

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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## Coach Kirk Ferentz

### Press Conference



COACH FERENTZ: Good afternoon. Good to see everybody. I'll talk a little bit about the last weekend and move on to this week's ball game.

Certainly, pleased to be 3-0 right now, and that being said, still have a lot of room for improvement and growth. That's something we're trying to work on right now, have been working on.

Saturday, started slowly. Every game is a little bit different, certainly. Started slowly. Part of that is us. Part of that give credit to Western Michigan. They did a great job and took advantage of some areas that we struggled in a little bit.

So all in all, pleased the way the team settled in and played good complementary team football the rest of the way. Saw some good execution, certainly in the run game, mostly, on offense.

Defensively, once we got through our bumps, really settled down and got off the field, did a good job getting off the field.

And special teams, missed a field goal, but nonetheless something that you hope you're more consistent on. But then came back and got the big punt block, and did a good job on the return game. It was good to see that.

Cooper did a nice job and all the other guys blocking for him, did a good job there, too. Happy for that and happy for Anterio getting his first piece of success, if you will, as a Hawkeye. It was a good moment, certainly.

And just good to see the progress. I think the players have been working hard and we're getting good leadership. So happy about that. Obviously that was a lot more opportunity for growth right now with our football team. We'll need that moving into Big Ten play. That's kind of where we're at right now.

Couple of things, unfortunate news to touch on. Certainly not happy about losing Luke Lachey. Feel most badly for

him. He's the person most affected. It's an unfortunate development.

But he'll be fine in time, but it is a significant injury. He's going to be out for quite a while.

And then the more week-to-week type basis, both Jaz and Kaleb won't be available this week. So we'll evaluate it each week as we go forward, but they're both going to be out Saturday. We'll go with the guys we finished up with the other day.

And that is a positive. The tight ends as a group stepped up and did a good job. Erick is a quality player. And Ostrenga is a good young player coming up the ladder. And Stilianos, talked about him being a much improved player in the spring and camp and John Pascuzzi did a good job, helped us out. And Kamari and T.J. in the offensive backfield did a good job.

We'll go with the guys you got, like you always do, and next man in, opportunity for them. We wish Luke the best in terms of his recovery coming back.

Looking forward now, we're playing a good football team. Everybody expected Penn State to be an outstanding team. After three games that's certainly what it looks like watching them perform on film. They're really good, 3-0 and 1-0 in the Big Ten now.

Captains are the same group plus one. Joe Evans, Jay Higgins, Luke Lachey, Cade McNamara and the next man will be Logan Lee. Logan will take Luke's place for the coin toss. Logan's done a great job, a senior and a tremendous player and leader.

As expected, Penn State is a really good football team. Can't remember a year where they weren't talented. Certainly the case with this team. And they're well-coached on top of it. They've done a great job recruiting. Take a lot of pride in that. And then they do a great job coaching in all three phases.

Offensively, it's pretty much what it's looked like for quite some time which has been pretty impressive.

They have a defensive coordinator and a special teams coordinator that are in their second years with the program.



They had great success last year being Rose Bowl champions and had tremendous year. And you can see that carrying over moving forward.

They've lost some good players. Think about the quarterback graduating, and about Joey Porter in the back end. As is customary with Penn State, the next guys up do a great job. That's what we're seeing on film.

Offensively they run the ball, throw the ball, do that very well. Basically two personnel groups. But either way they run it effectively. They run it effectively. They've got good players out wide. Two really good tight ends and two young backs.

The young quarterback's done a great job running things for them, and looks very composed back there. And their offensive line is big, strong and very experienced, very veteran. They're good there.

Defensively, same thing, really successful there. Been playing great defense. Give up 11 points a game. Really athletic guys at every position. The line up front, the linebackers and the secondary got a lot of good players and they're very active and very dangerous because their athleticism and, again, aggressive in their approach and for good reason.

And then with the kick game, like you would expect, they're pretty good in all phases and that's no big surprise.

Moving forward, it's our first Big Ten game. Certainly it's a challenge going on the road. It's about as good as it gets in college football to play at State College. It's a great football environment.

And then throwing a Whiteout on top of it. We've been involved with one of those before. And in general terms, if you love college football, it's one of the great venues and great experiences, great opportunity from that standpoint.

