

8/28/2012: 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:

"I'm sure like most people, we're eager to get going here. Everybody has been practicing hard I know around the country and our team has done the same thing. We had, I think, a productive preseason and now we're into a new mode, certainly. We started school here a week ago and this is our first game week experience like everybody else. It's a new set of circumstances."

"All that being said, we're playing a very good Northern Illinois team. It's going to be a big challenge for us and we're eager to head up that way at the end of the week."

On whether he likes playing FCS opponents or if it's just something that has to be done:

"I don't know if I have a strong feeling either way. You know, I think it's just a sign of the times. It's very, very common across the country, so it's part of the pre-conference scheduling if you will. You look at our game a couple of years ago, we had a good football team and we were very fortunate to beat [Northern Iowa]. It's kind of the way with us right now. We're looking for non-league games that look all very, very challenging. Certainly, Northern Illinois, that's the team we're focused on right now, that's going to be a great

challenge for our team."

On how the running back position will be approached going into Saturday's game:

"Basically, anybody that's healthy and with us will play. We've got three guys figured out at the running back position. We've got Damon Bullock, who had a good spring and then two freshmen – Greg Garmon and Mike Malloy. We also have Brad Rogers and Mark Weisman back with us. They're our first five guys."

On how he was able to evaluate those five players during camp:

"Well, I guess the good news is they've all had plenty of opportunity to get work in. All five of the guys I just mentioned really did a nice job. Brad had some injury issues in and out during the course of preseason, but the other four guys got in a lot of work and all had a good camp."

On how many wide receivers and tight ends are expected to be used against Northern Illinois:

"I think it's probably reasonable to think that four of our tight ends will be in the game at some point. That's a group where I think we have good experience. C.J. Fiedorowicz really had a good spring and a good camp and I'd say the same thing about Zach Derby. Zach had his best spring and best camp, just like C.J., so those two guys are our most proven guys. Ray Hamilton has done a nice job and Jake Duzey is one of the younger guys that's coming along."

"At the receiver position, again, all of the guys that have been practicing I think will be in the game at some point. It's probably a group that includes six guys, so it's just part of what we do. We play multiple tight ends and multiple receivers, so I think all six of those guys will play as well as the four tight ends."

On how he'd characterize what has happened at running back over the past years:

"I can't speculate on other guys. The guys we had played well. If you go back to 2009, we had a true freshman be the MVP of the Orange Bowl. He rushed for over 100 yards in that ball game. Then we had a true freshman be the MVP of the Insight Bowl rushing for over 200 yards."

"So we're used to playing younger guys certainly and, you know, you play the cards that are dealt to you. That's kind of what we've done at all positions, but the running back position has been one where we've had a lot of players playing and the good news is they've performed pretty well. I'm confident the group we have this year will do the same thing."

On how much running back Jordan Canzeri has practiced since returning last week from a torn ACL suffered last spring:

"Yeah, he's in gear. But he's coming off an ACL repair. He's working. He's doing great. The recovery has gone really well. But I think realistically, we'll reserve judgment on that. I think we're looking at weeks or months before we even talk about him entering back into contact or anything live at all."

"You know, right now it's great that his rehab is going well. I mean, we're thrilled and it's great to get him back again. I think that makes him feel better and it helps the rehab process. But again, realistically, we're probably months away from having him return to action."

On how much the coaching staff has explored using Rogers as a running back vs. as a fullback:

"Yeah, again, we don't have the deepest group right now. We're basically the three running backs I mentioned a minute ago – Bullock, Garmon, Malloy – and then factor in Weisman and Rogers. Those are the guys that have gotten the most work. And Jonathan Gimm has done a really nice job, too. He's purely at

fullback. With Brad being in and out of camp, he looked really good last week, but I'd say the guys that have gotten the most work are the three guys I mentioned, plus Mark Weisman."

On whether things done in practice get changed because of what has happened at running back:

"Not especially. We've really been pretty cautious with our tackling, live tackling in practice. That's something that everybody has different philosophies on. I was talking to a pro scout the other day and they tackle frequently, which is really unusual, I guess, or at least not what I'm used to.

"But the places I've been and coming back here, we've always been pretty cautious, especially about guys that have been tackled. If a guy has been tackled in live competition, we really try to minimize those opportunities and with younger players, you do a little bit more. But it has been something we've been careful of.

"All that being said, it doesn't ensure you're going to keep guys healthy, but we feel good about that. The guys have worked hard over the last three weeks at all positions and we're with probably most teams – we need to go out and play a game now."

On how he'd assess the development of his defensive line at this point:

"I thought they improved during the course of spring practice and I would say the same thing about the last three weeks. Obviously, it's a group that has a potential to improve and needs to improve. You know, we're hardly experienced there. It's probably our least experienced position on the football team right now.

"But the good news is we did get Carl Davis and Dom Alvis back. We didn't have them in the spring. They weren't available. Those guys are working back into it and I think

right now, it's fair to say we'll probably play six, seven, or maybe even eight guys during the course of a game. I'm not sure we have many guys or any guys that can play 75-80 snaps a game right now.

"We had that a couple of years ago. It's a different set of circumstances, but I think collectively, the group is going to play well and play effectively. I'm excited to see them play and see how they do."

On the impression Nate Meier has left on him and the position he'll be playing at:

"Yeah, Nate's doing a good job. We're not going to play, it doesn't look like right now we're going to play an awful lot of freshmen. But we have moved him to the linebacker position. He's a very aggressive, very tough-minded guy. It seems like that's going well right now, so at this point, he's a linebacker and I think he's a guy who could probably help us on special teams. I think we'll probably hold on that a little bit right now, but I think if we let him go, he'd probably be a guy that could help us on special teams."

On whether there's consideration for redshirting him yet:

"That would be the plan at this point. But, things are always subject to change, as you know."