

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Coach Kirk Ferentz

Press Conference



Also I've heard a lot of feedback how we train, the job our trainers into the strength room. I think it's important players get coached in all phases. Certainly it's good to hear positive feedback on that.

KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon, everybody. Appreciate you being here, covering the team certainly. For us, we're excited to get started with spring practice. Had our first day today, so it was good to get on the field. Something we always look forward to.

Some things don't change over the years. Everything is kind of done in phases. Our guys got back here in January. First thing in front of them is the winter program, which is critical, not only in terms of their physical development, but also growing as a team, their mental growth as well.

I think this year it was even more interesting because the mix of newcomers. First of all, it was our biggest group of newcomers, 11 guys joined the team, then the mix of newcomers to veteran players as opposed to the past, typically high school guys.

That's really been an interesting process for us. We got two more guys that are scheduled to be here in June. Looking forward to that, as well.

All that being said, you got different perspectives, new mix of people. It's something we really didn't want to take for granted. Make sure that the guys had a chance to transition into the program regardless of age, experience, et cetera. I think the commonality is they all want to play football and they all want to be in a place where they're welcomed, feel a sense of belonging.

Their feedback we've gotten has been good. It's interesting. They comment about the food. Our guys eat really well. That's by design. The fact that the facility really has been such an upgrade for our program, being in here since '15. Get feedback on that.

Little things like the fact that our guys eat together, not every meal, but we have meals during the course of the week where they sit down and actually look at each other, talk, things we couldn't do in our old building, things we forget about sometimes.

That part is all good. Then the other component is the Hawkeye Championship, which begins basically in early February once guys get settled in. That belongs. I think it helps create a little sense of unity, teamwork, gets guys to reach across position lines, age lines. The feedback there has been really positive.

All those things have been in works, if you will, the last eight weeks, or the eight weeks before spring break. I think we made a lot of progress there. Happy about that.

Certainly as we phase into spring practice, things don't change. Anxious to get a look at newcomers, a little different this year given the numbers, ages, all that type of thing. Basically you want to assess everybody on the roster because the whole idea of the past eight weeks is to see growth, most importantly how does that transfer to the field. We'll go through the same thing in the summer as well.

You look at it with a fresh eye, get guys on the field, see how they're progressing. I think I've always enjoyed about spring practice is it's pure football teaching, if you will. There's no game plan to get ready. No clock on us, be ready at 11:00 on Saturday, whatever time it may be.

It's more about the development of the individuals, teaching football, teaching the skills, the fundamentals. It's going to be important for them to have that to be successful. In the spring you have challenges with numbers, body counts, if you will. Graduation is the first thing on the list there. You always graduate a group of players. Certainly no different this year.

Then the injury factor is always a deal. Guys that have out-of-season surgeries, I think we're close to a dozen on that, under a dozen, but approaching that number. Guys that had to get surgeries, those types of things.

When you think about our linebackers, basically all spring, the three starters. You always have to deal with that. But that creates opportunity for other players, as well.



The last component you're always challenged with is the leadership void. Got a good reminder of that the other day. We had our Pro Day the other day, nine seniors, that's always a good reminder of what you're losing. Kind of bittersweet, if you will.

You're going to see those guys be excited and have a chance to interview, if you will, for NFL teams, but also just kind of hits you right in the face, what a role these guys all played in terms of playing well, but also being good leaders for us. Those are the challenges we're looking at right now.

Today, as I said, was our first day on the field. I think we got off to a positive start. The real key right now is how we can focus through the next five weeks here moving forward as a football team.

What kind of questions we can answer, go from there.

Before I wrap it up, I'll be happy to answer questions. Want to wish all the best to our guys that are aspiring to play in the NFL. Not a program goal for us, but we're excited for everybody that has an opportunity, hope they do have that opportunity, chase their dreams for the years ahead.

As I said, nine guys out there the other day. A couple guys from the past also came and worked out to get some exposure. Wish all those guys the best.

Also want to publicly congratulate Lisa Bluder and her team, what a great success they've had all year long, certainly this past weekend. Wish them all the best as they head out to the West Coast here for the Sweet 16.

I'll leave it at that and throw it out for questions.

