

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

**Kirk Ferentz**  
**Seth Wallace**  
**Tim Lester**  
**Beth Goetz**

Press Conference



**KIRK FERENTZ:** Welcome. Good to see everybody, and appreciate you guys being here.

I want to take an opportunity today to follow up on a couple announcements that have been out and talk about some new roles, certainly for Seth, and then introduce Tim and let you visit with him.

Start out with Seth. We announced that promotion a while back here, and in a nutshell, it's based on the quality work that Seth has done since he's been in the program. He spent three years as a grad assistant, worked under Norm Parker years ago, and then has been back here since '14 and served in several roles.

With each year, his role seems to increase a little bit, and he's done a fantastic job.

I thought this was just an appropriate way to recognize some of the achievements he's had. It's not intended to single anybody out or anything like that, but a recognition of quality work and the role that he's had, the assistance he's given Phil and the entire staff. He's done a fantastic job with the defensive part of our program. It's in recognition of that, and I'll ask him to come up and say a few words.

**SETH WALLACE:** Good to have everybody here, and thank you. We certainly appreciate it as a program. First off, I give a lot of thanks to Coach Ferentz for this opportunity. Obviously, very appreciative and excited about it.

This is something I didn't expect. It's not something that you work for. You just kind of go about your day-to-day and try to do as good a job as you can.

That's evident maybe in the way that you all have seen me grow as a coach over the years. It started here back in 2005. It would have been December of 2005 -- I had a lot of appreciation for this program. I grew up in Grinnell, Iowa. My father was a small college football coach, so I was always paying attention to football at that time, college football, and specifically to the state of Iowa.

I had friends that were Iowa State fans. I had friends that were Iowa fans. I was neither at the time. I was a son who was celebrating his father's successes.

I had a little bit of background, but not a ton. Certainly that increased in December of 2005/January of 2006 when I picked up the phone and I had a mutual coaching contact that knew Norm Parker.

My love and admiration for this program began at that time when Norm called me up and then I later in January of 2006 became a Hawkeye.

In 19 years, I've been here for 14, but I did take a little bit of a break, and after I was a GA here for Norm and Phil and Coach, I left and went to Valdosta State and spent five years down there, and then as Coach mentioned, I came back here in '14.

The big thing here is the operation that we have here, the people that are a part of this, the coaches that I have been around, that I'm around today, some of them have come and gone. Some of them have served as big mentors in my life, and I'm proud of that. I'm very proud of those that I've had the opportunity to learn from.

But probably more than anything is the players that we've had the opportunity to work with here. I go back to my time here in '06 when I first showed up, and I was Norm's GA but I was working positionally with Phil, and whether it was Miguel Merrick or Marcus Pascal then, where I'm working on the scout and we're trying to clock Mitch King, Kenny Iwebema, guys like that from early on when I got here 19 years ago, I'm fond of those memories, and then certainly fond of the memories that have taken place here in recent years.

Like Coach said, I got back here in '14, so this will be finishing year 10 being back here.

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We've had some very notable players. I've worked in a lot of different capacities, so I've had the opportunity to recruit these guys as a recruiting coordinator, as an assistant D-line coach with Reese Morgan when I first got back here, I've worked with Phil in the back end, served as a linebacker coach. I oversaw our punt team, believe it or not, for many, many years.

So in a lot of different capacities I've been around a lot of good players and most notably some of the linebackers that have come through here, the Jewells, the Campbells, the Higgins, the Jacksons, Bensons, the Niemann brothers. There's been a bunch, and I'm very proud of that. I'm proud of the opportunity that I have here. I'm very proud to be working alongside Coach Ferentz and this program, this university.

With that being said, I would tell you I'm probably a lot like the three linebackers that you witnessed this past year that all had the opportunity to leave. They all had the opportunity to go on and move on to different places.

I think there's a lot that pulls you here. There's a lot that makes you want to stay here. Because of that, I'm fortunate to be here, very happy to be here, and if it wasn't for Coach Ferentz, if it wasn't for Norm Parker's phone call in January of '05, I probably wouldn't be standing up here.

Lastly, congrats to Tim Lester, who will be up here in a second, and then Beth Goetz on her appointment, as well.

KIRK FERENTZ: Thanks, Seth. Appreciate that. If I can bring Tim up just to say a couple words about Tim and the search in particular.

It appears there's a lot of interest in this position, has been, and also the timeline.

But basically, as I said back in December, my first and foremost concern and most of my time was just focused towards our football team. It's my number one responsibility. That was that little bit of research, that type of thing, on the coordinator deal.

The bottom line is this, the whole key to this thing was to ensure that we got the best person and the right person for this position, and that was the goal from start to finish.

The bottom line is I want to do what's best for our team and best for our program, and I'm confident that we landed the mark there.

Roughly in rough terms, probably had a list of maybe 10-12 people, had conversations with six, and extensive conversations with four. When it came down to it, in my

mind at least we had four candidates that were qualified in my mind to do the best job, and it was just to figure out who the best person for that would have been.

