

11/8/2011: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

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're certainly happy to get the win Saturday. It was a very hard-fought game against a good Michigan team. It was good to get the victory, and now we face another really big challenge here certainly with Michigan State coming to town. It's another tough game for us and a very, very strong team in all areas. Very well-coached. Certainly, it's going to be a tough challenge for us."

On trying to make teams that want to be balanced offensively one-dimensional:

"Well, I think most defensive teams take that approach, regardless of who you're playing. You always try to make a team a little bit uncomfortable, but I think it's tougher when a team is balanced, and certainly Michigan State is that. They have the capability of throwing the ball very well, and they run it very well, too."

On what impresses him about Michigan State's defense:

"I mean, where do you want me to start? We think they're probably the most talented and active secondary that we've seen. Their linebackers are typical Michigan State. Those guys are really good players and they get to the ball very well,

and it all starts up front. Those guys up front do a great job of playing their scheme. Like last week, it's a totally different package what they do defensively.

"But the bottom line is their players – all 11 guys – play it very well. They understand it. It's not like you have to sit in a room for eight hours trying to figure out what Michigan's going to do, or Michigan State. They have an identity. The challenge is trying to execute against them. They're are both just really, they have good players and they play really well."

On what he sees on film with Michigan State quarterback Kirk Cousins and what he means to its offense:

"Well, he's a tremendous football player and has been for quite some time. Beyond that, I don't know if you were at the Big Ten Luncheon back in late July/early August. He spoke on behalf of the student-athletes and gave you great insight on the type of person he is. You can tell he's obviously a very, very strong leader. You can see it on the field, but also being at that luncheon I think really gave 1,800 people pretty good exposure to the kind of young man he is. That means an awful lot to a football team, or any team, if you got a guy like that who's a very talented player, but also has that kind of make-up. It's a nice thing."

On how much emphasis gets placed with certain groups dealing with loads of injuries:

"First of all, I think injuries are the hardest things for coaches and players to deal with. I think most of us realize that. You cover sports for a living. These players invest an awful lot to make it out to the field, and when you have an injury, it's just so disappointing to be removed from activities that they've worked hard to be part of. It's a really hard thing. Then coaching-wise, it's a challenge. Not always, but they tend to run at one position and it just seems

to be something that happens. I think any of us in coaching realize that your best plans never seem to work out, so you just have to be able to adjust and adapt, and that's part of the challenge in coaching."

On whether he has to alter certain drills or preparations when injuries mount with one group of players:

"I don't think there's any question about that, and then certainly with the scholarship reductions that have gone on in major college football for nine years, it's a different world we live in now than when I left in '89. Numbers dictate that, and then injuries certainly add to that."

On if any lessons have been learned from last year's November slide that could help with ending this season strong:

"We'll see. We came up short last year, and the year before that was the opposite, so we'll see. I shouldn't say that. '08 was the opposite. We'll see."

On if this is when senior leadership is counted on heavily:

"Yes and no. Yes in that, yeah, yes. No in that, really, it goes on all season long. I think that's probably the beauty of football, and particularly college football. All 12 games are very, very significant. They have different reasons and different ramifications, but at the end of the day, there has been so much talk of divisional play, conference races, and all that stuff. The one thing that hasn't changed is the more you win, the better off you are, and the more you lose, the worse off you are, so that's just kind of how it works."

On how much can be learned about a team at season's end:

"Again, I think you learn a lot. But I'd also counter by saying I think you learn every step of the way, including spring practice. Basically, every step of the way, it's a very dynamic process."

On running back Marcus Coker's continuing development:

"You know, we're really pleased with his play the past 4-5 weeks. I think he got off to a slow start this year. There was a lot written about that locally, and I made the comment that he got nicked up quite a bit during camp. My experience is when players aren't able to practice in a consistent manner, then it usually shows up in performance."

"I think that's what we saw with Marcus in the first half of the season. But in the last 3-4 games, I think he's starting to get into the form that we kind of hoped to see him get into. He's a tremendous young guy with a great attitude and he has been a really great team member, so I'm happy to see him have success out there."

On how cognizant he had been of division races and being in it despite the earlier loss to Minnesota:

"You know, as I said earlier, it is different this year. I'm not suggesting it's not because there are two races now instead of one. But again, it's as simple as the more you win, the better off you are. Last week, we were basically toxic. Now people are talking about conference races again. We just won one game and I know we have three really tough games ahead of us. That's really what we're worried about at this point."

On whether he tells the players about still being able to play for a Big Ten title:

"I'm guessing they look at the papers. Well, let me retract that statement. Guys under 25 probably don't look at papers. They look at whatever they look at, the Internet. My guess is it's all out there. That's all you read about or hear about. They're all probably aware of that, but I think all of us know we have a very tough game on our hands this week. Nine days ago, we didn't play well enough to win in our conference, so I hope they're thinking about what it takes to play well enough to win."