Q. When you look at the players who were on Monday for the Pro Day, you're going to replace them on the field, but their intangible gifts, Jack Campbell, Sam LaPorta, Kaevon Merriweather, Riley Moss, especially, those four, jumped off the charts, how do you do that? Is that a more organic? Now having newcomers that filled those roles at other places, do you look to them to fill that, whether it's Cade or someone?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we have to. Probably include all those guys, Benson. Hard time listing all those guys, the roles they played.

There's obviously things you see on the game field, but there's things we see in the building, away from the building, things you hear about. Guys maybe giving advice to the younger players, what have you.

So like I said it's kind of sobering when you see them out in a cluster, in a group. The flipside, again, this goes back to probably February, I think the guys have done a good job of -- the guys that are older guys now have seen good leadership modeled, Riley, all those guys. So they've learned from them.

I think they also feel an obligation to help fill those voids. They have to earn that. It's not something you can give anybody. They have to earn it through how they act and how they go about their work every day, and that's sitting in the Hawkeye Championship meetings and sitting in with the Hawkeye Championship captains, listening to their dialogue, exchanges. See a lot of positive things, growth.

Mentioning Cade, looking across the field at him, sure struck me as a leader. Watching him on film going into that game, struck me as a leader of a really good football team. That's an added plus when you can have somebody join your team like that that has experience already.

All that being said, he fully realized he had to come in and earn it with this team, this group of guys. He's done a great job there.

Q. Speaking of which, what is his availability this spring? Piecemeal? Is he full throttle?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not full throttle, but still coming off the rehab, the surgery. Good news is he's been throwing some individual stuff, throwing on his own. He's able to do some seven-on-seven right now. As long as there's nobody around him, as long as he's comfortable, we're going to let him participate in that.

He's not going to move around a heck of a lot right now. I think we're still probably a month and a half, two months from him being full, full speed. He's able to do some things like that.

We're a little short in the line right now. There's always a challenge every spring, it's our offensive line, gives us a little more time for seven-on-seven. He's learning the system most importantly, but also getting to communicate, actually do some throwing with the guys.

Q. Erick All, what's his availability?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's positive. We weren't sure initially two months ago, but he's come along really well. I think first positive thing, he went skating, I think it was in Cincinnati still, back Christmastime. That was a good sign. But he's really progressed well.



We'll be smart about how much he works, not to overdo it right now. He was full speed this morning. We expect him to be out there all spring.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIRK FERENTZ: Literally we got, like I said, close to a dozen, nine, ten surgeries that we had either in January, we've had a couple since, had a foot injury, Jake Bostick, unfortunately. Then we have probably another ten or dozen soft tissue issues that we're dealing with right now.

When you train hard, things are going to break down sometimes. How hard do you train, all that stuff. It's one of the by-products. So hopefully we'll be getting some guys back. I mentioned we're a little thin in the offensive line. Hopefully we'll get a couple guys back here next week or the week after. That will enable us to ramp things up a little bit more.

We'll just adjust where we have to. I think today went well. Try to look at the big picture and not sweat out every little detail of what's going on today, but keep the big picture in mind.

Q. Kelby on the two deep, what have you seen from him that has really impressed you?

KIRK FERENTZ: Two deep, but almost by default. I don't mean that in a derogatory sense by any stretch. He's really improved. He came alive. Spring is always fun to see what stories. I thought he came alive during bowl prep, the month of December, seemed like he was gaining some traction, showing up in areas we maybe hadn't seen before.

Prior to that he was on the scout team for the 13 weeks before that. That's a nice phase where guys that maybe are working on scout teams get a chance to get looked at.

He's always been a good athlete. Just seems a little bit more comfortable. I don't know where he's going to factor into the playing component part of things. But I can see him on special teams, maybe gaining traction there. But he's off to a good start.

Q. In regards to the player lawsuit, the news of the settlement, what do you see as the next steps for the program?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think that's been resolved. Nothing more I can say about it. Our focus has been on what's in front of us, and I think we're in a really good spot right now. Our plan is to stay vigilant in every area of our program.

Q. We haven't spoken to you since you released the statement (no microphone).

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm sorry?

Q. Why do you think it would have been dismissed if it had gone to trial?

KIRK FERENTZ: That's my opinion. I was very involved in it. Worked closely with the legal experts on the thing. That's my opinion. That's why I stated it. It's been resolved. There's not much more I can say.

Q. Do you feel the communication was where it needed to be between you and everybody involved with Iowa? Are you satisfied with that?