When you look at Tim and what I've discovered, he's had a wide range of experiences. I certainly knew of Tim and was aware of his background, especially at Western Michigan. As I did a little research, learned a lot about the wide range of experiences that he had, some things, his story basically, I know I felt good about it, was very impressed, and as we open the door and let the staff learn more about him and spend time with him, everybody walked away feeling pretty good about things.

In my mind he's a good fit for us, and that's first and foremost. Similar in a lot of ways to I think the way we've operated, yet a lot of different perspectives, too, new perspectives. That's part of moving forward, obviously getting different ideas, different views, and trying to implement them in a way that we all believe will work for us.

Feel confident about the way the process worked, and pleasure to bring Tim up here to say a couple words.

TIM LESTER: I'd like to start off by thanking Coach Ferentz and Beth Goetz for this opportunity. My family and I are extremely excited to be moving to Iowa City and be a part of this football program.

The one thing I know everybody wants to know is what we're going to be about, and I can tell you right now that we're going to be a physical football team. We're going to be disciplined, and we're going to be aggressive in everything we do, from run game to pass game to keepers to RPOs to tempos.

One thing I've learned in my time as a former quarterback, quarterback coach, offensive coordinator, head coach at pretty much every level, it's about putting your players in the best position to succeed.

Unfortunately, I've only been here a couple days and haven't had a chance to meet all the players other than a couple that were in the hallway in the last couple days, but I'm excited to get to work with those guys and to figure out their strengths, their weaknesses, figure out where we can put them in positions to have success to help our football team win.

It's going to be a process. We're excited to get started as soon as possible. We started the moment we hit the ground running.

But I am excited to work with all of you to answer all your



questions, but most importantly, I have a saying, RBO, 'relationship before opportunity.' I'll have a great opportunity to coach these young men once I have a relationship with them. So that process is going to start real soon, and we're looking forward to having the opportunity to have some fun out there and be aggressive at all times.

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll let Beth bat clean-up. It's my first opportunity publicly just to say I'm really pleased to learn about Beth's full-time appointment. You heard that from basically everybody in the department. She's done a great job since she's arrived here.

I think all of us know these are really interesting unique times in college athletics. It's going to take I think a real forward-thinking leader to help move us forward. Our program has got great potential, and I am confident Beth is going to do an outstanding job in that role. So I'll ask Beth to come up and say a few words, too.

BETH GOETZ: Thank you, Coach, and anytime we get a chance to support what Coach Ferentz and the program is doing, it's a good day for us.

I wanted to publicly have a chance to congratulate Seth, Coach Wallace, on this well-deserved and well-earned opportunity, and what an example he is for our student-athletes, and I know without question, as you all speak to him directly, the impact he has on them day in and day out, not only on the field but certainly personally, so congratulations to you.

And welcome to the family, to Coach Lester. We have a little bit of history, so obviously we were in the MAC together so I got to compete against his teams a little bit, but I also had the opportunity to get to know his son, who's now a professional men's volleyball student-athlete, went to the Final Four while I was at Ball State. It was a pleasure just to get to know the type of individual and the character he's bringing to this program, and we are so excited to welcome you and your family to Iowa City.

I want to congratulate Coach on putting together such a great staff and a great team. I know everyone is as excited as we are about the personnel coming back, and counting down the days. I know Coach may like a few more, but counting down the days until we can start fall camp. Great group. We're looking forward to the 2024 season. It's going to be an exciting one, and we're excited to have this group leading our young men.

Thank you.

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll throw a couple words out here just in

closing. Really excited about this team, working with this team. We got back here almost four weeks ago Wednesday.

But really like the group that we have. Certainly excited about the way the staff is coming together. We still have one spot to fill, and hopefully get that done in the next two weeks. We have a good grip on that as we move forward.

It's like every year at this time, it's all about moving forward. It's a new team, new year, new opportunities, and the biggest thing is we just have I think great people involved in the program at all levels, and really pleased with the success that we've experienced, and I kind of go with five-year increments, and certainly the last five years with three 10-win seasons, a lot to be proud of there, and we know there's a lot of work in front of us, and that's the fun part. It's great to be off the road.

Got the bowl game concluded, get back here, and you turn your attention to working on the staff and then also starting to think about the things we need to be doing going forward and also recruiting, so it's great to be back on campus. It's always ironic our players get here and we all leave and go recruiting. Kind of funny how the calendar works.

The best part is in front of us right now. It's when the work gets done, getting a chance to get reconnected with our players, getting to know them better, what their needs are, how we can try to move them forward, and then transition into spring practice at some point.

But each and every day has got purpose, it's got importance, and this to me is a really fun time when you're on campus with your players, with your staff, and able to work with them.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the offenses that Tim has put together, relies heavily on RPO and 11 personnel. Iowa does do a lot of 11 personnel, but also kind of a foundation that's more under center. How do you anticipate kind of the marriage going, and what are kind of the keys that you think will help the RPO game work here at Iowa with what you have?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of funny, my first blush was crossover film through the years. You can watch people, and the first thing I think of is 12 personnel with them. They ran the ball extremely well. To that point, what you said is correct, as well.

