you can tell us how our roster is going to look in two weeks, I'd happily give you a hard number. No, it's pretty fluid. I think in this day and age, it's extremely fluid.

Like coach said, what's unique is this is, I think, the first year I think I personally really felt that not only were we recruiting high school kids, we're attacking the portal pretty

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hard, but we're recruiting our own roster really hard, too, and that's certain guys just to stay and not go to the portal, that's certain guys that maybe have a COVID year that we could use to come back. There's some ongoing conversations with a few guys on the team about potentially returning, so that's obviously going to affect our overall number, but it's pretty fluid for the most part.

We know there are a couple of holes that we need to fill right now on our team, and we'll work in the portal to do that, and we'll get there.

I've seen, as I was telling Chad and Scott beforehand, there's this misnomer which is a little bit scary about the transfer portal, is there's a lot of schools that announced transfers today. We did, too, with Erick and Cade, but they are free agents until they start class on campus, so even though schools announced guys today, and there are some guys that were announced at certain schools today, doesn't mean we're going to stop recruiting. It's scary for us; it's great for the kid because they lock in a spot. The school is bound to them, but they aren't bound to us, if that makes sense.

It's fluid, and we're going to continue to talk through it, and I think we'll have a better idea once we get through the bowl game on what a couple of our own guys are thinking, and that's going to kind of affect where we're going in certain spots.

Q. How difficult has it been for you guys as a recruiting staff to vet out all the players in the transfer portal that you're potentially looking at? It's so accelerated right now with everything going on.

TYLER BARNES: It is, it certainly is. Football, college football, NFL, it's a very small world. Most of the time, whether it's myself, somebody on our coaching staff, we're going to have a connection to that staff, and we're typically going to start there. We're going to call them right away and just say, what do you really think of the kid, why is he leaving, is there any baggage, would you recommend him. Then some of them, too, are guys that we recruited out of high school. That provides an extra level of comfort because we can go right back to the high school coach who typically they end up having a pretty good relationship with the kid even when he goes to college.

But that is the scary part. We had a couple of our guys transfer other places, and the schools they went to never called us, which hey, good for them, but I would be a little worried that you don't reach out just to gauge anything.

But that's not how we're going to operate. We're going to try and dig as much as possible. But it's -- in this day and

age, the transfer portal and the window being open, there's so much coverage, so when names pop up, I've got a board of just guys on my desk and I'm constantly texting coaches: This guy hit the portal, see if you know anybody we can reach out, I'll try and hit up the kid, I'll try and hit up the high school coach. It's just constantly going.

I don't know how I feel about the window per se. I actually think the window has made this worse, honestly. I kind of liked the rules last year just because it wasn't so chaotic and crazy those first few days out, but that's where we're at, and we'll adapt and adjust to it, but it is tough. It's a challenge.

I don't know if there's a perfect answer to how you're supposed to attack it this way, other than we just know we have to dig as much as possible to understand if we're getting engaged or getting married with this guy, we've got to know what we're inheriting, and is he going to be good in our locker room, is he going to be good with our players, because that's still a big part of it, too. When these guys come on campus, we still take a lot of input from our current team on, hey, what do you think; is he going to fit with us or is he not, and if they tell us he doesn't, then we'll move on.

Q. You signed a running back from Wiley, Texas. It was kind of a whirlwind if you want to call it that, gets here late Saturday night and he committed from Purdue. What do you think of Terrell?

TYLER BARNES: Well, Terrell, his whole process is actually really interesting because he was going to Purdue, and Coach Brohm takes the Louisville job, and his parents -- he's a mid-year enrollee, so he'll be here in January. His parents had scheduled a cruise as kind of a parting gift before he went to college, so he was actually on a cruise for seven days in the prime time for him to go visit schools.

We had talked back and forth, like I initially said, hey, Ladell, you just need to go down and see him and family Saturday night when they get back from the cruise. It's just going to be really tough for them to get up here and turn around that quick. We ultimately settled on bringing him in, and this poor kid and his family, they sat on airplane. They were supposed to arrive at 11:07 p.m. on Saturday night. They actually landed at like 3:42 a.m., sat on the runway for about five and a half hours, and they were awesome sports about it. They didn't ruffle at all. We kind of moved the schedule back Sunday, and when you only have 12 hours to have an official visit, it's already really condensed and tight, so I was trying to give him a couple extra hours of sleep. But they were awesome.

