

# 2013 NFL Draft: One-on-One with James Ferentz

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While he waits to find out whether or not he'll be selected in the 2013 NFL Draft later this week, former Iowa center James Ferentz recently took time to talk with *HawkeyeDrive.com* about what lies ahead for him in the future, as well as reflect back on his days playing for the Hawkeyes.

If Ferentz is drafted, he would also be the first Iowa City native selected in the NFL Draft since 2004 when former Iowa kicker Nate Kaeding was picked by the San Diego Chargers and the first Iowa City High graduate since 2002 when the Atlanta Falcons drafted former Hawkeye wideout Kahlil Hill. Ferentz would also become the third member of his family to work in the NFL in some capacity.

Below is a complete transcript of *HawkeyeDrive.com's* interview with Ferentz:

***HawkeyeDrive.com (HD):*** Since the last time we talked after your game against Nebraska, what have these last few months been like for you as far as just getting acclimated to moving past college football and preparing for the NFL?

***James Ferentz:*** I think the biggest difference is just not being part of a team for the first time. For almost 10 years, I've been part of a football team since junior high, all the way through college. Now, I will have been a couple of months now not belonging to anybody.

***HD:*** I would imagine most of your time has been spent here in Iowa City, but have you gone anywhere else for workouts,

whether for specific teams or just with different people in general?

**Ferentz:** No. The only time I've really been out of Iowa City was when I went down to the Shrine Bowl for a week in January there. I had a great experience there, a lot of fun. But no, we've been working out with Coach [Chris] Doyle and his staff. In my mind, there's no reason to leave Iowa City. I have a coach here who knows everything about me – knows my strengths, my weaknesses. He's someone that I feel 100 percent comfortable working with and there was just no reason to look anywhere else. You know, Coach Doyle and his staff are the best in the nation, in my mind.

**HD:** You mentioned playing in the East-West Shrine Game and you got to do that with both Micah Hyde and Keenan Davis. What was the experience like, if you could elaborate a little more on that?

**Ferentz:** It was a blast, start to finish. The Shrine Bowl committee did a tremendous job. The hotel was top of the line. We practiced at a local high school, but you know, there really wasn't anything I would say was disappointing by any means. It's just really well done. A great product. I got to visit one of the Shriners' hospitals down there in the Tampa Bay area. It puts a little bit of meaning behind the game and it was really humbling and an honor to play in that game.

**HD:** What did you take away from that experience in terms of talking with various scouts and GMs that were down there looking at all of you?

**Ferentz:** It was a good introduction to the process that has been unfolding here. You know, you just kind of learn everything about it. It's exciting, it's nerve-wracking. You don't really know what anybody thinks about you. Do they like you? Do they not like you? It was a good introduction to just kind of how you need to re-adjust your focus for these next

few months and just worry about training and improving your skills as much as you can.

**HD:** Given the coaching backgrounds that both your father and older brother Brian have in the NFL, did you feel prepared for what to expect as you were first getting acclimated to everything you've had to do these last few months?

**Ferentz:** I mean, that's kind of a tough one to answer. I feel like my knowledge of the game has grown a lot in these past five years and I think it has grown a lot even in these past couple of months. But I also understand that once you get to where you end up, whether you're drafted or a free agent, it's a whole other game and everything kind of starts over again from scratch. You're at the bottom again on the totem pole. The speed of the game is going to be faster than it has been. You kind of have to re-learn everything and hopefully, I'm able to re-learn it quick and do some good things. But I also just know it's going to take a lot of hard work and it's going to be a long road.

**HD:** Since you didn't get invited to the NFL Combine, did that make you more anxious for your Pro Day since that was going to be your first major audition for NFL teams since playing in the Shrine Game?

**Ferentz:** Yeah, it was a nerve-wracking experience because kind of like you said, it was our first real chance to get out there and show what we can do. It was a lot of fun. But at the same time, even with the nerves, I felt very prepared. Again, Coach Doyle and his staff do a tremendous job preparing us. We went out there and I thought it went really well. It's hard to tell. Hopefully, it went well. In my mind, I thought things went pretty well. But you know, like I said, nobody really says anything, so it's kind of hard to tell what anybody thinks.

**HD:** What have the different interactions with NFL teams been

like for you, whether they came at the Shrine Game or during Pro Day or just when teams come to Iowa City to see you work out?

**Ferentz:** I feel like a lot of it is just them trying to get to know you, what kind of person you are, what kind of team player you are. You know, obviously they're going to bring up any questions if you've had any issues off the field, which I have, so I had to explain that a handful of times. But you know, nothing really out of the ordinary. I just feel like they're trying to get a better sense for you as a person and what you're all about.

**HD:** Since you brought this up and this was actually going to be my next question, about the two incidents from your true freshman year, did you prepare yourself for the likelihood of being asked about those again even though they happened 4-5 years ago?

**Ferentz:** Yeah. I think naturally, anybody who would be interested in me, that would come up. But you know, I tell the truth. It was my first year on campus. It was part of growing up, being immature, not being a real team player. You know, those experiences were unfortunate. They're part of my history and my career. But at the same time, they helped shape who I became. Obviously if I could go back in time, I wish they never happened. But at the same time, I think it helped take me to places where I've gotten to.

