

2013 Big Ten Media Days – Kirk Ferentz transcript, Day Two

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

So Thursday morning during the second day portion of the 2013 Big Ten Football Media Days, I placed a recorder at Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's table and managed to record the entire 2-hour duration he spoke to various reporters from both the state of Iowa and nationally.

Afterwards, I agreed to a collaboration of transcribing the entire 2-hour segment with Jon Miller from *Hawkeye Nation* and Marc Morehouse from *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*. We each spent our nights back home transcribing 40 minutes worth of Ferentz speaking on Thursday and have it all presented here on each of our platforms.

Two things worth mentioning beforehand: 1. As I said, this was broken into three parts. Miller transcribed the first 40 minutes, Morehouse the middle 40-minute portion and I wrote out the final 40 minutes worth of Ferentz audio. 2. The questions came from all different reporters throughout the morning, so it's not as though we each spent 40 minutes talking to Ferentz ourselves. I'm making this distinction now in the event you see some repeat questions and answers in this transcript.

All questions are labeled with the letter "Q" while Ferentz's responses are labeled with his initials, "KF." Without further ado, here's everything (literally) that Ferentz said Thursday in Chicago.

PART ONE (as transcribed by Jon Miller of *Hawkeye Nation*):

Q: Are you guys doing any different jerseys this year?

KF: We are not really planning on it. No. I kind of like our black and gold, get back to looking like we should look, hopefully. There is nothing in the works right now.

Q: You have had a hand in putting together Iowa rosters for 24 years. What is the crux of an Iowa roster? What is your strategy?

KF: It's true in any program, you have to get players who are going to fit into what it is you are going to ask them to do. That is the key. It is true of any program and probably the biggest thing I learned in the 1980's was that some schools have certain parameters they use. They have absolutely standards and make few exceptions about size. We don't have that luxury. You think back to a center like Joel Hilgenberg; he weighed 235 or 240 his senior year and he might be as fine of an offensive lineman as I have ever coached. Mark Sindlinger might have been six-feet tall. He backed up Hilgy in 1983 as a true freshman and started three years on three very good teams. One thing about coaching is you learn from your players. you fast forward with us in the Orange Bowl in 2002...after we did our first joint press conference, Pete Carroll and I were talking. He was talking about Palamalu being the last guy they took. Pete wasn't there when Troy came to school. His uncle was on the staff, they had a scholarship pop open late and they drafted him. You had two of the best strong safeties in the last few decades playing in that game with he and Bob Sanders, who wouldn't pass the size card most places. We can't be a size or speed team, a combine team. . I think about the Giants in the 1980's. their defensive linemen looked like offensive linemen. Every team has their personnel quirks. I just saw a film on the Steelers..it was not at our house, as we don't have the NFL Network at our house, which is a sore subject. We were at one

of our kids houses and they had a film on the Steelers defense one of the best of all time. You look at how teams are formed. At Iowa, you need to keep an open mind. It's more about mentality and personality and perseverance. You have to have requisite skill and ability, but the mental part is more important because it's a hard race to run. It;s not for everybody.

Q: How much does that color what you do on the field and the players you get. If I recall correctly, you wanted another player and then wound up with Bret Van Sloten. It seems like you can just go find them.

KF: We had our eye on him for some time. Once you meet him and his parents and his sisters happened to be with him the first time I met him, you met the whole family and you knew he was a winner. He is an exceptional young man. I have told people in the private sector that I don't know when his career will be over, but I would hire him in a heartbeat. If he can't outsmart you, he will figure out a way to win somehow, someway. He is a tremendous purpose and great student.

Q: Was Iowa his only offer?

KF: I think we were then some other people got involved. With him, it was more about intangibles than anything else. We had heard a lot of good things prior to meeting him. It was kind of like Mike Elgin. that happened later and we were 'supposed' to offer him a scholarship, but sitting there with his mom and dad, we couldn't not offer him.

Q: The theme here seems to be Iowa guys..

KF: Something about them conveys to you that they will find a way to be successful. They did it in the classroom at a really high rate. On the field, they were not the most gifted for athletic of guys, but boy they were determined, smart, physical and tough. Those guys have a chance...they find a way to rise to the top.

Q: You have had some Cadillacs thought...

KF: Adrian developed into one, Christian walked in as one. They don't walk in here often like that. The bottom line, I learned from our wrestling program in the 1980's, it's not where a guy is when he gets here it's where they are when he leaves. To be a good college football player, it takes a lot. It's a sacrifice time wise, energy wise. It;s not for everyone. To be really good, you look at Elgin; he carried a 3.85 in Engineering and started three years in the Big Ten. That is not your average bear.

