

9/27/2011: 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:

"We were certainly happy to get the win Saturday. I thought the guys played pretty well for the most part, prepared well for the game. I'm also very happy obviously for Tom Nardo. He's a great story. A fifth-year guy that was a walk-on when he came here and earned a scholarship this past year. He has just been playing really good football for us throughout this entire season, so I'm just really happy for him. It's nice to see his efforts recognized."

On whether cornerback B.J. Lowery or offensive lineman Nolan MacMillan will be back next week:

"Yeah, unfortunately with Lowery, I just heard this morning he's going to need a couple more weeks. We were hoping to maybe get him back this week. But right now, it looks like he's going to be held out for at least two more weeks. With Nolan, he made progress last week and was able to practice a little bit. Hopefully we'll continue to move him along as the week goes on."

On having a bye week this early in the season:

"Well first of all, you have no choice. You just take what you're given. That being said, some years it means more than

others, but this is one time where I felt back in the summertime this was going to be a real positive for us. We have a really young football team. We've graduated a lot of really good players over the last two years, so we're a team that's clearly in a developmental mode right now, probably a little bit like we were back in '08.

"That being said, I think this comes at a really good time for us. We know a lot more about our team and our personnel now than we did a month ago, and it gives us a chance to maybe re-think what we're going to do and how we're going to move forward. The nice thing it does, whenever a bye week comes, it gives guys who are nicked up a chance to get back and get healthy, and we have a couple of guys in that category, so that's a positive."

On his initial thoughts of Penn State running back Silas Redd:

"Well, I haven't thought about it and I have not looked at one play of them this year. But I can tell you this – we saw him last year, so it was no secret. He's an excellent football player. They had a really good back that has played there the last couple of years. It seems like they always have a really good back. When Redd showed up on tape last year, it was like, 'Whoa! Is this guy good.' I have no idea what his stats are, but I'll go out on a limb and say he's probably doing pretty well, and it comes as no surprise. He's a top-notch running back."

On the development of the receiving corps:

"Yeah. We've had a couple of good stories, and that might be as good as anything we've had. We all felt fairly confident that James [Vandenberg] was going to play well at quarterback, only because we've had him in the program, then we saw him in game action two years ago and felt good about what he did last year. So that was a positive. The bad news coming out of camp, I wasn't really sure we had anybody that could catch the ball

consistently outside of Marvin McNutt. He was really our only experienced guy coming back.

"If there's one thing I am pleased about, it's the development of that group overall. Even the guys that aren't playing have been catching the ball the last couple of weeks and doing it at a different level than they had prior to that. So I'm happy with the development and the progress. That being said, we've got a long, long road in front of us. But at least you could look at the last couple of weeks and say there's some potential there."

On the rushing attack, and particularly on running back Marcus Coker:

"Well, Marcus is a guy that really had a tough year last year for that first part of it. Then in the second half, he really got involved after coming back from an injury and did a lot of good things for us. Certainly, he finished up on a strong note. Unfortunately, he was not at full speed during most of camp, so he didn't really look that good in our first game or two. But I think the last couple of weeks, we've seen him start to climb back, and obviously we're going to need him to be with us. Now the next task after getting him back to full speed is to find some relief for him. We need to help him out along the way, so that's going to be the next challenge. I think that will probably take some time."

On what a game like the one vs. Pitt two weeks ago does in terms of confidence for Vandenberg and for the offense:

"Yeah, you're right. That was hardly our plan going in. Sometimes those things happen. But like anything else, you have two choices. The guys kept competing, so that was the first good news. The second thing is we closed the game out. We played pretty well in the last 18-20 minutes of that game. The idea is to play a full game, but at least in those 18-20 minutes, we looked like a different football team. It wasn't

just the offense. Obviously, they had to score. But it was a team effort.

"We got off the field on defense and finally played well on special teams. We had been horrendous. In that game, we had been really consistent overall. It was a positive step, and I think we took another step last Saturday, but we've got a lot of steps in front of us to make right now. But the good thing is at least we're taking steps, and if you're moving forward a little bit, at least you give yourself a chance."

On whether Vandenberg needed a game like that to boost his confidence and solidify himself:

"Yeah, I wouldn't say he needs them, but it certainly doesn't hurt. James, you can only evaluate him on what you see in practice. He has always been pretty much the same, and he has been pretty much the same now in his six starts since he has been here. He just has a good demeanor. He keeps his poise. He keeps his focus where it needs to be, and as a result, he has played pretty well so far. We all think he's certainly capable of playing better, and that's the task out there for him."

On how much he converses with his son Brian, who is an assistant with the New England Patriots:

"He's probably the only person I talk to during the season, quite frankly. I talk to him more than my wife, which I don't really talk to my wife very much. We'll talk a couple times a week. It's just a father-son thing, and we also do the same thing."

On if he talked to Brian following the Patriots' loss to the Bills last Sunday:

"Yeah. Like anybody after a loss, you're just looking for answers."

On whether he has found something defensively that wasn't

there earlier in the season, particularly against Iowa State:

"You know, I'd even go back to the Pitt game, at least our issues were a different kind of issue, if you will. We didn't tackle well in our Week One or Week Two. Week Two, I believe, we just did a horrible job of contain with the football. That's going to be trouble against anybody. If you're playing a good team, then you're really in trouble, and that where's we found ourselves. We haven't completely solved that issue, but at least we're getting a little bit better. We still aren't tackling the way we need to, but at least we're improving a little bit at least off the last two weeks.

"Then the big thing two weeks ago was we gave up big plays, which is not a good thing, either. I mean, you name the three bad things on defense – don't tackle, don't contain and give up big plays. A lot of times, they go together. But they had a couple of plays that were well-conceived and executed very well, and we gave up a couple of easy big plays against them. So our issues have been a little bit different every week, but at least on film, you can see us playing a little bit better, and there's reason to think that maybe before the season's up, we might have a decent defense here."

On whether the changes in the secondary are permanent and on the development of safety Jordan Bernstine:

"Sure. It's actually been two weeks since we kind of re-configured things a little bit. Moving forward, unless something happens, that is our plan. I think right now we're, I wouldn't say settled, but not planning any major changes. And Jordan has been a great story for us. We need great stories every year, and we usually have a couple. He's a fifth-year senior that had a very difficult and challenging injury two years ago that really knocked him out the whole season. It was a pretty nasty injury, but he has come back now and had a good spring. He was moving around well, doing a lot of good things, and it has just continued on.

"Unfortunately, Week Two here, he had strep throat – I just heard about an NFL player that had that and missed a game last weekend. He missed our second game, has come back now, has started two games and has played really well. I would add too that he's playing really well on special teams, too. He's doing a lot to really help our football team right now."