

11/13/2012: 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:

"It was certainly a tough weekend, a disappointing weekend for our team. We went back to work on Sunday and had the day off yesterday. We're eager to get started again today and we've got a big challenge on our hand going up to Ann Arbor to play Michigan, who is an excellent football team. They're playing very, very well and came off a very exciting win and certainly it's going to be a great challenge for our team."

On what types of challenges Michigan's Devin Gardner presents to Iowa's defense:

"You know, I think it's just a case, I certainly don't coach at Michigan but I think it's a case they have two outstanding players. They wanted to find a way to get him on the field. He was doing a great job at receiver. Now certainly with the situation that occurred, he transitioned back."

"The thing I think we've seen is with each week, he's growing. His confidence is growing, the package has grown and he's playing very well, very effectively and he's a dangerous player in a couple of different areas."

On the issues with the running game during Iowa's current losing streak:

"Well, I think some of our personnel situations have created that, certainly. We've lost a couple of linemen, we lost a really good running back. We're not real deep at that position anyway, so certainly, your personnel kind of dictates the direction you go, as does the score of the games."

"But outside of the Penn State game, we were never really in that, so if you take that out of the equation, the other ones, it's more just driven by getting our best players on the field and doing what we think gives them the best chance to have success."

On the oddity of leading the Big Ten in turnover margin despite having a losing record:

"It's a little bit unusual. It's not totally unusual, but a little unusual. The one thing with that is it's hard to have a good football team or winning team and a winning, successful season if you're poor in that area, so I think that's not quite an absolute, but almost an absolute. Then flipping it around, if you do do a good job in that area, it doesn't necessarily guarantee success."

"But our guys have done a good job of taking care of the ball and I think we've been opportunistic defensively. The other positive is I think our kicking game has improved significantly, so those are the things we've, I think, steadily gained ground in."

On how he's preparing for Michigan defensively given the uncertainty it has at QB:

"You know, it's a little bit tricky. They're both good players. They're a little bit different in terms of what they do and how they attack you when those quarterbacks are in. So that's a little bit different for sure and nobody's going to know. As I understand it, Robinson's 'day-to-day,' which means he might be out there, he might not be. So we have to prepare as if either guy is going to play and even the possibility of

both of them playing.

"It's a little bit unique, a little bit different. We kind of went through that with Minnesota a little bit earlier in the year. You know, that's just one of the circumstances we face this week and we'll have to prepare that way."

On the challenges of having to teach a team to win close games:

"Well you know, I think in our conference that's really, at least for us historically, been a big determining factor on how you do. I go back to 13-14 years ago when we were improving as a team and that was the biggest challenge. We were playing people close in 2000, then we had to get over that hump of winning the close games and a lot of things go into that."

"But you know, teams that are successful typically find a way to come out on the right end of those close scores and teams that don't do that have records that aren't where you want them and that's kind of our circumstance right now. So we continue to work on that."

"You just never know from game-to-game what aspect is going to play a critical role, so that's what's important. Everybody is doing as well as they can."

On if his team takes any confidence in the recent success it has had against Michigan:

"You know, I think every team is different and every game is different. It doesn't hurt, obviously, but it doesn't guarantee us anything. You know, as we look the tape, they've got an excellent football team. They were very good last year, in my opinion, and I think their record bore that out and they won the Sugar Bowl. So that was a very good football team that we competed against last year and they're a little bit different. I would suggest they're improved from a year ago"

and we're certainly not the same as we were a year ago, either.

"But it just comes down to this week, who can handle the circumstances the best. The one thing we know is we're playing in a tough venue and playing against a very, very good football team."

On the challenges Michigan's defense will present Iowa's offense this week:

"The challenges of playing their defense are similar to last year. You watch the film, they're extremely sound, very well-coached. They've got good players and they play hard. I think that's what I associated with them for awhile, going back to the '80s. I think that's one of the first things I've always thought about when you think about Michigan."

"They line up with a good scheme. It's usually not overly exotic, but these guys give you some challenges that really can keep you up at night with their schemes. But the big thing is they play extremely hard and that's where playing good football starts."

"The other thing is their offensive line does a really good job. They're big, physical guys that really block well and again, I could be talking from 1985 and saying the same thing, so there are some real parallels. The faces are different and the schemes are different, I'm not suggesting it's exactly the same. Then on top of it, they've got good skill players to go with it. It's just a really good football team."