Q: This day and age, do you find four and five star players who are overrated?

KF: All the time. The NFL blows it on draft picks and they have a lot more invested. They get to do a lot more research. They have so much information and they blow it on picks. People change. College aged students change. they change as students, people and athletes. Wherever you may be when you get there, it's what you do once you get there that determines things. It happens frequently. In basketball vs football, in football you don't see a guy from Decorah compete against a kid from Chicago or Ohio, because they don't play them. Decorah doesn't play St Ignatius in Cleveland. You don't get that opportunity. Whereas in basketball, you see a kid from a small town compete against a kid from a bigger town. In that sport, you have a chance to make more of an educated projection I guess, as to how a guy will be. But even then, Drew Ott when he came to our camp a year ago, June, 14 months ago, I think we had offered him. We really liked him, but he got destroyed in our camp. But no kidding, you weight 207 pounds, would you mind getting in a three-point stance and going against a tackle. No kidding. We put him in an uncomfortable position and he didn't look good, but he showed up last year and worked hard every day and the reasons we thought he would be a good player, we saw that every day last year and he is not 207 pounds anymore. We made that

projection and they are not always right. Just like Ike Boettger, he is a quarterback in camp and we asked him to put shoulder pads on and blocked and he looked terrible, but he ran like AJ Edds. We do more projecting. There are ten schools in the country where you can pick guys. There is nothing wrong with that, that would be OK. But they don't all pan out.

Q: Could you coach them?

KF: I think I could coach anywhere, but I like where I am at.

Q: I think you like that challenge.

KF: It's a part of our challenge. The guys we are talking about, Bob Sanders, Nelson, Clark, those guys were fun to coach. Someone made a point yesterday about a walk on carrying something extra throughout their careers...same way with someone injured...they have a different appreciation for being healthy than someone who has never missed time. Those things can be advantages. I don't pretend to know all of our wrestlers, but talking to the Brands' and Dan (Gable), it sounds like they have had a lot of guys who have done their best wrestling in college. That is the whole idea of anything you do in collegiate sports; a guy improving, striving to push his boundaries and seeing how good he can be. You can get some unique stories.

Q: What is the verbal clock now like what it was in 80's and 90's

KF: Back in the 1980's, early verbal commitments came much later, as a rule. you might have a guy who grew up in Iowa City and wanted to play at Iowa his whole life, but as a rule everything happened so much later. It wasn't always peaches and cream then, either. Those were the days of four or five coaches sitting in a kid's house on signing day. I remember spending at least four days in Marceline, Missouri...myself and another coach. It was comical...we were at an eight unit

hotel, it was like spy vs spy for the first day...but after a few days we were eating every meal together, thinking "will this kid make his mind up?" I bought two shirts at the Marceline clothing store because I ran out of clothes. He didn't come to our place and a year and a half later he called and wanted to transfer to Iowa and we said thanks but no thanks. That was in late January. I could have been home with the wife and kids. It's never been perfect. With earlier commitments, there will be more decommitments That stands to reason. Consumers have all the rights. It's true in recruiting, too.

Q: You talk about a leap of faith in recruiting..as the commitment clock accelerates, does that leap gets larger?

KF: As coaches, you have to be careful about writing it down in ink. Where it really gets tricky...lets say a quarterback would commit to you and you are not 100% sure he is totally committed..it gets tricky to try to recruit other ones. It's a new dimension that has been added to the game. It is interesting. Things can happen. teams have bad seasons, a guy might jump off the ship. Coaches change jobs frequently and guys might jump off the boat then. It will be a fluid process, but that is a good reason for early signing period. Everyone in our conference is totally in favor of that.

Q: Do kids want that?

KF: Why wouldn't they? It's an industry now. This is hard for anyone to deal with. Flattery and attention is nice but it can affect people. Parents have most definitely changed. Any high school coach would tell you that who has been in it for 20 years. Any high school teacher would tell you that...any teacher, any level. The world is different. There is a lot more...it's all about me kind of stuff. That is the world we live in, too. If you are involved in team sports, that is one of the challenges you have in coaching.

Q: Is that more of parents wanting their kids to star, they've invested a lot of money in the process?

KF: Best way I could say it, there was a time recently where I would tell you most players if you give them truth serum and read their minds, they want to know when they would hit the field and how much will they play and where will they end up. That is what they were thinking. You could count on the parents to ask about the education, what are the graduation rates, etc. Parents are still saying that, but there are a lot of them more interested in the playing time than education, and that is just my opinion and in generalities. There has been a shift. There is one 'what is in it for my son as a player'. We should all be interested in careers, but there is so much more involved here.