We knew the coach down there really well. We had a prior

relationship. They obviously brought up Eno, and just compared their games basically. He's a pretty quiet kid, but when you see him -- the thing I liked the most when we get kids up here is we go to the photo shoot in Kinnick Stadium, right, because then you really get to see body types on kids. I know that may sound weird, but it's true. You get to see what they really look like because they come in with big jackets and hoodies on, like you can't really see everything, and our biggest thing was, hey, how big is he actually. When he gets here, you still don't see it, but once he puts on the jersey, I texted Ladell immediately, I was like, this dude is going to be all right; I think we're fine.

But Dad is a really good human being, played D-end actually at Illinois, went to the same high school as Christian Kirksey and Don Shumpert, so Hazelwood Central, so there was a little bit of connection there. Played against Ladell, so they kind of had an instant connection, and then Mom is a really sharp lady, too, and just the way they handled the visit, coming off a seven-day cruise, driving five hours to get back home, go to the airport to sit there forever and getting in here late, that can start the visit on a really sour note, and they were great about the whole thing.

It was a good visit overall, and we're excited about him. He's really versatile. Obviously you see him do a lot of different things. He played high school quarterback his sophomore year, played quarterback and running back his junior year. This year was split out between playing in the slot and then playing running back. Really good hands. He has some versatility to him that we thought would be a good addition to the room.

Q. You've probably never had a world champion wrestler in your recruiting class before.

TYLER BARNES: We've had some good ones but not --

Q. I'm sure you have to deal with Tom Brands on this topic, too, so what are the plans? I know he's probably going heavyweight, so that probably helps.

TYLER BARNES: Yeah, you know, great relationship with wrestling, and you can probably imagine how the conversation went when we initially told him, hey, how are we going to work this out, and Brands just told us to get it done. So like all right, easy enough, we'll talk later.

We haven't gone through the specifics yet. We're going through it right now with Brody Brecht and baseball, so we have some familiarity with it. It's going to be probably a little bit different in wrestling, but there's such a good relationship, we'll figure it out. I'm assuming he's going to

wrestle heavyweight. We haven't really discussed that; that would just be my assumption, obviously, but he's a kid -- he's got such a big frame where I think he's going to naturally add some weight pretty quick.

But we're not going to do anything to hurt him or put it on too quick. We'll just kind of see where his body goes. But talking about just a determined kid and just how he operates and what he does, it's on a whole different level.

Talking with Brands, it was funny because we're like, how is this really going to work once he gets on campus. Coach Brands was saying, if there's one kid that can make both these sports work, I'm not going to bet against Ben. We kind of agree with him because when you meet Ben and talk to him, this kid is a beast. He's a complete animal. I don't know how he does it, but he just keeps it rolling. It'll be good to get Ben here and we're excited, and we'll see where it goes.

Q. Does it pose a challenge when in June you think you're getting a five-star offensive lineman, and then right before signing day you find out that you don't have that?

TYLER BARNES: You know, we have the 24-hour rule after losses and losing recruits, and yeah, it stinks. It stinks. But at the end of the day, just like coach said, it's got to be his choice and what's best for him and his family, and we wish him well. I shot Kadyn and his parents the same text, just hey, best of luck down there, we got you; ignore all the noise on social media. Just look at my mentions if you want to laugh at some stuff, too, because I get the same thing, but just don't worry about that. You guys have to do what's best for you, and honestly, in this day and age in the transfer portal, who knows what's future holds.

We wish him well, but again, it's not about the one guy we didn't get; it's about the 23 guys we signed today.

Q. The quarterback you're bringing in, obviously two quarterbacks, but on Marco, seems like you guys are really high on him. What do you like about him? Seems like he's a different type of quarterback than you've recruited before.

TYLER BARNES: Yeah, Marco is a really good athlete. He's got a really sturdy build, almost looks like a linebacker. He's a great kid from a really, really good family. He's got those innate leadership abilities. Guys like being around him. That's what you want in a quarterback. Spencer is the same way.

You want a guy that can come in and command the

huddle, command the team, wants guys to follow him into a burning fire, and that's who Marco is. He's an ultimate competitor. Obviously has played really good football the last three years out there, and his stats back that up. It'll be good to get him here. I wish we could get him here in January. Unfortunately his academic schedule at his school didn't allow that, but he'll be fine once he gets here in June. There's not enough good you can say about Marco and just his family. His parents are unbelievable.

When we recruit, when we recruit guys, you like seeing that whole makeup. That makes you feel good about everything.

