

9/20/2011: 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:

"First of all, I'm happy for James [Vandenberg]'s recognition. He was certainly well-deserving. He did a good job of leading our team back, and that being said, we're certainly happy to get the win. It was not looking good there for about 40 minutes, and then we came to life a little bit. We did a good job of finishing the game, certainly. I was happy to get the win. It was good to be at home.

"All that being said, we continue to have a lot of work to do. We've got some positives working for us right now, but a lot of work to do ahead of us. That's where our focus turns here today as we get going for Louisiana-Monroe. They just came off a real tough loss to TCU. They played extremely well and gave themselves a very real chance to win the football game, so we'll have our work cut out."

On what it says about the quarterback position when the top three leading rushers in the conference consist of QBs:

"Well, I think things tend to go in cycles a little bit, but I'm not surprised. I haven't really looked at the stats. I'm not sure who all those guys are right now other than certainly Michigan's quarterback, who has just been a very prolific producer. I think we're seeing it week in and week out. I know

this is our fourth straight week of playing quarterbacks that have a lot of designed runs. That just seems to be the direction college football is going right now."

On how the defensive approach changes when facing a mobile quarterback:

"Yeah, very few teams are running the old Wishbone, things like that. We played Georgia Tech a couple of years ago, but anytime the quarterback is a threat to run, that alters your preparation because it's just one more area of responsibility that the defense has to be responsible for, and it puts pressure on you."

On the progress of his other receivers beyond Marvin McNutt:

"I was very pleased. Mainly because when we came out of camp, I wasn't sure what we had, what our receiver situation was outside of Marvin McNutt. You know Marvin has proven himself in conference play and looked like a good Big Ten player. But when we came out of camp, that was a huge question mark for us."

"For Keenan [Davis], I think he has taken big steps the last two weeks. That's really encouraging. I think Kevonte Martin-Manley was the same way. Certainly, that was his best day Saturday, and he showed some signs a few weeks ago. So for us to have a representative team, we're going to really need some help at that position in particular. We were concerned about that coming into this season, and I think at least we're making progress, which is good."

On what he has seen from ULM thus far:

"Yeah, it's a very difficult preparation. It kind of goes back to the question two questions ago just about what they do offensively. They're very diverse. They almost have two separate attacks out of two different personnel groups, so it's really a tricky preparation. Defensively, I'm not real

sure, I'm thinking back 13 years, my memory isn't that good anymore. But I'm trying to remember a preparation quite like this defensively. They're really, uh, it's very unique. They've got good, athletic defensive players, so they got us scratching our heads a little bit right now. On both sides of the ball right now, this is really going to be a challenge for us to get ready for them, and on top of it, they're playing really well right now. They've a very veteran football team."

On if he learned anything about James Vandenberg during the fourth quarter against Pitt he didn't know before:

"Well, I think we all came into this season with a good feel about James, and very optimistic. He had only been a two-game starter coming into the year, but I think we all looked at him a little more differently. I think we've looked at him like he was a starter last year, even though he wasn't out there. He has earned our trust and our confidence just through the way he is on the practice field, everywhere you see him. But all that being said, he hasn't played. You know, I try to temper my enthusiasm for him and I still do. He has only started five games in his career, so he has got a lot of work to do still.

"He had a lot of bumps on Saturday, too. There were some times when he got stuck in the mud a little bit, and things weren't real clear for him. But obviously he ended up doing pretty good there in the second half. I think as I said a couple of weeks ago, we're going to have some ups and downs with him through the month of September. I think that's true of any new player. But all that being said, we have a great feel about him. He's a tremendous young guy and really has got all of those characteristics you look for in a quarterback. So we're just looking for him to continue to improve, and that's certainly going to help our chances to have success."

On if Vandenberg's physical tools and demeanor remind him of other QBs he has been around:

"Well, I think physical tools are all different. It's interesting. We had Matt Rodgers in here, speaking of the same topic. Matt was our honorary captain here this weekend. My last year in '89 was his first year here as a starter. We were 5-6 and he had a lot of ups and downs that year. Then the next year he led Iowa to the Rose Bowl, and the year after a 10-1-1 season, so it all came into place for him.

"The guys we had back then, we had Matt Rodgers, [Chuck] Hartlieb, Mark Vlasic, Chuck Long, all guys that just, quarterbacks like Brad Banks, the championship quarterback, Drew Tate. All of the good ones have a certain air about them I think. Different personalities and all that kind of stuff. But at the end of the day, they lead the team and they move the team, and that's what good quarterbacks do, no matter how they do it. Some guys use their feet better than others, all that stuff. But at the end of the day, they lead the team."

On the changes Vandenberg made last Saturday as the game progressed:

"I think it was a team thing as much as anything, too. Our receivers did a better job of getting open and we protected a little bit better. I think we just started playing better collectively, and certainly James did, too. That's why games go 60 minutes, because 40 minutes into that one, it wasn't looking so good for us, that's for sure. The good news is things fell in place for him, and hopefully it will help his confidence. It's always good for players to experience good things at any time, and I think it should be good for our entire team's confidence, hopefully."

On how he coaches kickers through struggles and with the hopes they regain their confidence:

"Well, it's probably like any position. You just try to enjoy the positive I think. You know usually, it's like anything in sports in general. I think golfers go through slumps with

their short game, their putters, or whatever. Baseball, pitchers lose their stuff at points, even the good ones, and hitters go through the same thing. There really is no panacea, there's no magic potion to get good. for guys. I think you just go back to work, you really study what you're doing, and work hard to improve. If you're not hitting the ball, you go out and hit balls. That's what you do. Shooters in basketball do the same thing. I'm not a good 'Dr. Phil' guy. You just go back to work and just keep swinging the bat."