

9/18/2012: 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:

"It was good to get the win, obviously. We needed to play well and play hard. I think our guys did that, so it was good to get the win. Now we turn the page and get ready for Central Michigan. We've got them coming in here this weekend. So it was a positive step for our team and we've certainly got a lot of work in front of us."

On the running back situation for Saturday's game against Central Michigan:

"We're still waiting to find out. But I think it's probably a precarious situation for Damon Bullock. We'll see how that plays out, but I'm not overly optimistic there. And then Greg Garmon, I think we'll know more as the week goes on and we'll just see how he performs out on the field."

On if the performance of fullback Mark Weisman last weekend surprised him or not:

"Yes and no. I don't think anybody would've predicted him getting over 100 yards. But the one thing he has done, he emerged in the spring. We didn't know a lot about him. He transferred here from Air Force and was ineligible last year, so we learned more about him in the spring. He really looked

like a good fullback candidate and then he had an exceptional month of August. We felt very confident about him. I don't think anybody has worked harder or practiced any better than him over those two periods.

"Coincidentally, we started working him a little bit at running back last week – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday – but certainly didn't envision that happening. It's got to be a little bit of a surprise. But on the other hand, I'm not surprised that he performed well because he has practiced well."

On his reaction to those who say the Big Ten is down based on non-conference performance:

"You know, my response, I really don't... I'm not trying to be cute, but I really don't follow that stuff all that closely. We've got plenty of work to do right here, so that's really what I've kind of been focused on. But my reaction would be to any of those things is we all want to know the outcome before anything ever happens and I think, you know, just let the season play out. To me, evaluations of anything should be done more so at the end rather than the beginning. That's just my feeling. But that won't go over well with most people."

On if he finds himself rooting for other Big Ten teams when they play quality non-conference opponents:

"Typically, we're more worried about what we've just done or what we're going to do. I pay attention, but I pay more attention to the teams that we're going to play, first of all, and then as far as really watching it closely, I don't know if I've really had an opportunity to do it yet this year. Maybe during the bye week, I'll probably sit down and watch a game or two then. But otherwise, I really haven't done that."

On how Weisman ended up transferring to Iowa from Air Force:

"Well, I think you'd have to ask Mark. But the story I got was

that he was tired of having guys bounce quarters off his bed and he got to the point – I don't know if this is a story or legend now at this point – but he got tired of sleeping on the floor because he figured out if he made the bed perfectly once and then had to sleep on the floor, then he'd have to go through that aggravation again, so I think after sleeping on the floor a little bit, he decided it wasn't the path that he wanted to take.

"We knew some people that had coached Mark in high school. Bill Mitz and some other folks. I think that had something to do with him coming here. But all this kind of stuff has just surfaced. We were really impressed with Mark and he did a nice job last fall, but he was ineligible so our focus was on the guys who were really playing in the games. He really got on our radar screen strongly in spring practice. He just really practiced well and I don't know if we had anybody who practiced better in August than he did.

"So you know, that's the fun part of college football, seeing guys emerge and do a good job like that. In this case, it just so happened to show up on the game field."

On whether he has to make adjustments with Weisman or if he has the speed to be a running back:

"Well, the thing that's surprising, more typically with our program at least, it seems like the trend has been for guys to move from middle linebacker to fullback, if you look back as far as Edgar Cervantes back in 2002. He was a frustrated linebacker. Tom Busch, right on through. We had a lot of linebackers playing fullback. Mark Weisman, and Brad Rogers is the same way, we actually have two guys on our roster that actually carried the ball in high school. So it's unusual for us and that's a good thing."

On what he attributes the success he has had with guys like Weisman being able to step in like he did:

"I think you have to give credit, first of all, to the players. The players that have stepped up, they're the ones that are doing all the work. So that part of it is where it all starts. And then Lester Erb has done a great job with our backs – coached them, instructed them – and they're just like any other position. It takes a lot of work and thought to become proficient at that position, so it's a credit to him. But it's like anything that happens on the field. When something good happens on the field, it's because the players are doing a really great job. I think that has been the case."

On if he sees the Big Ten being more wide open than in years past:

"I don't know. My guess is, and I'm speculating, but my guess is it's probably more wide open than the experts thought it would be. But again, I think that's just football. That's college football. I'll go back two years ago. I think if you look back and look at Oregon and Auburn, where they were in the preseason rankings and then where they were in January, I'll rest my case right there."

"Again, I'm not saying this in a critical way because it's what makes sports so intriguing. But everybody wants to know how things are going to turn out, who's going to win the Heisman, who's going to be the NFL MVP and all of that stuff. But the fun of it is playing the season and seeing how things do unravel."

"I mean, I'll go out on a limb and tell you Alabama's a heck of a football team. I did see part of their game on the bus coming back from Chicago and they're an awfully strong football team. That's not a huge surprise to anybody. But beyond that, there are a lot of good teams out there. I haven't seen them yet because I'm not watching. But let's let the season play out and then we'll all have a better grip of what's what and who's who."

On what he would attribute to the defense's slow starts and also its ability to adjust on the fly and play better as the game progresses:

"Which part – Us playing poorly early or us playing better in the second half? I'm hoping it's maybe our inexperience and age. I think we're not a real veteran group on defense right now, so I'm hoping it's just us catching up to the speed of the game a little bit and catching up to the way our opponent has been playing.

"Right now, we've played three teams that play very differently than we play and what our guys are used to in practice. I'd also like to think the coaches have done a good job communicating with the players during series and just getting them to settle down a little bit. But it's something we have to do better at.

"We have to play better in the first half because it caught up to us two weeks ago and it's going to hurt us moving forward. So we've got to find a way to play better early. But the good news is we have played better as the game has gone on. But you do have to play 60 minutes and that's something we've got to work on."