Q. What do you like about Teegan Davis?

TYLER BARNES: That's a good question. Teegan camped here last summer. Didn't know a ton about him. Actually Matt Bowen and Sean Considine had passed along his name like week three, week four of the football season and popped on the film. Small school football, multisport athlete background. Kind of had him on the list but not really, but then Seth Wallace, actually got two more extremely demanding texts from Sean Considine and Matt Bowen after the season, and Matt Bowen's team played against them in the playoffs, and actually I think Teegan's team was up 21-3 or 21-7 at halftime and unfortunately lost the game.

But when you have two guys like that who they know everything about Iowa football, those are two guys that earned their way here, played a long time in the NFL, one guy lives in small-town Illinois, understands the guys that are going to be successful here. So going back and just popping on his film again, just kind of just laughing a little bit. I think Seth sent me the texts from Bowen and Considine at like 10:30 or 10:45 p.m. last Thursday night, Thursday or Friday. I'm sorry, the days are completely blending together at this point.

Then watching his football film, then you see his basketball film, you see his high jump numbers, his long jump numbers. That's a recipe for guys that have come here and been really successful.

We actually, Seth and I agreed, nobody follow him on Twitter. Let's hit up the kid and get him over here on Sunday, because we actually lost a DB last year we were interested in to Illinois, Matthew Bailey out of Moline, so we didn't want Brett to see that on Twitter because they would have probably tried to get him down to Illinois, too.

So we covertly got him over here Sunday, and just a really good kid, a high-energy kid. He's got two brothers that play at Northern Michigan, actually for one of our former

GAs, Dylan Chmura, and a guy that I think he might have committed before we actually offered him. It was kind of like the Jay Higgins deal; hey, coach, I'm coming; well, are you sure we're offering you. Just the versatility he has is -- you've seen it in a lot of different guys we've had here in that secondary.

I would say that about our entire secondary class. I think Zach Lutmer is probably a safety for us, but I think those other three guys, they have some versatility to them that I'm not going to compare anybody to Cooper DeJean because that's completely unfair, but they have some versatility where they could probably play outside, probably play inside, and Coach Packer, we get guys here and we let him go to work and he'll figure that out. But I think the other three guys, you like that versatility, Kahlil Tate, John Nestor and Teegan Davis for sure.

Q. I saw Anterio Thompson and I'm like, okay, who is he again, and it was back to the headset and I didn't see anything. How did he jump out at you? You see No. 54, you see Iowa Western --

TYLER BARNES: He has a big personality like Davion, too. It's actually kind of scary talking to him, looking at him in the jersey over there, like holy moley, is this Davion or Anterio. Anterio, unfortunately, he was a product of the COVID year. Coming out of the COVID year, didn't have a whole lot going on, kind of got lost in translation, went to Iowa Western and redshirted last year, and their coaches were talking about him in practice, raving about him, so we actually had him at camp this summer.

At the time we didn't really have a true need inside so we kind of just kept him on the back burner, but Coach Bell did a great job with that relationship the whole way through, and he wanted to be here more than anywhere else. He was waiting on us.

I told KB, KB told me that, and I was like yeah, yeah, whatever, we're going to offer him and he's going to take visits, but sure enough, we offered him, and three days later he commits. He's a great kid. He was 287 pounds this weekend; he looks like he's 250, so you like that when you're bigger than what you look like. Big smile, high energy, and he wanted to be here. That's the biggest thing; we can't overstate how important that is. Guys that want to be Hawkeyes usually come here and have a chance to be pretty good, and he was all about it.

It'll be good to get him. He'll be here in January, as well. We'll get him in the D-line room and get him rolling, and I think he'll be an asset for us here in the future.

Q. Dayton Howard is a guy who went under the radar, I



don't think had any offers until you guys offered him, but you look at his senior year and you look his film, he pops off the page. How did he pop up on the radar? Kind of give us a little bit of your perspective in recruiting him.

TYLER BARNES: For sure, so he actually was a football player, baseball player from a small town in Savannah, Missouri. I don't know if anybody has heard of that. I had not, prior to Dayton, so he was there for three years. His dad played baseball at Kansas, and parents are divorced, but he ended up moving with his dad into the Kansas City area, went to a bigger school.

