

10/16/2012: 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 a really hard-fought game the other day and we feel very happy to come out with the win. I'm happy to see [Mike Meyer]'s efforts recognized. He has been playing really well for us and obviously he was a big part of the ball game on Saturday."

On what the key to success has been for Iowa's defense this season, particularly in the front seven:

"I think the guys have just worked hard, pretty much daily, and we're making progress. We were hopeful that we could during the course of the season and I think some weeks have been a lot better than others, obviously. But I think the group's growing. We're getting leadership from Steve Bigach and Joe Gaglione, our two seniors, and the linebackers are doing a good job. So you know, we've been growing a little bit, but we're hardly out of the woods at this stage."

On whether anything has surprised him about the way the defensive line has played so far:

"Um, it's still early. But you know, I thought they improved during the course of the spring. I thought they improved with preseason work. I think we've been making incremental progress

week-to-week, but we're not there yet. But the guys are working hard. I think they're giving their best and Reese Morgan has done a great job of working with a very young and inexperienced group. We're not there, but I think the good news is we can continue to improve if everybody just keeps working."

On the playing status for running back Mark Weisman:

"Yeah, he has got a sprained ankle. So that much, we do know. The MRIs were encouraging. They took that [Monday]. We'll have him work lightly today and just see where we're at. But you're asking a guy to play a position that's really demanding on the lower body to go out there and play.

"We really won't know until we see him in practice and even if he could play, I don't know how effective or long he could play. I think the bottom line is we just have to assume he's not going to be there. If he's there, that's great, but we just have to take the approach mentally that he's not going to be with us."

On whether running back Jordan Canzeri could see action against Penn State:

"Yeah, he's one of the last guys standing. So right now, if he can stay on both feet and know the plays, he has got a good chance to be in there. The good news is he got cleared, I don't know, about 4-5 weeks ago from a medical standpoint and has practiced well. His attitude's great and I think he has looked better with every week.

"So you know, that's good because we're running out of guys, but the bad news is I think we talk about him like he's a grizzled veteran player. I think he has one start here and I don't know how many carries career-wise. But at least he has been on the field as a Division-I football player, so that's a positive."

On what the key is to get the passing game going more this season:

"Well, we've been trying and we'll continue to try. You know, just in a quick nutshell for you, our passing game was pretty ineffective the first two games. I think it was pretty good for three games and then last Saturday, we were involved in a really tough defensive ballgame.

"So in a nutshell, that's where it's at and going back to those three games in-between, we were scoring at a pretty good rate but it happened to be on the ground and the quarterback was checking to a lot of those plays. As long as we're scoring, we don't care how we do it. The main thing is to score."

On what Penn State brings to the table this weekend and its success in the passing game:

"Well, they are and they're doing a great job. To me, it starts with their quarterback. He's really playing well. I think he has thrown for just at 250 [yards] a game right now. But beyond that, he's really from my vantage point, I don't coach there but looking from the outside, it looks to me like they've got several leaders on that football team. But I'm guessing he's a really strong leader for that football team. So that's what you hope for from your quarterback.

"He's doing a good job of getting the ball to a variety of guys and they're using their tight ends very effectively, and certainly their receiver's having a really good year. It's a real credit to all of them and Coach [Bill] O'Brien has done a great job with that group."

On Penn State's defense:

"They look like Penn State's defense from the last – I started watching them in the late '60s. I'm dating myself a little bit, but I'm trying to remember a Penn State defense not

looking good. The same thing with this group. Their front seven is as good a group as you're going to find anywhere and they're very athletic in the back end. They're playing really good football right now and have four straight victories. It has been a real team effort, but boy has their defense been very impressive."

On if he believes his team has started to gain momentum going through its Big Ten slate:

"Well, you know, all you got to do is go back a couple of weeks ago. We went through a very, very tough loss and we deserved it. The team we lost to played better than we did that day. You know, that's not that far in our rear-view mirror and I think that's just a good reminder of the kind of team we are. We almost have to do everything perfect and that's impossible.

"But for us to have a chance to win, we're really going to have to be doing things well, in any game on our schedule. That's kind of our focus right now. We just need to see what we can do this week to give ourselves a chance to win Saturday and then we'll figure it out after that."

On whether having Brian Ferentz on staff gives insight into what O'Brien might want to do this weekend:

"Well, I think if you just watch the tape, you can see Coach O'Brien's impact already. He has been a tremendous football coach and I think this is just my personal commentary, but what he did in New England was – obviously, that's documented – but if you look at the depth of his experience and the broadness of it, the various offenses and styles of offense he has played in, it's important at every level but it's certainly important in college. You just never know when your players are going to do well and not do well. He has done a great job in a short amount of time with what they're doing offensively.

"Brian has got his hands full just trying to work with our line right now, so I don't know how much of a benefit that will be to us. But we just have such respect for Coach O'Brien's depth and knowledge and his expertise. There's a lot of respect on our end and it's for obvious reasons. He has just been a tremendous coach throughout his career."

On what it has been like working with his three sons this season:

"Well, it has been fantastic. I started back – however many years ago – back in our program and that was a treat. I don't know if it happened by design, but it just happened. I think any dad would tell you anytime you're with your kids, that's pretty special. Especially when you're in coaching or any profession that works hard. Coaching, you miss a lot of time with your kids, so in some small way, it's a little bit of a payback. But I think in the end, it just happened to happen. It's not like there was any master plan."