KIRK FERENTZ: It really doesn't matter what I think. The matter's resolved and we're moving forward.

Q. This is the first time that we've talked since Brian Ferentz got those performance objectives added. What was the process behind that? Was that something you were supportive of happening?

KIRK FERENTZ: That was really between Gary and Brian, that arrangement. Gary supervises Brian for obvious reasons. That's really the same thing. It's in the books. We're moving forward. That is not something we're thinking about. We're thinking about our whole football team having a great season.

Q. Can you go a little bit more in-depth on what the Hawkeye Championship is, why you implemented that?

KIRK FERENTZ: It's something we started, I don't know, maybe 15 years ago. I'm not really good on the specifics. I have a habit of collecting articles, just throwing them in a file, read them on airplanes, things like that.

I believe it was a strength coach at Kent State, I think they were doing it, Kent State football at that time, probably 15, 20 years ago, like I said. He had been at Southern Illinois, if I remember correctly. Took that up there, read about it. Thought it was interesting. We brought it back here and talked about it as a staff, then we shaped it up. It's been something we've been doing for quite some time.

Basically our players elect 12 captains. It's varied a little bit every year. Right now we've kind of settled in on 12 captains, about a week or two after we start the winter program. Those captains draft teams. We set up competitive things.

There's a performance component to it in terms of what they're doing in the winter program, even summertime. Also with that is academic performance. Basically if you want to win, if your team is dependable, reliable, consistent, consistency is a big component, you get a lot of points for that. Community service, a lot of different incentives, those types of things.

Sounded like a good idea at the start. I think one of the neat things we've learned from it, like anything, you learn things after you do it or try it. It was neat to see a freshman defensive back sitting with a senior offensive lineman, guys that may never spend time. Back in those days we didn't have training table, an area where they could meet and eat together.

I think it's opened up more communication with the team. I think everybody takes pride in the team's performance, individual teams. So it's been really good. Gives us an opportunity to break into groups and have discussions on different topics, those types of things.

It's kind of been a win-win for us. I think our players really enjoy it, most importantly. Take a lot of pride in it. It's typically pretty competitive.

Q. What is your assessment as Lukas Van Ness as a player here? What have you told NFL teams about him?

KIRK FERENTZ: Obviously, he's a really good football player. You read the mock drafts, all those kinds of things. Nobody really knows right now what's going to happen in the draft, that's one thing I can say, other than a couple quarterbacks are probably going to go high, like every other year.

Obviously he's a really good football player. It was great having him on the team. I was just talking to somebody, seems like yesterday, it wasn't, but first time I saw him was in the library at Barrington High School, whatever it was, four or five years ago. I knew his sister went to school, the coach up there, Coach Sanchez, older sister is a freshman or sophomore, business student at that time.

He was a young kid at that point, a junior in high school, 220, 225. Showed up here in June, came to camp, same camp at Yahya Black was at. It was on a Friday night. Looked a little different. The scary part about recruiting is we start so early now, but he changed, not dramatically, matured since six months prior to that.

We ended up offering him out of the camp. Felt really good about him. He's been nothing but a great player for us. He does a great job in the classroom. He's got a

tremendous future.

Just really excited for him over the next couple months here.

Q. What have you seen from Deacon Hill?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, he's big. Bigger than most quarterbacks I've been around. That's the first impression. He throws the ball well, has a great personality. We're really excited. This is only one practice out there. I think he has a good feel for what's going on, what he's doing. Throws the ball very, very well.

Excited to have him on the tee. He's been tremendous, I think he's enjoying it.

Q. Jermari Harris is back on the depth chart. A year ago he was kind of an ascending player. What are your expectations for what he can do after sitting out for a year?

KIRK FERENTZ: Expectations are high. Obviously, any time a guy is hurt, misses time, you worry about how they're going to come back.

It's going really well for him. He's doing great. The neat thing about college football, there's a defensive coordinator here on Friday -- excuse me, Monday, who made the comment, I think he was last coaching in college maybe 10 years ago at Florida, he just talked about missing the development. He said you got to be excited about spring ball starting, having a chance to see guys. He fully gets it.

Jermari is one of the guys that comes to mind. He went through a tough circumstance medically, a tough injury, so disappointing to him. He tried to come back. It became apparent when he did try to come back that it wasn't going to be positive, so he went ahead and had it addressed.