That's the key component here. He has a real diverse background. He's experienced in a lot of different areas, as were many of the candidates, and that's attractive.

Last year being in Green Bay, being on the defensive side, yet part of his response, and I don't want to speak for him, but part of his job was to analyze the offense that Green Bay would face each and every week, so forget about the preseason, but got to study 17 games and two playoff games.

It's like a year of research, and I've always joked about it would be great to have a sabbatical like professors and go research, study. The bad news is it usually means you got fired the year before when you get to do that in our business, but it was a wonderful opportunity to just put it to good use.

Long story short, he has a real extensive knowledge of offensive football, and then the most important thing in any year is knowing who your players are, where their strengths and weaknesses are, and then trying to get them in the right spot, and that came across clear during the conversation portion of things over time. This offense is all about figuring out who we've got to get the ball to and then working from there, and hopefully we'll have a couple people to get the ball to, not just one or two.

**Q. I'm sure as you studied Tim's background at Syracuse, Western Michigan, even the Packers, I'm curious where you landed in terms of where his potential was offensively and what you liked about his track record at all his stops.**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think I'd look more at the last six, seven, eight years probably, Purdue on. With all due respect to Syracuse at that time, because I don't read a lot of feedback, but I did read somebody took a shot at that one.

My first thought was okay, if you evaluated my career at Maine, I probably still wouldn't be standing here. I never would have been standing here. We were 12-21 at Maine.

You can go back, and I think you have to quantify and qualify everything you look at.

It's like our team last year, I think there are pretty obvious reasons why we struggled offensively. It doesn't take a detective to figure that out.

What I've looked at and focused more so, the job he did with David Blough at Purdue and then the entire body of work at Western Michigan. You consider the MAC schools, they typically play at least two games that you're fighting, swimming uphill, upstream, and look at some of the wins that they had and some things they did, beating Pitt in '21, there's some really impressive things there, but more it's about the big picture.

Then last year's experiences really factored in, too. You try to examine the entire resume, try to talk to a lot of people that have worked with him and know him pretty intimately, and then project is this candidate going to be a good fit.

Felt really good about it, the work I did on the front end, and then certainly with our staff getting involved.

Everybody gets involved in the interview process, making phone calls, all that type of thing, so it's pretty thorough, pretty extensive.

Because of that, I feel really good about where we're at.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the wide receiver position. Do you remember when Greg Davis got hired, he brought Bobby Kennedy in with him; is that something you would consider doing with Tim, or have you maybe settled or do you have a direction where you're going right now?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think we're on a good path, but there's no mystery. The position is not the same but it is the same in that it's a fresh beginning for everybody right now. We're fairly young in that room in a lot of ways, and we're fairly inexperienced in terms of production, that type of thing. But there's a lot of potential there.

Ultimately you want to get somebody who can, just like Tim said a minute ago, build relationships, be good teachers, and most importantly, a coach's job is to help players become better. If it was pro football, it would be all about becoming better players. College football, there's a lot more to it, seeing the big picture, student, character, citizenship, all those types of things, as well as being good players.

But I've given a lot of thought to the guys in the room. I think we have good potential right now, and really it's about moving those guys forward, seeing the potential.

Also getting them to see the potential, I think that's probably the most important thing right now.

**Q. When you got to the point of the interview process where you were interacting with Tim on a face-to-face more kind of personal basis, what struck you and made you feel like that relationship could be one that could work really well?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's kind of interesting. Tim's situation is a little bit unique, but there were a couple, three, maybe four people that worked with him that I really trust and value their opinions, and I know a couple of them have



personal connections to this program. One person in particular, we have a past relationship. He was a player a long time ago for me that worked with him -- so when you talk to those people and they know what we're about and they know what he's about, it's reassuring because a huge part of anything we do -- we all spend more time with each other than we do with our wives and families.

The first thing is you want to bring somebody in the building who is not going to be like everybody else but who is going to share some common goals and realize this thing is bigger than any one of us individually.

That came across real clearly.

Then when you get into the personal part of it and the personal interaction, the staff interaction, then hopefully that comes across to everybody and everybody feels the same way, and I think, again, I feel really good about how our staff felt about Tim and their exposure to him and the things they learned, too, when they did their homework and research. But this was a group effort for everybody.

To be involved I think is important, and for everybody to -- maybe not be unanimous on the vote necessarily but everybody saying, yeah, could really see this guy being really successful with us and then letting him go to work.

**Q. Going to Seth as assistant head coach, is there anything he can take off your plate or anything he can do now that he has this new role?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, this is the first time we've done this, so I'm not sure what it's going to look like quite frankly. If I weren't able to be here for some reason, and there was a practice back during bowl prep where I had to attend a funeral, I wanted to attend a funeral, and it just worked out where I actually made it back 10 minutes beforehand, but in a circumstance like that, I'm not in the office for whatever reason, certainly somebody has got to kind of say yes, no or here's what we're doing.

