

10/26/2010: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's teleconference on Tuesday with the Big Ten media:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"Certainly, we're coming off a real tough loss to an excellent Wisconsin football team. You know, it was a hard-fought contest, and an excellent college football game. They've got a great team and they played a tremendous game. We've got to get ourselves together here and get ready to move on, because we have another outstanding challenge coming in. Michigan State is having a tremendous season, and they're a very strong football team in all three areas. We've certainly got our hands full again."

On what challenges he feels Michigan State presents:

"You know, it depends where you want to start. First of all, they're playing very good defense right now. They've got an excellent linebacking corps, a very veteran group. They've replaced their starters on the defensive line and the back end, and have done a good job with doing that, and then the guys they returned are playing very well. Their special teams are doing very, very well. They've got a couple of young kickers that are really doing well. Then offensively, they're extremely balanced. It starts with the quarterback. He is having a tremendous season, and it's not a big surprise. He played very well last year. They've got good tight ends, good

skill people outside, and a handful of good running backs. It's just a very tough team to defend."

On what type of challenge there is with getting the team back mentally:

"It's like any time you lose. It's disappointing, and unfortunately, we went through that earlier in the season as well. It always stings, but it's the nature of what you do, and everybody has worked hard. It's always tough to lose. The big thing is you have to turn the page, and that's what we try to do on Sunday after we look at the tape and talk about the things and make corrections. Then we try to move on to our next opponent, and that's what you have to do. It's going to happen to you at some point. It's not that great to go through that at the end of the season, and you certainly don't want to do that too many times during the season, but whether it's once, twice, or five times you go through that, you just got to keep moving on."

On if he'll play a punt defense or field goal defense, or if he's simply wary of a fake happening on special teams again:

"You got to be careful. They did a great job on a punt fake, but with [Aaron] Bates, he's a former high school quarterback, so he has got the ability to throw the ball. They've got a lot of guys that can throw the ball at different positions, so that threat is out there basically at all times, special teams or offensively."

On the chances of defensive coordinator Norm Parker being back this week:

"There's a chance. I think we're making progress. He's gaining ground with each week, and I'm really happy to say that. Not only in terms of learning how to deal with a prosthesis, but also just his general health. He has really gained significant ground here over the last 3-4 weeks. I think it's a possibility, and when I say 'back,' he won't be in the office

this week, but maybe he will be in the stadium and that would be a great thing for all of us, certainly. But we're just taking it a day at a time right now. I think we're close, but I don't know how close. Again, as I've been mentioning all along, our big focus is looking at the big picture, and you know, a day or two here and there. That's really not the critical thing right now. We're just trying to get him back for the long haul."

On whether Michigan State reminds him at all of last year's Iowa team that started 9-0:

"Yeah, I don't know if they have had as many close games as we've had. It seemed like every one of our games was really close in terms of points and the way they finished up. But they're certainly on a great roll, and it's not totally surprising. I think they're a team that a lot of us felt during the out of season had this kind of potential and capability, and things have really come together. They are just playing good football in all three areas, and that's what it takes to have a record like they do."

On if there's an explanation for why games vs. Michigan State have been so tight and whether he expects Saturday to be the same:

"I would think so. You would kind of assume that might happen. I think the teams are a lot alike and they have been pretty evenly matched. It has just been a great series through the years. There have been some exceptions. Our first year wasn't much fun back in '99, but as things have moved on, it has really been a good series. It's really not related, but when I was an assistant here back in the '80s, it really wasn't much different. We had some great football games with them, and I think that has continued on."

On whether it's better to force the Spartans into being one-dimensional, or just take what comes Iowa's way:

"A lot of times, it's what you do defensively. You just try to make people play left-handed. We're not sure what that means. Take your pick. Do you want their quarterback picking you apart, or do you want one of the three running backs running at you? It's really quite a dilemma, and they've got a veteran group up front. I know they graduated a couple of guys, but they have been playing really well as a group collectively. They've got tight ends that block well. To me, you have to play pretty balanced, and just try to do your best."