But if you're the opponent, obviously it adds to the degree of difficulty. The biggest one is just the opponents that you have to play, but then secondly the environments. It's a tough one for everybody to navigate.

So be a great challenge for our football team. Going to need a great week. I think we're off to a good start. It's going to take a great effort throughout the entire week for us to have a chance in this football game. But it's a challenge that our guys are looking forward to and we'll keep preparing for that.

Kid Captain wise, just mentioned Gabby Ford is our Kid Captain. She's a 17-year-old junior at Fairfield High

School. Discovered a brain tumor about seven years ago. She's had reoccurring treatment for that. Is doing well.

One little tidbit is that she's one of the first patients that actually moved from original hospital to the new Stead Children's Family Hospital. Happy for her to be the Kid Captain this week. We'll certainly have her in our thoughts this weekend when we're out there playing.

**Q. Luke Lachey, you said he's out for a while. Do you consider it season ending?**

COACH FERENTZ: Most likely. It's unfortunate. He's going to be fine, but tough development.

**Q. Jaz Patterson, what specifically is the injury?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's lower leg.

**Q. Will Luke travel with the team to Penn State?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. We'll see. On crutches right now.

**Q. Will Luke have surgery this week?**

COACH FERENTZ: Should be over right about now. And I said it before, when you deal with injuries or things that -- taking a player off the field, it's tough because there's a human aspect of this, too.

We all lose sight of that because -- especially in football, guys have helmets on, they're like gladiators on the field. But these guys are college kids and they have feelings. When it pertains to any athlete in the Big Ten or anywhere across the country, they invest so much.

And it's not who they are but it's such a big part of what they do, and they spend so much time working for it. I don't want to say have it robbed but to miss out on something that they look forward to it's really tough.

**Q. It was such a gruesome looking injury. Was it a clean break.**

COACH FERENTZ: If there's such a thing as a good situation than a bad one, that's what we had here. That's the good news. It's routine if it's somebody else's -- I hate that word when you talk about medicine or medical procedures. There's nothing out of the ordinary there.

You think about a guy like Scherff or Drake Kulick, I know they had something similar. He should be fine. Hasn't slowed Scherff down at all, nor Drake once they came back, but it's tough in the meantime.

**Q. Want to ask you about passing game with Cade. Have you seen that develop over the first three weeks, and do you feel it's moving in the right direction?**

COACH FERENTZ: I definitely do. Just talking about injuries. When guys can't practice or they can't practice full speed it impacts everything. And that's players at all levels. NFL guys are no different. If they're not on the field getting the work they need to get at some point, it catches up.

So I think that's been the biggest deterrent. That all took place back in August, and it was a random injury but it was real. And had to deal with it. And the good news it's gotten better week-to-week and he's been able to do more in practice.

So there's more to it than just throwing the ball. You also have to call the plays, be involved in the cadence, all those kinds of things. So it's like a lot of things; it's just a matter of us keep chipping away here. And feel good about the people involved right now. It's a matter of trying to improve our execution week-to-week.

Hopefully with each week at practice we'll see better execution out there. And this is going to be a tough test here because you're going into a tough environment against a team that's really athletic and very opportunistic on defense.

It's going to be another step up. But good news is he's a veteran player who has done it. And at least he's got that to draw upon. But you still need to be in the here and now in terms of practice.

**Q. Urban Meyer said that a whiteout was worth a 10-point advantage. Just curious, 2009, you look up and see 100,000 white T-shirts. What do you remember about that environment?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it's closer than 110, and that 10 points became 17 points real fast in '09. We always talk about getting off to a good start, especially on the road, just try to take the crowd out of it.

We did the exact opposite of that in '09. And the next thing you know it's 17-0. We're looking up, the place is going crazy.

But the rest of the story there it's a 60-minute game. And when you're playing a team that's as talented as these guys are and as good as they are, well-coached as they are, there's going to be some lows, too, during -- hopefully we create some highs but there's going to be some lows.

And you have to keep playing. And if you're fortunate you can make it a 60-minute game. That's the whole idea.

But easier said than done because these guys haven't played in a close game yet. And so that first things first is make it close, and you have to try to figure out how to make it go in the fourth quarter. But to play in a raucous environment, it's good to be the home team for sure.