There might be some things as we go down the road here a little bit that maybe I can do a better job in terms of delegating, taking some things off. He's not the only guy on the staff, but I've got to have total trust that whatever he does is probably going to be better than what I would do, so probably can learn a lesson right there; try to take that to task.

**Q. In the RPO game there's a lot more slants that are involved and probably more slants than you guys have run recently. Do you look at that as a positive for this offense and getting the ball out of the quarterback's hands at a mesh point, and how can that help elevate**

**moving the ball down the field and the way you want it to be moved?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it's not something we haven't ever considered or we're blind to. It's kind of like I touched on earlier, part of Tim's job is going to be to figure out what do we want to emphasize. You can only practice so many things and emphasize so many things and do them well. But if that's something we deem to be good for our offense and fits in the package and we can execute it and not take away from other things, it's a balancing act a lot of times. But yeah, I'm open to anything right now, any ideas.

The whole idea is advance the ball and help yourself, and hopefully in theory there you're helping yourself in the running game. You're also helping yourself in the passing game. It starts with not having a negative yardage play. That's the first way to kill an offense, besides turnovers. That's the worst.

I think one thing I would interject, with his head coaching experience, it came across, and that wasn't a requisite, but it's certainly a plus in my mind because if you're paying attention, you really have an appreciation for how football is complementary and how one thing affects the other. We've been pretty good on defense. Obviously we want to be better offensively, and we have been better. We want to get back to that.

But just how one thing affects the other. You've got to be really sensitive to that because as much as things change in football, and I know entertainment value is a big thing in this day and age, but it's still about winning, and that's really where my focus was 25 years ago, and it's going to stay there. That's what we're trying to do is win games if we're going to keep score, which I'm pretty sure -- someday we'll play without equipment, I'm convinced of that, but they'll probably still keep score.

God only knows, I don't watch that Pro Bowl stuff, whatever it was on Sunday, but I can tell you this: I have watched it when they did have pads, and they've done what they've done because that was ridiculous when they had pads. That was just a waste of everybody's time.

And good reason; I wouldn't have done that, either, if I was one of those guys.

**Q. You were quoted in the past as kind of downplaying the total offense stat. I believe you were quoted in the Big Ten Network as saying it was the most overrated stat in football. Do you stand by that? I noticed in the press release about Tim's hiring that his numbers at Western Michigan specifically in total offense were cited. Do you still believe that's a stat --**



KIRK FERENTZ: Is that in the context of making this hire? Is that for clarification, me talking about total offense?

**Q. As far as goals and criteria for evaluating Tim's performance.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I'll give you what I was referring to specifically and then I'm going to step aside and let everybody else talk. But basically my reference is it's an interesting -- believe it or not, I do pay attention to what goes on nationally, and I've kind of been fascinated through my career. There's certain guys that get reputations. In fact, I worked with one 26 years ago. Do the math here, 26, 27 years ago -- no, holy smokes, 35 years ago, okay. It was a guy who it was all about him and it was all about the next job, so it was all about his numbers, and the place I was at had a pretty prolific quarterback. In fact, we actually had two really good ones, but it was all about what he was trying to do, his agenda.

Over my career, I've noticed there are certain people -- I'm not saying that's all they're thinking about, but it's more about their portion of the equation, if you will. I really don't gravitate towards people like that.

I'm kind of fascinated -- I am a little petty; sometimes I'll do a little research, and that's where the wins per game stat came from. So it's possible for a guy to really try to emphasize what it is he does, make himself look pretty good. Meanwhile, the team is winning seven, eight games, which I'm not making fun of that by any stretch. Every game to win is tough.

But when that starts taking away from what the team might be able to do, I really am not interested. I have no interest. I've just never gravitated towards that type of person, I guess.

I'm just not big into self-promotion, not big into look at me guys. Sometimes those guys are really good, and the coach does deserve credit. I'm all for that. There's a reason why things happen typically.

But I think, again, it gets back to what's the bigger picture. Are we trying to be a showy offensive team or a high-blitz team or whatever, and that stuff is all great until you're giving up the big play, or on offense you turning it over to the other team and all of a sudden your defense is out there defending 20 yards.

Everything goes together, I guess, and I've just never been fascinated with that glitzy stuff sometimes that a lot of people get distracted by.

We're just trying to build a team. We're trying to build a team on the field that's going to be able to get the job done and hopefully at the end of the game win, and fortunately we've been on the right side of that more than not, so try to stay there and try to improve on that. That's our goal.

Offense is a big part of that. That's our goal. I'm not minimizing that. If we can hold them to 500 yards and hold them to 150, awesome, unless we're getting six punts blocked. There's something everywhere.

I'll step aside if you guys have questions for Tim or Seth.