Q: Do you have to be more careful with projections?

KF: They don't all work out. I would counter it and say...I can't compare percentages but when you draft first rounders, sometimes they don't work out, either. A lot of them can disappoint you. My second year in Cleveland, we drafted a linebacker at 19. He wasn't on the roster two years later and wasn't a good special teams player. The one thing in the NFL, when you draft a first rounder the one rule is they better play. If you want the owners to be patient with you and believe in you, they are not happy when first rounders don't play. That happens a lot. In our case, we are further down the line in development. Sometimes kids peak earlier and things like that. There are a lot of variables. I just read an article recently, I think they had a series on the basketball draft, recruiting classes from the last 15 years, it's amazing how many of those guys you never hear of and they were can't miss coming out of high school. There is no fool proof system. No 100 percent. When Christian Ballard came in, he could have gone anywhere in the country. Adrian didn't have that chance, he was more of a Midwest recruit. Four years later, Adrian is a 1st round draft pick. Riley Reiff,

Nebraska hit him late. He wasn't heralded and if he would have stayed he would have been a top five pick. He still made a good decision to go, I am not saying that. There is no absolute.

Q: You know the players you can and can't get. When you meet the parents, how much of that goes into the decision?

KF: When we came here 14 years ago, we had a good idea of who and what we wanted to be and how we wanted to do it. That hasn't changed much.

Q: What shaped that?

KF: 30 some years of coaching...

Q: But at Iowa, when you came here as a head coach, you knew what the challenges were here, the kind of players you could get...

KF: In general terms, I will double talk here a little bit...we have not had an extraordinary about of NFL receivers. In the 1980's we didn't have any NFL backs or D-linemen, but we have a lot of guys in the NFL now who have been in the secondary or defensive line. There are certain things we thought were important and certain things you look for in players. The bottom line, we know we are not going to start on the inside lane year in and year out. That is not how we are. Maybe there were some exceptions in the 1950's. you know where you are going to start, so you have to figure out how you are going to get to the front of the pack.

Q: Was this a longer out of season? Do you look harder at things, any bullet points you wanted to change?

KF: I don't know if it was longer. I guess it was, because we had a lot of free time in December and January relative to things I would normally be doing. We did our player personnel evaluations prior to Christmas last year and you don't do that

when you are in a bowl game. Everything got moved up a little bit. We tried to pretty retrospective on everything we do, every segment of the program. I think the clear thing we had to do was what factored into our lack of success you can't do anything about and what are the things you can do something about and spend your time there.

Q: You have said Greg Davis will be a better Iowa coach this year. What does that mean?

KF: We had two transitions, with Norm and Ken leaving. The difference being that Phil was already in the program. He knew the program and payers and we didn't wholesale changes things defensively. That was a modest transition as opposed to Greg not knowing anyone; the players, the staff. Things were moving faster. I was committed to not wholesale...a very high percentage going his direction, with the terminology and all that stuff. So there was a lot of learning and teaching going on. That was traumatic for everyone, coaches included. Those of us who had been here, it was all new. Brian hadn't been there, and it was all new to him too. This year, we are all a little more comfortable with everything and Greg is more comfortable with our personnel with what we can do and can't do. that will show up. Greg is an excellent coach, teacher and human being. He fits the profile of the guys we have had as coaches and coordinators. He is right in there with the class of people we have.

Q: Chuck Long brought up a point yesterday, bringing Bobby Kennedy in, someone Greg knows, could make a world of difference.

KF: They are not quite like a married couple, but it's close. They go back and forth pretty well. There is a real comfort level. That is what happens when you are with someone you have been with for a long time. They have a great relationship. That is an advantage.

Q: What do you see as Chris White's secret in recruiting right now? He has been away from game a few years and has hit the ground running.

KF: I am smiling..he has a great personality. I am laughing at a text he sent out on his first or second day of vacation. It centered around a lobster they were getting ready to eat...but anyway.

Q: I think he tweeted that picture.

KF: That was a classic. I have a flip phone, so I was trying to figure out what it was. I did see it on an iphone, transferred it over. I was entertained. He has a great personality. He is a real intelligent guy. Our players have taken to him very quickly and that is our backs as well as the guys involved ins special teams. They enjoy his demeanor and it seems like some have been receptive to him as well.

Q: Are you surprised to see recruits committing without a campus visit?