**Q. Obviously you can't replace a guy like Luke Lachey, but what kind of expectations do you have for Steven Stilianos and Addison Ostrenga? What have you seen from them?**

COACH FERENTZ: No different than a week ago or three weeks ago or a couple years ago. We want everybody to do their best and keep working, and play as well as they can play. And the good news is Addi is a guy we threw in there last year pretty much out of need and really responded well.

He's been pretty consistent that way, and I thought he did a good job Saturday. He'll keep getting better the more he plays.

Steve's a guy I mentioned in the spring who is starting to emerge. I'm not saying it's a Zach VanValkenburg story but similar. Coming from a small school, year two, there's a lot more confidence and a lot more competency.

I thought he did a good job Saturday. And we'll use him more now just by pure numbers.

Like I said, Pascuzzi jumped in and did a good job too. We like to have four guys at least that we can put in the game. Eric's done a good job. He's a veteran guy, too.

The group will be fine. We're better with Luke on a couple of levels, playing-wise and also his leadership.

**Q. Have you seen Jermari Harris when he was out for as long as he was, how did he stay engaged?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's kind of the same discussion. He was good that way. He's been able to practice this year. But the biggest thing is that game time you miss.

Both he and Cade could be in the same discussion. These guys didn't play last year at all. And that's -- so you miss practice time. And in Cade's case, he's missed practice time this year because of an injury. Jermari is because of the suspension.

And you can't substitute that either. So the practice time's important and then game time's important. Both these

guys are coming off a long layoff. And the good news is they'll climb faster than the guy that's never played. That's the other good part of it; they both have experience.

Jermari has had good week this week so far. His attitude is great. I'm confident he'll play well Saturday.

**Q. When you look back again at '09, specifically, to go down 10-0 in two drives, how did you guys, A, keep your composure; and B, what was the impact of the blocked punt, not only in that game but in the big picture?**

COACH FERENTZ: You have no choice. You have to try to keep your composure. It's easier said than done. It's easy to buckle in a situation like that. That was a good football team we had. And those guys hung tough.

You find a way. You make a couple of plays. You never know how it's going to come, where it's going to come from. And Clayborn's thing it was one guy's outstanding effort basically, because it wasn't a punt block that called.

He was doing his job. We had one guy pressing the punter, make sure the guy gets the ball out. He beat his guy that was supposed to block him. It was a great sound. Never forget that sound. It's a good sound or a bad sound, depending what sideline you're on. And the ball comes right up to his breadbasket and he took it and ran.

He's a special player and a special person. And it's funny how that works sometimes, too. Guys like that just spark a team. And after that we had a little different demeanor the rest of the way.

**Q. Being from Pennsylvania, does it mean anything more to you to walk into that stadium into that Whiteout and memories of that rivalry?**

COACH FERENTZ: I carry a chip on my shoulder because they didn't recruit me. I always joke about that. Obvious reason was they were trying to win. They were trying to win then, trying to win now.

They didn't recruit guys that ran 5-flat 40s at linebacker that weighed 200 pounds. I've forgiven them. It's 50 years later. I'm over that, I think (laughter).

I've always had great respect for the program. It's always represented what football should be like. And they've been very good. I'll go back for trivia, in 1969 they played Kansas in the Orange Bowl.

And they stopped Penn State like two or three plays in a row down on the goal line. And the refs figured out they

had 12 guys on the field. They got penalized. They got another crack and Penn State won the game. It was like 15-14. How to go three plays without anybody detecting that? The officials didn't figure it out.

But I remember that game vividly. I think Denny Onkotz might have been a linebacker. It was Linebacker U. And Steve Smear and Mike Reid might have been playing. I was a fan of theirs as a kid obviously, because they were good and Pitt wasn't any good. That's the way it is.

But, yeah, I've gotten over that nonrecruitment part (laughter).

**Q. Diante Vines shared that his uncle passed away a week before he scored the touchdown this Saturday. Were you aware of that? And just thoughts on Diante's performance, especially considering that?**

COACH FERENTZ: He shared that with us. And, again, tying in with the injury situation, there's a real human aspect. When you have a team of 100-plus players you can imagine.