**Q. Seth, talk us through the conversations that led you to getting to this position this spring.**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I don't know that there were too many conversations, other than just an opportunity to sit down with coach. He pulled me aside a while back and said this is what he wanted to do moving forward. Used a lot of the comments and remarks that he used earlier. I wouldn't say that there was a set of conversations or a process to this. It was more just a conversation and an opportunity.

To be real honest with you, I don't see it changing a whole lot of my day-to-day, as Coach mentioned. My opportunity to be on the defensive side of the ball and continue to do what I'm doing there I think takes enough of my time, but this is certainly a welcomed opportunity, and obviously excited for it.

**Q. Seth, can you take us through kind of how you saw the dominos fall with guys coming back on defense? Obviously Nick, Jay, a lot of other guys, just how was that all for you kind of seeing a bunch of them come back?**

SETH WALLACE: Well, to be honest with you, Kyler was the first one. Kyler did have the opportunity to move on. He immediately came in and said that he was coming back, and then certainly the other two held on until the last minute.

Nick, of course, but Jay waited, and I think he did his research, and I think he spoke with those that he needed to in regards to his opportunity at the next level. He reached out. He called -- same thing Nick did. It's a breath of fresh air for any coach or for any program, for any side of the ball to be able to get back two guys that -- certainly in Nick's case, I don't know that I was betting on that one happening. I felt like Jay we had a good shot on, but when you get both of them back, a combination of the three of them that started for us, it's a pretty big deal.

**Q. You've traveled the road. You've GA'd at a smaller college to this point. What does this mean to you personally as a kid who grew up in Iowa, to have the faith of a head coach like Kirk Ferentz?**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I talked about the love and admiration. I think you can use those two words if you're looking for a response right now.

The conversation that I had with Coach was -- it was probably a real big moment, but really just knowing that -- I grew up a coach's kid, my father was a Division III coach, that was the path I felt like I was headed down, and I was good with it. I was okay with it, other than my mom kept reminding me, if you're going to be at the Division III level, you'd better -- no different now than what we've created in Division I, but the Division III level, it's a tour of duty, and she kept reminding me that your wife better completely understand what's going on here and she'd better understand what's going on here in the current state because this is a little bit crazy what we're dealing with in college football.

But it's certainly not what I set out to do, but it's a welcomed opportunity, and I think I'm very fortunate.

**Q. We got to talk with Kirk and Tyler about these three linebackers coming in. I know they've all been committed for quite a while, all eastern Iowa kids. What are your thoughts on them, and what attracted you to them, and what are your expectations for their potential when they do get here?**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I don't want to pigeonhole myself in recruiting, but it was a little bit by design. I don't know that you can count on three linebackers or three on the defensive side of the ball. I know you can count on more than three in the state being scholarship players at the highest level, and that's a tribute to our high school coaches and what they're doing in this state and the development and the type of kids we're getting.

But to say that we were going to find three linebackers all within a 50-mile radius of Iowa City, and I don't think that any of you would write a negative article on those three after being around them and seeing their storied high school careers because they're all state champions in some regard, which is really fascinating when you think about it, and then they've all come through our camp.

We've had a firsthand opportunity to be around them, their families, but more so to vet them from a football standpoint or from an on-the-field standpoint, it's a little bit unique. Not counting on it. I can't talk about next year's kids. You guys read about it or at least reached out to them this

weekend.

**Q. You were mentioning in your opening statement having opportunities elsewhere. What are the things that have kept you here and made this such an attractive place to stay?**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I think there's a want to be here. I wouldn't say there's a need to be here.

Where I'm fortunate and where I separate myself from a lot of other people is I'm from Iowa, my wife is from Iowa. My parents are around, her parents are around. Anything, any decision made beyond that would probably be pretty selfish on my part, and I might have to do it by myself, and I don't want to do that right now.

But the way we play defensively, the success we've had here, and defense gets a lot of the notables, but Coach alluded to it, you can go back to nine years ago and you can see that we're one of five programs that's won 62 percent of their games or more a year. We're not much like any of the other four.

There's a lot that keeps you here, that you get a chance to win, you get a chance to coach good people, good players, work with good people, good coaches, good staff. It would take a lot to leave here for a lot of things, to be honest with you.

**Q. Seth, along those lines, I know in this neighborhood, I think at least four different schools in the former Big Ten West have reached out to you, talked to you in different facets in the last couple years. What is your aspiration in the future? Not this year; we know what you're going to do this year. But five, ten years down the road, do you want to be a head coach, and if so, is succeeding Kirk a step towards that in some regard?**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I appreciate your question, and I don't know that I've ever thought much beyond where things are right now. I think that's always been -- I was around my father growing up, and I saw him do it, and there were times where I got nervous of the potential that you could wind up in that type of position just because of all that it entails.

It's not that I wouldn't want to get there at some point. I just think it's a byproduct of doing your daily job, and really that's kind of all I've been about for the course of my career is just see how well you can do your job, where you're at, and with those that you're doing it with, and then the rest will take care of itself.