But all the way through, he's been invested, he's been a great teammate on the field, totally involved. He's been helping lead. You talk about the leadership void, he's going to be one of those guys. He is out in front. Not he will be, he is. Totally invested.

Then I remember however many years ago, three or four years ago, him being here the first time with his mom and grandfather. I think she had two wisdom teeth taken out. The grandfather drove them. First time we met him. Hadn't offered him at that point. He impressed us then. The growth he's had since that time, that's the fun part.

Q. I don't see Seth Anderson on the depth chart. What could be his role this year?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's been great in the program. Soft tissue injury. I don't know if we'll get him back on the field or not. Keeping our fingers crossed.

Tremendous young guy. Looks like a great athlete. Great attitude. Everything has been positive. Unfortunately before break, he had a soft tissue injury.

Q. Could you see any circumstance where Cooper gets a look on offense this thing?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, if we had more guys, we would have done it last year, too. You saw what happened when we took him out. Our coverage is not quite as full as maybe some other people's. Cooper can play anywhere on the field I think on the perimeter, offense or defensive. I believe that. Any of the five DB positions. Probably I wouldn't put him at fullback, but thought about quarterback. Believe me, we had Labas in the bowl game basically, right? That was it.

He's that kind of athlete, really versatile, tremendous athlete. If we had that opportunity, but right now we're not even thinking about it. We're just trying to get our one deep figured out right now.

Q. Lawmakers in the state calling for your athletic director to resign or be fired. Do you have any response to that?

KIRK FERENTZ: I really don't. I'm only thinking about this season and this team, yeah.

Q. (Question about the secondary and opportunities.)

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll start with Koen. He did a really nice job all fall, probably would have played some in the bowl. Then unfortunately he got hurt in December. That kept him from being on the field. He has really done a good job. Really anxious to see.

You mentioned Deshaun, T.J. Both those guys are young guys right now. This is a really valuable time. They did a good job in December. This will really be helpful for them. If we're going to have a good football team, we need them to take the next step. I think they will. I feel good about the way they work. They're great guys in the program.

All three guys you mentioned are critical for us. Talk about improvement. For my money, Castro played his best football in December. That's the best game he played with us. Made some really nice plays against good people. You hope that's part of it. We need everybody to keep moving forward and developing.

Q. Linebackers right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: We have some quality guys. We're thin. Start with it's easy to pick Jay (Higgins) because he played a lot last year. A guys that's ascended in the program. To think we're going to replace Jack Campbell is not realistic. We don't have a guy like him.

The group I'm excited about, just cherry pick. You have Jay, Karson, Kyler Fisher. Kyler is the same thing, we really see him ascending right now. Karson is a guy that's really intriguing.

This spring will be really important for them. Jaden Harrell, good opportunity for him. Talked about Kelby earlier. It's a good opportunity for all those guys to move forward. That is one position where we have a newcomer coming in in June that I think is a pretty established player. I'm not saying he's Cade, but similar background that way.

Q. We got a chance to talk to Cade a couple weeks ago. He said really refreshing getting the kind of support from Brian and John Budmayr, from them asking for his feedback on certain plays, offensive philosophy. From your perspective, how have those meetings happened since he got to campus? What's the optimism that the offense is just trajecting on the right path?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll give you a quick picture of things. You go from the last Saturday in July. We had 20 prospects on campus, 18 of whom -- at the end of the meeting, we briefed on all 20 guys. I said, Let me get this straight. 18 of the guys out of the 20 have not played a snap of junior football yet in high school, and two others guys hadn't been playing as a sophomore. That's just the world we live in now. I'm not complaining bit, I'm just stating a fact.

The comparison, you take a guy like that, and then you play a guy or have a sit-down with a guy who's beaten us in the championship game two years ago. The conversations are different. That's where it's kind of a neat opportunity in some ways. I'm not totally anti-portal or this transfer stuff in that it made perfect sense for him. We've had quarterbacks leave here and find better homes, find homes, if you will, where they're able to finish out their careers and do really well. I think that's just how it worked for Cade.

But you're talking now about a player that has been out there playing college football, done a lot of good things. I think the level of those conversations are a little bit different. The level of expectations are different, too, both

ways, what we expect from him, what he expects from us. It's a real contrast. That's what makes things interesting, quite frankly.