I would say frequently there is something going on with a family member. Again, we're talking about impacting lives, and it's easy for us sometimes, in general terms, to overlook that stuff or you forget those things because we're all focused on the games and performance and all that kind of stuff.

Each and every one of these guys have personal lives all from very diverse backgrounds, things going on. It's something that just seems to be, there's always something going on on the football team with someone's story. And how they choose to handle it is up to them. We respect that.

I think it was about a year ago this time Leshon was back for a funeral.

It's tough. And how the players try to deal with it, again, that's kind of personal, but we try to support them in each and every way. And as pertains to Diante, he's had a great career. He's had so much hardship. It's good to see him out there playing.

He's having fun right now. He's able to practice every day. Sounds mundane and basic but those are things he hasn't been able to do during his career without having some brace on his wrist or whatever.

It's just good to see him playing the way he wants to and I think envisioned himself when he came here a couple years ago.

**Q. Seemingly wherever your range, wherever Penn State is ranked it's been a competitive matchup. Four of the last five within one possession. What is it do you think that leads to such competitive Iowa/Penn State games?**

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know. It's one of those deals. It's funny in conference play, sometimes some teams match up that way and some don't. The 2016 games is a real good reminder what it can be like if we're not ready to go. That was really ugly really fast.

It's just a reminder. They have a talented football team right now but that's not totally new to them. If we're ranked or not ranked, where we're ranked, if you're past probably eight or 10 right now it doesn't matter at this time of year. It will be more significant in November.

But if you're in the top 10, you're probably a top-10 team, I don't think anybody is surprised Penn State is up there right now just because of the way they played last year, the way they finished.

And, again, it was a good quarterback, but they have a guy that might be better right now. When you're in a position to do that kind of stuff, it's not a surprise they're ranked the way they are.

But, again, we're at the other end and we need to be thinking about the what-ifs and we better be ready to go here.

**Q. What do you remember about recruiting Diante?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not an awful lot, other than I've got a tie to Pennsylvania, I've got a tie to Connecticut too. Things have really changed up there. It's ironic, right now our two starting receivers are from Penn State. It has nothing to do with me going to college there. I can promise you. Ken O'Keefe recruited up there and knows the area.

My point is that high school football has really changed quite a bit. The prep schools up there in Connecticut have done a much -- they're much different than they were 10 years ago or even probably 20 years ago, obviously.

It was one of those things where we matched up. He was very interested in us. We were more than interested in him. Just ended up being a really good mesh. We're glad to have him. He's a great young guy and great family.

**Q. There's a bit of a sour taste in Penn State's mouth after the 2021 game. There was a little bit of controversy about accusations of flopping. Obviously**

**they lost their quarterback, lost the league, lost the game. Are you expecting a little bit extra juice out of them coming into a game like this?**

COACH FERENTZ: Not really. I don't know how many of their players were here in '21. I don't know how many of our guys were here either. And then probably, like me, not many of them remember much about it other than it was a tough game. We had to make a big play to really get back into it.

And once you play the game, it's usually pretty much like the rest, you move on to the next season, next game, I don't think it's a big game deal there.

**Q. Was that something you addressed at all with James Franklin afterward?**

COACH FERENTZ: No. There's nothing to talk about other than congratulations or good luck. In fact, there's no good thing to -- I'll share this with you. After 20 some years of being a head coach, I don't know of a good thing to say afterwards other than good luck. What do you say? If you win, lose, what do you say? Not much to say. So good luck.

**Q. That long touchdown that Western Michigan had, what all did you see go wrong?**

COACH FERENTZ: Obviously a breakdown in technique and communication. One thing I do know, you can't play good defense if you don't tackle. The other thing, if you give up big plays -- and they usually go together -- but we didn't have a chance to tackle on that one because just miscommunication.

And all three phases, it's like electricity in the water, it's just a bad combination. Bad things can happen fast if everybody's not on the same page. It's really what happened there and some poor technique on top of it.

We better not do that again because we won't be able to survive easy touchdowns like that.

**Q. The '09, we're talking about it a lot. You ran the ball well that day. Given what you did this last Saturday, do you feel more confidence you can establish the run -- probably have to, right?**

COACH FERENTZ: It would certainly be helpful. It's hard to find people to beat these guys because they haven't lost many games in the last 50 years, 60 years.