But there's a lot that keeps me grounded. I get to work with Phil. I said he was an acquired taste a couple weeks ago, and some people have asked about that. Don't ask me right now because I'll pass on the answer because I don't want to get into it. But having worked with him, having GA'd for him, having worked with him, I don't claim to have much of an ego. I know we all do to a certain degree. There's not much that I need other than just the opportunity to coach our players, make some suggestions in regards to what we're doing defensively, and then turn the page the next day and keep doing it.

I think a lot of it just keeps me grounded. Opportunity to be around some really special people is a big part of it.

**Q. You had a pretty good off-season in terms of returning guys that you really wanted to retain. Sort of the downside of that is you've got a lot of linebackers on scholarship, guys who are capable of contributing to this team. How do you manage a situation like that, especially with the scholarship count where it is right now?**

SETH WALLACE: Yeah, I recognize that, and I would preference it as maybe an inconvenience, not a downside. We've got a lot of good players on our team.

The room that I'm responsible for is a foundation and a catalyst to what we do special teams wise, so there is opportunity there. But there are some guys in that room that have been waiting around for three, maybe four years for their opportunity, only to think that that opportunity was going to come available this coming year and then you have two or three guys come back.

So I do recognize it. It's the ever changing world that college football is. They have choices to make. I would welcome their choices. I would give the two sides as best I could in regards to it, but at the end of the day, they've got to make some decisions, and I would say that is where we are fortunate. There's not a ton that is good about the transfer portal, but there are kids that can leave now and maybe try to find a better situation if, in fact, they're set on not being here.

That's hopefully an answer that sums it up.

**Q. I think there's a lot of questions about the wide receiver usage. Iowa has only had one wide receiver with 600 or more yards since 2016. It's a position that comes with a lot of ego and wanting touches. Coming into Iowa City, how are you going to reinvent the wide receiver positions because I think you said in your opening comments you want to put a product that people want to be a part of, so from a strictly wide**

**receiver perspective, how are you planning to do that?**

TIM LESTER: Well, obviously wide receivers are a huge part, no matter what you're running, schematically. But putting them in position is the biggest key.

Through my time in coaching, I think we've been around quite a bit of pretty good ones, and we've been able to find ways to get the ball in their hands. There's a lot of ways to do that, whether it's screens, whether it's straight drop-back, whether it's putting them in the backfield. The flexibility of an offense is key.

I haven't had a chance to meet all the wide receivers yet, but I want to make sure that the quarterback understands that we are going to spread the ball around and he's going to read his keys as he's supposed to. It's my job to make sure that one of those first couple options is the guy that we want it to be.

Had some success with that and plan on keeping it going.

**Q. Were you calling plays in 2021 at Western Michigan?**

TIM LESTER: Yes, Jake Moreland and I. Jake is my best friend, and we think the exact same. We played together, we coached together 80 percent of our adult lives, and we kind of groomed and he was ready. We kind of hopped in and kind of team did it that year, but three years before that I called him.

**Q. I've been studying the 2021 season because that was a terrific offensive year for Western Michigan. I'm curious what you remember about that season in terms of the production, how that could maybe apply to what you want to do here. I see a lot of things here like rushing attempts, time of possession. The wins were good ball security, those types of things.**

TIM LESTER: Yeah, I think we were top 10 in the country in time of possession. Never huddled, which was unique.

Team, I felt like we did a good job running the ball, finding our run lanes, and the pass comes after that. We never even talk about throwing the ball until we figure out how to move the ball on the ground.

That was an explosive team. The one thing that people don't -- maybe it's because I'm a quarterback, always have been and coaching them. We're going to do what that person does best, and Kaleb was good at it.

Before that we had Jon Wassink was my first couple years our quarterback, and he was great at drop-back, going



through a progression. That was his thing.

I just saw a trophy, the Campbell trophy in there. Jon was a finalist for that, which is an award that Jack won. Jon was a finalist when Justin Herbert won it.

It changes every year depending on who you have and what he does well. That guy behind the center matters.

Figuring out what he does well, because if you have a flexible enough offense, we can call it anyway he wants it. That year Kaleb was really good at the RPOs. We had some pretty dynamic wide receivers, D'Wayne Eskridge and Skyy Moore. We had two second-round draft picks out there running around. So that combination that year was a great mix. We had a great combination with Jake upstairs and me on the field.

Yeah, every experience can help us moving forward, but we've got to figure out kind of what we've got and what's the best way for us to be efficient, aggressive, run the ball and help the team win, and we'll do those things whatever they are.

**Q. How do you blend or what's the process of blending stylistically what you've done before with the RPO with other things with what Iowa has done historically and has found success doing historically?**

TIM LESTER: It's a process that started a couple days ago. But it's an exciting process. To get everyone's opinion in and I have all kinds of playbooks, what's going to jibe with what they know and where we think we can improve.