KF: Yeah, that is concerning, too. What if they show up and don't like it? I think we have given them a good framework. When I came out there in 1981, they used to have the college blue book. What I knew about Iowa was a lousy record and the head coach was a square jawed ex-Marine from Texas. that is what I knew about Coach Fry, because the blue book said it. I got a haircut and a tie and came out and interviewed. Now, there is so much information out there so it can happen more. Kids didn't commit early back in the 80's and 90's. They didn't get an offer from Coach Fry until the end of the weekend. The dating stuff is gone, this is all mail order stuff now.

Q: You seem to place an emphasis of the student in student athlete, you have a few guys here taking summer classes..how much pride do you take in your program's graduation rates?

KF: I was talking with Bret Van Sloten yesterday. Both of those guys were studying in the car and they were studying yesterday morning. People throw numbers out in recruiting visits and people don't check the numbers. I've told a few young people that they might be talking about their women's basketball team, but I know their football numbers. We are really proud of what our guys do. Our players get great support when they get on campus from the get go. We think it's important. I have had three kids in the program. The most lasting accomplishment a player will achieve in college is to get a degree. Football will end at some point but that degree is there for a lifetime. In this day and age, if a player doesn't get a degree it's because he chose not to. That is where coaches and support folks have to step in, because when you are 22 years old that is not #1 on your list, but we have to emphasize that. That being said, there will always be a player or two who chooses not to finish. It's sad, but you hope they come back at some point. Dallas came back after they won the Super Bowl and got his degree after the Super Bowl. Andre Tippett did it, Mike Tittley did it too. He was doing well in his professional life, but he had a young family and he didn't want to be a hypocrite with his kids. He came back and got it. Those are good examples of the way things should be done.

Q: There are three QB's in the running here. Have you thought about practice structure and how you want to let them have the same looks and all that?

KF: That is what we did in the spring. Everyone got an equal opportunity, good and bad. What I mean there, a mix of first team and third team. We will start out that way. There is no blueprint for this thing. You have to be fair to the players in the competition and fair to the team. My suspicion is things will look a little different in August than they did in April. The entire team will. We assess that as fast as we can and work it accordingly. Having three in the race, it's

not easy. It's easier with two, but that is not the case.

Q: What do you expect to see from them?

KF: I don't have any expectations other than hoping all three will look improved and I think they will. You can't predict it, but looking back on things, after going through a spring where they were really running the offense and looking at film all summer and then 7 on 7's, I would assume they are all farther down the road. It will be a matter of what they do in camp but that will be based on how the rest of the team supports them. Whomever is playing quarterback this year has a good chance to be better supported than James Vandenberg was last year.

Q: Does that include wide receiver?

KF: I am including everything. Still our biggest question marks outside of QB is our receiver position. We are young, we don't have the depth or the firepower we need. But the good news is we have a fairly veteran line, a group of tight ends that are veteran and runnings backs we didn't have last year. there is a chance on the whole to have a better starting point than we had last year.

PART TWO (as transcribed by Marc Morehouse of *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*):

Q: Do you see Mark being a 20-carry back

KF: I could see that. I could see that.

Q: Would that be good for this offense?

KF: What did he have, 5.3 [yards] a carry? Twenty times five, I'd take that.

Q: For a while he averaged 8 yards a carry.

KF: Twenty times eight is even better. That's unrealistic. I

think right now we have a chance to have a nice combination, whereas last year I didn't know if we even had a back.

Let's not forget, Damon Bullock refused to block anybody a year ago, including the last day, where I . . . it just looked like he was allergic to blocking. He has improved so much. We had a couple of guys who had good springs. I'm not sure he's No. 1 on the list, but he's right at the top. He did a good job. I think he's really starting to understand the game and really enjoy the game. That's fun.

Q: Is versatility his biggest strength?

KF: I would say that, yes. In some ways he's like Albert [Young], though I'd say Albert was a little better runner. He'd lean a little more to the run game, but he was capable in the passing game. Damon is really capable in the passing game and a better runner than I thought, actually, so I think that will keep improving.

Q: Do you see Bullock and Weisman on the field together? Maybe Canzeri?

KF: It's possible. We'll see. Jordan had a really good spring. That's encouraging. He got better as the spring went on. The last time you guys saw him was one of his better days. That's encouraging. So, at least we have three guys who've been on the field and who've been tackled in real games and things like that. That's a good starting point.

With our lack of experienced depth at receiver right now, we have to use anybody we can use to move the ball down the field.

Q: Have you had a chance to see your incoming freshmen receivers?

KF: We don't see them at all. I see them in the building.

Q: Will QB be 100 percent won on the field? There are certain

things you'll need to see.