But the teams that beat them last year did run the ball a little bit successfully, and that's always -- but that's a truism

in football.

If you can run successfully, unless you throw it every snap -- and if you're throwing it every snap, at least if we're throwing every snap, that's not going to be good. Some teams are designed that way; we're not.

So you've got to try to find a way. These guys are a really unique challenge, very aggressive, very athletic. They make it tough on you.

**Q. Kamari and Terrell both fully in the game plan?**

COACH FERENTZ: Oh, yeah, all three guys are in there. Max jumped in. It was great to see him get a touchdown. He's worked hard.

He's a team favorite. All the guys pull for the guys doing scout teamwork and things like that. But these guys, it's going to be a different arena from what they're used to. But they're going to find out now. So here we go.

**Q. When we've talked about the wide receivers, you've mentioned staying patient, staying with the process. With Luke going down and his injury, does that kind of accelerate maybe the process a little bit with the wide receivers to get them more involved, or how are you kind of approaching it?**

COACH FERENTZ: Penn State will dictate what happens there. But the receivers are doing a really good job. I just think they've really practiced well. I think they're doing well on the field. And I have total confidence in our group. Confidence in our tight ends. Still have good group there. We'll be better with Luke, obviously, but we still have a good group.

We're not going to just change our whole approach by any stretch. We'll just keep trying to figure out what's the best way to maybe give us a chance to move the ball against these guys.

**Q. Kaleb Brown got his first touch this last weekend in the game against Western Michigan. Did you see his reaction, any thoughts on him getting involved?**

COACH FERENTZ: It's good to get him involved, especially if it's the first time. It's a positive. It's not part of our game plan, necessarily, but he's part of our game plan and in our rotation and done a good job. Said earlier, I think he's on the, if you will, still in the developmental mode a little bit.

But he works hard every day. He has a good skill set. It's just a matter of time, he'll get some production, too.

**Q. With Penn State's ability to really (inaudible) with the corners, greater emphasis on getting that run game going as early as possible?**

COACH FERENTZ: It would be helpful in general if we can do that. We're better if we can play balanced, at least have the threat of being balanced.

And if they make you, especially this team, if they make you one dimensional, they can get after the quarterback very aggressively, and they've got a bunch of guys up front that can move and they're really slippery and just crafty.

So if it gets into one of those games, I don't think it's a good thing for us. Better if we could. But then easier said than done.

**Q. When you look at the quarterback, just a true sophomore, what impresses you about his play?**

COACH FERENTZ: Composure. He's very talented. Big guy. Can run and throw. But just seems very relaxed and in command and very composed back there. And I'll go back to he got extensive playing time in the opening game a year ago.

First game of the Big Ten last year against Purdue, on that Thursday night he played a lot and really did a good job. He didn't look like he was out of place at all, and now he's got the keys to the car, so he's doing a really good job with it.

**Q. You were mentioning Anterio, and we keep hearing from players about his speed. What do you think is the next steps for him in his development?**

COACH FERENTZ: Just the keyword you said, "development." What we're asking him to do is totally different. Not unlike all the guys that are playing on the defensive line. We play it a little bit differently than some people. There's a learned aspect to it.

And I think that's what he's going through right now and talked to him last week mentioning that Yahya Black wasn't Yahya Black three years ago. Same with Logan Lee. Go down the line with any of the guys. But especially the interior guys, there's a real art to playing in there. It's something you learn how to do.

And I mentioned a guy like Yahya Black, a pretty big human being. And Brady Reiff played very successfully in there, 260, 265. Karl Klug. So we've had all kinds of body types in there.

Anterio is a really talented guy, great young guy, good attitude, tough guy. But he's got to learn how to play. And with that will come playing faster and a little bit more effectiveness that way.

**Q. How much of a pass rush or lack thereof is based more on the quick game that the other teams are throwing at you versus not having somebody who can really get to the quarterback?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think we have guys who can get there if they get a chance. Sack numbers are important, obviously you'd rather have them than not have them, but they don't tell the whole story; can you be disruptive. To your point on the quick game, sometimes getting your hands up is more disruptive than trying to get pressure on the guy, if the ball's coming out pretty fast.