Q. Your offensive line took a lot of lumps, growing pains, some didn't develop quite the way you wanted them to. Where do you see things right now? Do you think that trio of juniors that started every game last year can take the next step? Where does Daijon Parker fit into that?

KIRK FERENTZ: A couple aspects. I am confident. I hopefully shared that in January. I've seen certainly more film now since then. The more I watch film, especially in the offensive line, it's just hard to duplicate experience, whether it's playing or practicing.

I went over the litany of challenges that we faced the last two years probably with that group, and continue to face because we're a little thin right now. I wish we weren't, but we are.

From my experience, the only way you get better is going out there, you have to practice it, you have to rep it, just get better at developing your skills, plus physical maturity helps. I still remain very cautiously optimistic if we can get what we need to get done in reasonable fashion, I think we're going to be just fine.

But I'd be misleading if I said the last two years have been the standard we want or hope for. It is what it is. Obviously Linderbaum played really well. We've had individuals play well, but for that collective, what we're looking for, we're not there.

I just talked to a young player that was in the game against Illinois. I just asked him this morning, looking at film yesterday, What were your two worst plays? Neither one of them had anything to do with physical, it was all mental, him not sure who he had. He didn't really block anyone. Next thing you know, we have issues. Things like that, it's hard to be a good offensive football team if you don't have the confidence to know what your role is, then just do it, let the system work for you, that type of thing.

That's kind of a good illustration I think of some of the challenges that we've had. There are other times where we don't block or finish the way we need to. I think that's going to be our next step. The key is going to be getting guys out there where they can work long enough, get the reps they need.

By saying this, Nick DeJong has had a really good out-of-season. He's had injury issues since he's been here. You can see him right now, today is only our first

practice, but the confidence. Just seems like a different guy right now because he feels confident, he knows he's trained and is ready to go.

We have to take those kind of steps individually and collectively. I'm confident we will as long as we can get those guys on the field.

Q. What do you see as the next step for Logan Jones?

KIRK FERENTZ: Just keep playing. He has so many good things. I talked to him about getting his hands up quicker. You see times on film where it's not natural yet. But he will. Like, he will. He's got a great attitude. He kills the out-of-season program. Everything he does, he's a guy who is always out front working and pushing.

I think I said this before. We all kind of got sucked into it last year. He just does things with such proficiency. We're playing our first game last year, I totally forgot that he had never played college football. That's a big hurdle, a big step for a guy.

He's taken that step now. He can work on getting better and keep improving. He's driven that way mentally.

Q. Any guys in the bowl game coming through this spring that you think can ascend on either side of the ball?

KIRK FERENTZ: Like I mentioned, Entringer had a good -- he was showing signs, then got injured. Xavier did play. Really did a good job there. Same thing. It's exactly like Cooper's story. He played more as the year went on, kept getting more and more comfortable.

Those are the things that have to happen for us. Cooper is a great example of that. Look at him now, you wonder why he didn't start all 12 games a year ago, but he wasn't ready. He wasn't there yet. But he got there.

That's the fun part bit. Hopefully in five weeks I'll have some stories for you like that that, hey, this guy is really ascending right now, making that move.

Q. Is there competition brewing in terms of QBs 2 and 3?

KIRK FERENTZ: Did you mention Spencer? He's out. A pretty serious surgery he had. I don't think he'll be playing. We'll see. We'll let that play itself out.

I think it's going to be a good competition based on what I've seen. I thought Joe did a really great job over the course of the month making major strides.

Petras gets a heck of an assist for doing that. Right there in his hip pocket helping him. Simple things, like making the call in the huddle, which sounds easy. There's a lot to that for a guy who hadn't been doing it all fall.

Where he's at now compared to where he was at in December is night and day. He looks like he's been in the program, kind of catching onto things. We're excited about him. We're excited about Deacon and Cade. I think we have a good player coming in to join us in June, as well.

Cautiously optimistic. We'll know a lot more next fall. But I like the group. I think there's good competition. I think they're all good for each other and good with each other.

Q. What kind of numbers are you looking at as far as the thinness of the offensive line? Thinking about moving guys over?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, I think we got more enough if we can keep guys on the field. We just had one pop up a week ago. He's going to miss the entire spring. Again, it's frustrating when guys can't practice because that's really where you get better, especially up front on both sides of the ball. Probably the hardest place to play physically. Takes a little bit more maturity.