What's interesting is I had actually gotten an email from two season ticket holders about two other guys on that football team. One was a quarterback that now is going to Michigan, Ronnie Bell's brother, and then another was a linebacker there who was a potential walk-on, and the high school coach there who we've had some familiarity with; he was actually Graham Mertz's high school coach, so we had a relationship there, and basically said I wasn't going to start hitting up high school coaches until we finished our season, and I understood what this kid was about for an entire year. So he had reached out to Coach Copeland, and Coach Copeland passed it along. I think I watched like 10 clips, and I was like, Cope, what are we doing? Get this guy up here this weekend. Like this guy is really good.

What's amazing, you see Dayton, he is bigger than advertised. He is all of 6'4" plus extremely long arms. We like that he comes from an athletic background. One year of production. I'm still shocked he didn't have more offers, like completely shocked. I don't know what Kansas and K-State are doing; I hope we prove them wrong.

But another kid that he was supposed to go to Kansas after we offered him that weekend, and in his mind, he's like, everybody has been late to me. You guys were my first offer; I'm going to roll with you guys, and I'm going to try and prove these in-state schools wrong. We like that, but I agree with you, he's long, he can run, he's got great ball skills. He can jump out of the gym. I think there's a lot to like there. He's 190 pounds, which for a high school kid, 6'4", 190, that's a pretty good start right there.

Q. The dual offensive linemen from Indiana, what stood out to you about Lauck and Jones?

TYLER BARNES: So we were on Trevor probably earlier than Leighton, even though we were talking to both guys about the same amount of time. They're both different; obviously Trevor can play offside, Leighton is going to be an interior guy, but Leighton's wrestling background, had camped here before, had been here a ton. I think he had

probably come -- Marshall Jones' dad could tell me, maybe five or six times before we officially offered him. And not to get off on a tangent with other guys, but Leighton, kind of like Aidan Hall and Zach Lutmer, there's just certain guys, like we can wait and try and take these guys later in the process, or if we know we're going to take a full class of 25, why are we waiting? Let's just offer these guys; let's get them in the boat. They're our type of guys, especially Leighton, who loves Iowa, loves wrestling, is tough as shit, obviously, and he's got a chip on his shoulder. Then we offered him, he committed, and he still had some schools come after him.

Trevor is a little bit different. Trevor is probably a little bit more highly sought after, and he had some bigger schools coming after him, and I think Coach Barnett just did an unbelievable job relationship-wise with Trevor and his family. He's a good kid, and we were trying to sell him on our tradition and our history, and he is, he's a great fit here. He fits in with our guys. He fits in the locker room. So that was a good win to get after that big official visit weekend in June, but both guys we're certainly excited about.

Q. How about Alex Mota... could play multiple positions, but ended up at wide receiver.

TYLER BARNES: Yeah, so we initially had Mota camp here two years ago as a DB. It helps that one of his aunts is a diehard Iowa fan and season ticket holder here. I don't know if she was going to let him go anywhere else, honestly. You'd have to ask Alex that. But again, the process where we wanted him as a corner and then he'd prefer to play offense, and obviously we needed receivers, too, and we thought he was a really good athlete, a really good kid, has a ton of familiarity with our program, obviously, very versatile, so it'll be good to get him here.

We're excited about Alex. I think he's realistically play inside or outside. We'll see. He's going to get bigger. He's going to get a little bit thicker once he gets here and gets in the weight room with Ray and gets into our nutrition stuff. But he's a kid, again, I think from the very get-go he wanted to be an Iowa Hawkeye. I could be wrong on that, but again, that's really important to us, and we're excited about him.

I know there were some teams making some late pushes for him, but glad he stuck it through, and again, we'll get him rolling here in June.

Q. Who are your early enrollees?

TYLER BARNES: So obviously Cade McNamara, Erick All, Anterio Thompson and Terrell Washington will be the four for sure, and then TBD on -- we'll see how the next

three weeks goes here on some others.

Q. As you finalize this class, what do you consider the positional needs?

TYLER BARNES: As we finalize this class, we're still looking for a corner, whether it's high school or transfer portal. We're still -- we think we need some help out there. We're going to look hard at a tackle and see if we can find some help outside there.

Then from there, obviously receiver still, and those are probably the three main spots, and then in true classic Coach Ferentz fashion, we're always going to keep the best available and see. There's going to be guys that pop up. We had Koen Entringer from the late period last year, who went from having us, Michigan and Notre Dame, so there's going to be guys out there. Our job is just to make sure we keep our eyes open and if we find a guy that can help our team, if it's not a position of need, we'll end up taking him most likely.

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