I've coached long enough now that I've run a lot of systems. In 2008 when I was a Division III coach, Seth was talking about that, we ran the Shanahan system. He was the quarterback coach at the Houston Texans. Matt, who I played college ball with, got him coffee. I think that was his official role. So I got the playbook then and we ran that at Elmhurst. At Syracuse when I took over we took over a spread offense that didn't even have a tight end and we tried our best to blend them together.

Then we went to Purdue and got to run the Saints' offense, which was cool. Learned a ton. Then on to Western where I had an offensive coordinator my first year and then when I took over, tried to put a little bit of that in it.

Then to go back and work with Matt this year was full fledged, that system. Everyone runs that system a little bit differently but it's fun to get back after 10 years of being versions of it, it was fun to just be in it and watch all the teams in the league run a version of it, not all of it but a

good portion of it.

There's a lot to choose from, and I hate to keep going back to this, but I can't wait to see what we have.

But I definitely know how to tie them together, and a lot of the formationally and how we're going to build it, what gets called will be dependent on kind of what we see in the spring and what we see as the guys move around here in the next couple months.

**Q. Iowa's offensive struggled are well-documented from last year. In taking a look at the roster and the personnel, what gives you confidence that you can come in here and help move this program in the right direction?**

TIM LESTER: Well, I love tight ends. I'm a huge fan. Everywhere I've been, our tight end has been all-conference normally. I guess as a quarterback, that's the guy you start with. Some people use them, some people don't. I love the fact of what they can do to a defense in the run game, in the pass game, in the play pass game, in the keeper game. It also can open up things out on the edges, too.

I know there's an unbelievable tradition here of that, and I've heard we have some good ones. Everything is I've heard this and I've heard that. But I can't wait to see with my own eyes.

But that part of this offense of running 12 personnel, which is really what we did at Elmhurst and a little bit at Syracuse, that fits what I have a lot of experience in. Let's put it that way.

But none of those work if you can't run the ball. So you go to a place if you want to run an offense that's going to be physical and run the ball, you've got to go to a place that can run the ball. I have looked at the numbers there to make sure that that can happen, and we've had success, and we have to continue to have success to get the rest of it to go.

So that combination of those things make me really excited about what's coming.

**Q. Sidelines or press box for a game? And Cade McNamara is likely going to miss most of the spring. What is the challenge when your starting quarterback is not available to you on the field for spring ball in trying to implement your offense?**

TIM LESTER: I would say to the first question, A. Question A, I would say up. I prefer being up. I like to see

the game from up there. I think being an offensive coordinator is about making adjustments. I've called games for a long time. I was a head coach at I want to say 24 years old or 25 years old, so I think I've called a game with 70 passes, and I've called 70 runs in a game. You have to make adjustments as it's happening because they have a plan, too.

When you're having to think and make adjustments, I just think being in the environment up in the booth is a way better learning environment than sometimes on the sideline where it gets very emotional.

I know as the head coach I had to call from the sidelines, so that guy up in the booth was the most important person in the world to me, that we thought the same way.

But it became my preference. Pretty sure I'll be up.

The second half of your question is the one thing I would tell you is we need to get the horses to the race. Whenever Cade is ready to go, I'm looking forward to working with him. But there is absolutely zero way that you can discount his experience. When you have experience in playing in games, I'm very confident that he'll pick it up when it's time, when he's healthy, when he's ready. If he didn't have a ton of experience, I'd be more scared, more worried.

But he's got to get healthy and be good to go when he gets his chance, and he'll be out there every single day we're out there whether he can throw it or not. He'll get a lot of learning in, but he has played games, and that is invaluable when it comes to quarterback play, so I'm excited about that part of it.

**Q. A question about Cade McNamara; he's somebody who's had experience as you mentioned. What are some ways, assuming he'll be healthy by the start of the season, that you can accentuate and elevate him as a quarterback?**

TIM LESTER: You have to make him comfortable, number one. Everybody is comfortable doing different things. I think sometimes quarterback coaches, they have things they like to do. I'm not married to anything. I've run a lot of things. I have a unique experience as far as levels and have been a D-coordinator.

I have to figure out what he's good at, and I have to put him in those situations as much as possible.

I've watched a little bit of film on him, not enough that I can comment on any of that. But the things that I need him to get better at, we have to focus on. You get what you

emphasize.

We're going to make sure that he can do the things that I think this offense should be able to do well, and if there's things he's really good at, we're going to do them. Much like we were talking about the RPOs earlier, Kaleb was great at them, so we did that a lot, and it worked. I've got to get to know him and make sure -- every quarterback. There's a couple -- the year I was the offensive coordinator at Syracuse, we lost our starting quarterback, I want to say it was play seven. It was an achilles, like an Aaron Rodgers thing, and then the backup went down and I ended up playing walk-on, and the offense totally changed. We had to change.

I've got to get to know each guy and what they do well so that we can call the offense to have the most success when he's in there. But that's on me to make sure I can figure that out and put them in good position to have success.

**Q. You're going to be coaching quarterbacks?**

TIM LESTER: Yes, sir.