There's a challenge there in just that repetition of the work you can't necessarily get. If there's good news there, the guys I'm talking about have been on the field. It's just you wish they were out there getting all those reps. It's part of football. You can't do anything about it.

Q. You mentioned Seth and Bostick. Are they both done for the spring?

KIRK FERENTZ: Bostick, for sure. Then Seth, we'll see. I'm not overly optimistic.

Q. Cade is new to them.

KIRK FERENTZ: The good news is Cade isn't practicing the entire practice. That will work itself out. Those guys can do that in the summertime, they're going to throw the ball, do seven-on-sevens, all those kind of things.

There's a little bit of a gap. The linemen don't go out and do one on ones. It would be really stupid. I think recruiting camps do that. Had a heart attack the first time I saw that. I would never let my kid do that. Oh, my God. Had three kids play football. There's no way. Yeah, that's commentary.

Q. Any new scholarships to report?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't think so right now. Yeah, we'll see. See where we go there.

Q. How have you seen Beau Stephens and Gennings Dunker progress so far? What are you looking to see from them?

KIRK FERENTZ: Both of them had good winter programs. With Beau, it's all just about slowing things down for him a little bit. Only been on the field one day. I thought he had a good day today.

Gennings is one of the guys that's out. Hopefully we'll get him back next week or the week after. He's the guy that needs the reps. He has all kinds of potential. You got to really learn how to play, too, and you only do that by being out there.

Q. When you look at the defensive line, it may be the deepest unit on the team. Last year, as well. You bring in a couple of new guys from junior colleges that have experience at a high level. What is your level of confidence with them? Are you going to look to them as being a primary unit again to lead the charge?

KIRK FERENTZ: I really like the group. We lost John. It's a big loss because he really played well last year. Then Lukas.

Our biggest recruits were the three seniors that came back, Nico offensively, then Joe and Noah. We couldn't go out and recruit three guys like that. There's just no way we could get 'em not only in terms of level of the play, but the value in our program. You talk about the leadership void. You have those three guys at the front of the class. That's really helpful for us.

Deontae is a guy who, again, you talk about ascending players. Last year, just watched him, you could kind of see it coming. I don't think he's done yet. I think he's got all kinds of upside in front of him, too.

Anxious to see some of these guys. It's going to be interesting. Llewellyn out there. Ethan Hurkett is healthy. He's got a good motor. I think collectively that group has a chance to be a strength for us?

Q. At running back, you don't talk about that very much, but Kaleb Johnson had a good rookie year. Same thing with Jaz Patterson. What do you think of the competition there?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think it's healthy. Leshon has done a really good job for us. Jump back to him in a second. For

the first year, Kaleb I thought really did a lot of good things. There's still things he can get better at. He knows that. He's got a great attitude. He's done a really nice job in the classroom.

Jaz, I sort of jump back to Leshon, a reference, one play a couple years ago, Leshon made a run, kind of like, Oh, okay, that's not bad. I would say the same thing about Jaz. The run he made in the bowl game kind of got my attention. He hit that thing hard.

Not easy to know what he's going to look like this spring. Tremendous guy. Done a really good job in the classroom. He's really settled in well. It's going to be fun to watch him compete. I think it's really healthy competition right now.

Q. How do you think Sam LaPorta fits into an NFL offense?

KIRK FERENTZ: He is a tremendous football player. Better guy. He underestimated him certainly in the recruiting process. We were really fortunate that we were able to get him and his mom to come up here and look, finally they changed their mind and decided to come here.

I've told the NFL people that will listen, Don't make the same mistake we almost made. He may not be 6'5", but he's a heck of a football player, outstanding tight end, outstanding player. Unbelievable temperament. Just loves to compete. He's coming off an injury and plays in the bowl game.

Talk about an anti-2022 college football player. He's in the other end of the spectrum. He never even thought about not playing. We weren't sure he should. We were like, Are you sure you don't want to think about this?

That's just how he's wired. That's rare in this day and age. I'm not giving commentary on anybody else. That will continue to serve him well. He's an unbelievable football player and great guy, really good guy. I feel the same about all those guys that were out there Monday. Really good group of guys.

See you in a couple weeks. Thank you.

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