I mean, you have to move past the stats. It goes off what you're seeing on the tape, and we have a couple of guys that can be disruptive there; we just haven't had an opportunity really yet.

**Q. With the development Sebastian Castro has had since he's been here, was there a time when, a conversation or a play or anything, where you saw things kind of click for him?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think it was the bowl game last year, that month, not just the game itself, but that month, things happened faster.

How do I want to say this? Like our opponent, couple teams in our conference where their guys, they jump in and move faster. They get there quicker -- you never make it to the end line, you know what I mean?

They play a little bit more proficiently, a little quicker because they may come in a little more advanced than a lot of our guys, we're not getting a lot of five-star guys that my sister Julia could say, take that guy, take that guy.

There's a little bit of learning or growing curve. And whether physically learning, all those things factor in. But that's just the world we've lived in for quite some time. We're comfortable there.

But I guess my point is -- I think it's true at every school, not just here -- whether you're a top five program or a bottom five, everybody develops. If you're doing things right, you should be getting better each week with every day, but it's all player driven. The player drives that.

Mentioned Brady Reiff, like there's no way physically he would have played in there his first or second year, then he

started gaining traction, get a little stronger and all those kinds of things.

So that's a race every athlete runs, I'm sure in all sports, but I just know football a little better.

I guess my point is you just never know when that light's going to turn on, and that's one thing I learned in the '80s, like for certain guys, you just never know -- as long as they're giving effort and they care and they have pride in all those things, you just keep coaching them and see what happens and you never can tell.

Think about Ron Hallstrom who didn't start a game for four years and ends up being a first-round draft pick, plays 14 years in the NFL, never started a major college football game until his fifth year in college.

You never know if the guy's got the right attitude, has a skill set that enables him or allows him to have success. You keep working with guys. They have to keep working. That's the key point.

Some guys do and some guys don't. And other guys, it happens a lot sooner. Mentioned Ostrenga, he played last year, showed probably put this guy in there and he'll do okay. Right now I'm glad we did because at least he's got more experience than he would have if he redshirted. I guess what I'm saying more of our guys are typically going to redshirt than maybe some other schools.

**Q. Steven Stilianos, what have you seen from him and how did he help fill the void that Luke left?**

COACH FERENTZ: I think the parallel, as mentioned earlier, VanValkenburg, first year he played well enough -- A.J. would come get a Gatorade, take a couple of plays off and then get back.

Good enough to do that, but he really wasn't a factor in the game, and his second year he was definitely a factor. I'm not saying it's exactly the same, but I think that evolution -- Steve's a lot more comfortable. Didn't look overly comfortable a year ago or confident.

Now I think, starting this spring, we started to see that, like he felt like, okay, I'm getting it a little bit and I think I understand what they're asking me to do. I thought he did a nice job Saturday and he'll get more snaps now as we move forward.

**Q. Speaking of that group, Jackson, obviously different situation, DII guy, but he's having to do a lot of that growing on the field, that role.**

COACH FERENTZ: Sure.

**Q. Are you seeing more of an accelerated growth from him as a veteran and do you think that he's sort of ready for a task like Penn State?**

COACH FERENTZ: We'll find out Saturday. I think he is. He's a good football player. We talk about these guys, these older guys, the transfer guys. His circumstance is different in that you mentioned he has played. He's played the last two years, played really well. Whole different defense.

He's learning that aspect. And he wasn't out there this spring, nor was Rusty Feth, nor was McNamara basically because he was throwing. Erick All wasn't doing a lot in the spring. So those gaps of time.

But the guys that have played, I think, are more capable of making it up faster than somebody who hasn't played. So you've got these different discussions.

But it's the interesting part about all this stuff. It's like a puzzle in some ways and you just try to -- everything we thought Nick, hoped and thought he was in recruitment, that's who he is. He's extremely serious, extremely mature and focused, great team guy, and a really strong leader.

I think with every week we'll see him keep playing better and better, and I would say the same thing about Jay. He's been in the program growing the other way. Maybe one of those guys not heralded coming in here.

I'm glad he's on our team. And we have been for several years just because of the way he operates. He'll have a good career here because he really cares about it and works at it.

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