**Q. Route concepts, what structure do you like to run, especially because you ran so much RPO? How do you like to build your concepts beyond the line of scrimmage? You've run a lot of 11 personnel, probably 90 percent of it that I've seen --**

TIM LESTER: Yeah.

**Q. How do you anticipate that working within kind of the foundation of what Iowa likes to do because 12 is such a staple here?**

TIM LESTER: Yeah. I look at myself as a 12 guy. The years we had 12, I can remember my first couple years at western we had 12, and those were good years, where I felt more comfortable with what we were doing.

At Elmhurst College we were 100 percent 12. That's all we ran the entire season.

Either way, when it comes to route concepts, you've got to understand the timing of the quarterback's footwork, and we can build -- it's kind of like piecemeal every week. You're building the concepts.

There's some full fields where we're going to call it, he's going to know his progression and we're going to go to work. We'll have four, five or six of those that he's comfortable with. But I think the flexibility in the passing game is what makes the offense I ran in college, which is

more of a Spurrier stuff compared to what Shanahan does and how they build their progressions every week. It might look like a different route combination every week, but we will change them based on coverages and what we're seeing, but I want to get the quarterback comfortable with the same thing over and over again. The key is to have him do the same thing over and over again and have the defense think it's a different play.

We like these two or three things against this coverage and we like this on the backside against this coverage and you can mix and match them and you get five on the front, five on the back, and the iterations of those two, and then you add shifts and motion to it, you can really put a guy in a comfortable situation where he knows what's going on. It might not look like that to the defense. That's the plan. But it all starts with what we're getting and what he's comfortable with.

So we have to get him -- we've got to get it installed, figure out what he's comfortable with, and then we can build it from there.

It always starts with the coverages we're getting and what our guy is good at, and then I feel like we can always build it from there.

I've got 600 pages of pass plays in there, figuring out what he's good at and getting good at something, jack-of-all-trades, master of none is not what we need to be about. We need to figure that out so we can get really good at something.

**Q. What you said before, RBO, relationships before opportunity, regarding that, a lot of coaching is not just Xs and Os but a matter of trust, building relationships. A lot of guys you haven't met, guys who were playing for a different guy under a slightly different system four months ago. What is the key in coaching you've been around different places and being an offensive coordinator and earning trust of those guys, especially in these first few weeks when you're meeting them for the first time, showing them these new things?**

TIM LESTER: You're exactly right. I think the biggest thing is sitting down and learning who they are because it does matter. We have cut-ups and they get to watch some NFL cut-ups, and I think they always appreciate that, running some of the things that they've run at that level that we've had success running at that level. But it's the most important thing is for me getting in front of them and really just asking where they're from because I don't know for a lot of them. Some of them are from my backyard in the suburbs of Chicago. Some are from Iowa. Some are from

Australia. I met him the other day. He didn't have to tell me where he was from. I knew. It was awesome to meet him.

That's the key because I know once we have that relationship, then it's time to go to work. I've got to show them kind of our ideas of what we want to do. I really want to see them all move around. I'm excited to start getting the playbook put together, which is going to take some time, and really watching all of last year's film to watch the guys play.

I haven't had a chance to do that yet over this weekend, these four days, but that's what's coming soon.

**Q. How much do you value mobility at the quarterback position, and will that be a priority moving forward when recruiting?**

TIM LESTER: I value efficiency at the quarterback position. Mobility would be a bonus. If I can get both, 100 percent I'm all for it. Who doesn't want that, right? But there has to be efficiency first, and I think sometimes people get enamored with the mobility, and when they have to drop back on a 3rd down to get us a 1st down or a two-minute drill to go win us the game, we can't fall short in that scenario. You have to play quarterback first. You have to be able to move the sticks with your feet, and the more you can do, the more we can do when it comes to running the ball.

It's a great icing on the cake if you can have it, so I'm always looking for it, but I'm not going to go away from a guy that I think can really execute an offense and make throws and be efficient as a quarterback just because if he can't do that, I'm not going to just take him because he can run a little faster.

**Q. Back in 2022 at Western Michigan, how much of the play calling were you involved with, and what did you take away from that season?**

TIM LESTER: Well, I hired a new offensive coordinator. He came in and put in his system. I was going to be more of a head coach. I took over the last three or four games. We were struggling. We weren't playing complementary football. We were turning the ball over. We lost our quarterback in Skyy Moore. They had two years left before they were done with their eligibility, and they left in January to go to the NFL Draft. Obviously I was excited for them, but it threw us off guard a little bit. It's worked pretty well for Skyy, obviously won one Super Bowl and is going to another one. Excited for him.

So we were struggling personnel-wise. So I think we won

three of our last four. It wasn't pretty. It was what we had to do. I played a true freshman quarterback and two freshman wide receivers, and we kept ourselves in games, let our defense play great. We found a way to win those games when that's what we had. That was our best foot forward.

Yeah, I think I called the last four that year and had to call different words than I'm used to calling, so I had to read it off a sheet, which is harder for me than normally the guy that puts it in his back pocket and doesn't take it out.

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