**HD:** As far as your football qualities go, what are teams saying to you about what you could provide to them on the field?

**Ferentz:** You know, there really hasn't been a lot. Just a lot of personal information they ask you about. You know, nobody has really talked much about what could I bring to their team. I think those are discussions that are left for them and their coaches. Right now, I'm just trying to make a good impression

and trying to help show the kind of player I am, the type of team player that I could be. Hopefully, I've been able to sell some strong point where I can contribute in some way.

**HD:** Now have teams been looking at you as a center like you played in college, or have they talked to you about possibly moving over to guard? I ask because I know some people probably look at your height and are thinking you're too short to play center. Is that something that has come up?

**Ferentz:** I think my height would make me too short to be a guard. But no, it comes up. People wonder, "Can you play guard?," and that's something that I did do early in my career. You know obviously, I just tried to get into whatever I could being a third-string player. But I think I'm mostly being looked at as a center. But like I've said to everybody, I'm totally open moving to guard. I have nothing against it. I think I could go and play it. I feel the most comfortable at center, but that doesn't mean I'm limited to center as well.

**HD:** How many teams would you say you have talked to at this point?

**Ferentz:** That's probably not something I'm supposed to talk about. My agent Neil Cornrich has said not to.

**HD:** And just to clarify, you have the same agent your father has then?

**Ferentz:** Yeah. Neil represents my dad and James Vandenberg as well right now as a current guy coming out.

**HD:** As far as your plans the weekend of the draft, do you see yourself watching it or are you just going to be with family and completely tuning it out until the time comes you get a call from somebody?

**Ferentz:** Yeah, I don't think my phone call would come until Saturday, if it was to come at all. I mean, I've always

enjoyed watching the draft growing up. I always like watching the first round. That's something my mom has always scratched her head at is, "How can we sit there and watch the TV for three hours and nothing ever really happens? They just sit there and draw names." But I'm looking forward to spending that weekend with my family. I know the Hawks are practicing that Saturday and I think that Thursday, so I'm sure my dad will be busy with the team, as will both my brothers. But I have two dogs I'll probably spend the day with, my fiancée and my mom hopefully will be around if she can. But you know, it's just some time that I'll probably spend with the family and just try to enjoy time with them.

**HD:** So to be clear, there won't be any storyline of you being at Iowa's open practice Saturday and you getting the call while that's going on?

**Ferentz:** Hahaha. No. No. I'll probably be at my home just trying to relax a little bit and try to enjoy these last few weekends with the family.

**HD:** I brought up earlier how both your dad and Brian had chances to coach in the NFL. What advice have they given you, not just preparing for it, but as far as what to expect once you know where you'll be?

**Ferentz:** You know, they said you just got to be ready to do whatever's asked of you and try to make a good impression every time you walk into the building, whether it's on the field or off. That's something that I think is one of my strengths. I've always been a hard worker. I've always understood my role. I've always embraced that role. And really, if I get the chance to go anywhere, I'm just excited to try and take advantage of that and hopefully find a way to stay.

**HD:** Just from some things you've said earlier, I almost get the sense that not getting drafted (if that happened) wouldn't

completely disappoint you then?

**Ferentz:** No. Like I said, I'm not sure what to expect, what teams think of me. It could be only one team likes me and they might not have to waste a draft pick on me. I'm just excited to try and get an opportunity to get somewhere and then obviously, regardless of if I'm drafted or I'm a free agent, you know, it's all about what I do once I get there. So I can't get too worked up with what happens this upcoming weekend. I think my focus should be on making a good impression, trying to show that I can contribute to their team somehow, someday and you know, just find a way to stick to a team.

**HD:** Have you gotten a chance to talk to any former teammates that have gone through this process before as well?

**Ferentz:** Yeah, I've brought it up a little bit. We haven't gotten into too much of the details, but we've talked a little bit. Marshal Yanda has been around the building. You know, I'm just trying to get a gauge for what to expect and the storyline has been kind of the same. Once you get there, you got to show what you can do for them and just take advantage of every opportunity you get.

**HD:** When you do get a chance to reflect back on your Iowa career, I know obviously last year wasn't what you envisioned, but looking back on the last five years, what do you feel you'll take away from that?

**Ferentz:** You know, just the memories. I had a great five years at the University of Iowa. I know this past season didn't go as expected, but it's funny you bring that up. We were just talking about that the other day and this past season didn't go as expected, but what I think is a great representation of Iowa is that last game. We're not going to a bowl game, but it's still a rivalry game and 70,000 fans still were in the stands. So that's something I'll always remember, coming out

of that tunnel, the goosebumps. That's just a feeling that's hard to describe and I know I'll be chasing the rest of my life.

**HD:** Finally, when the dust settles for you and you at least know where you're going, whether you get drafted or not, what makes you feel you will be successful at the next level?

**Ferentz:** I just think my love for the game. I just can't envision my life without football. You know, at times, football can be a real pain. But it's just something that I don't think I can live without and I'm just hoping that wherever I get an opportunity, my work ethic can help drive me forward and show that I can contribute to a team. I'm just really excited and you know, the future, it makes you nervous, it makes you excited, it makes you feel a lot of things. But I'm just really anxious to take on the next chapter of my football life.