KF: There's a lot that goes into it. Leadership is a part of it, and that's on the field and off the field. I think all three guys – I don't want to speak for our whole staff, but they aren't here, so I guess I should – but we're comfortable with all three guys. It's like when we had Stanzi and James in the room together. You felt if either one of these guys takes the ball, you're going to be OK. They act like Big Ten quarterbacks. Jake, C.J. and Cody, they all handle themselves well. They have different personalities and all that, but I could envision all three of those guys playing for us. That's a good thing. All we can judge this August is what they do on the field. If I find out one of them is sleeping through meetings – I know that's not going to happen, these guys aren't wired that way.

Q: Will part of the evaluation be them being able to handle that pressure?

KF: That's part of it, going through tough times. Nobody went through a worse time than Brad Banks in the second half of that Iowa State game. I think that's an overlooked part of the Brad Banks story. It doesn't get much lower than that, the way that game ended and his role in that. For me, when I think about Brad Banks, I think about how he came back from that and what he did to move beyond that. That to me is the best part of the Brad Banks story. I don't know when it's going to happen, but whoever's in there is going to go through [tough times]. It's part of football. You're going to experience things you wish you hadn't gone through. So, what are you going to do? Get in the fetal position and get the crap kicked out of you? Or are you going to get up and play? Going back to '02, Brad got back up on his feet and went to work and ends up being the player of the year in the conference. You want that kind of resiliency, for a quarterback especially. I'm not sure who's fault it was when we lost that game. I'm sure it was a dead heat between Brad and me. He and I were 1 and 2 on the

hit list in that game, so what are you doing to do? Surrender? That's what you're looking for, because it's going to hit the fan. Whoever it is, it's going to hit the fan.

Q: Last year, CJ Fiedorowicz was a bit streaky in his production. Most of it came after game six. How does that happen? Were defenses taking him out?

KF: It can be both. We don't go in saying we're not going to throw to a guy. Defenses dictate that. Part of it is he improved, too. We recruited CJ really hard and we had to. He came in with a lot of hype. That's one of the dangers of all the recruiting hype. These guys are still first-year players. Let them be first-year players, let them grow. You're not afforded that luxury when you're highly recruited. He progressed, he's improved. I'm hoping to see his best football this fall.

Q: Forty five catches is high end for a tight end at Iowa. Can he be more than that?

KF: I hope he has 60. That'd be great, I'd be OK with that.

Q: Do the other tight ends have that kind of potential?

KF: We like our group. Ray is just effective. He gets it done in his way. We think Henry is more of a blocking-type guy, more of an H back player. Jake Duzey and Kittle are guys we think can be effective in the passing game, too. We have five guys we feel comfortable putting on the field. That's position we have some depth. We don't have many, but that's one.

Q: Do coaches discuss at all how you could be better in the perception game with the SEC?

KF: We had a meeting in February. We had another one in April, the Monday before we finished spring practice. The focus was more on some of these NCAA legislation issues and what we could do to slow that train down. I think those were effective

meetings. We got a lot accomplished. Certainly, we met with the commissioner [Jim Delany]. We met with him yesterday. Those are topics we talk about, but I think we've all been trying to win, from day 1. I've been in the league for 14 year now and have worked with a lot of great coaches. Some results have been better than others, they've all come in and tried to recruit as well as they could and they all tried to win as much as they can. I think as a conference we're doing the same thing. I think it all comes and goes a little bit, but right now, I don't think there's a question with the SEC. They're playing on a little different playing field. Some of the teams, not all of the teams. Some of the teams are really healthy. I'll go back, too, we played South Carolina [2009 Outback Bowl]. I think I'm correct in saying they lost to Georgia at Georgia 14-7. I think it was 14-7. Georgia had three No. 1 draft picks on that offense and they came up with 14 points against South Carolina. The team that Alabama had last year and the last couple of years, to say their whole league is like that, I think we deal in generalities sometimes. I'm not knocking Georgia, but that was at home, 14 points, three first rounders on their offense – the quarterback, a back and a receiver. We ended up beating that South Carolina team. Things are relative, but there's no denying and just looking at how those guys have been drafted or will be drafted out of South Carolina, what they've got going right now is unique. I'd say the same thing about Southern Cal five years ago. What happened to it? I'm not saying that's going to happen at Alabama. One thing in college football, it doesn't seem like anything lasts forever. Just look at our conference. You've just got to keep working, keep pushing forward.

Q: [Alabama and NFL draft]

KF: That's rare. We had one guy picked. Maybe that's part of the reason we were 4-8. That's going to happen. My point is five years ago, who was ever going to beat Southern Cal? Well,

a lot of teams beat them last year. I don't mean that disrespectfully to them. Now the question is who's going to beat Alabama? That's a good question. The team with the Heisman Trophy quarterback might, but outside of that, I don't know who came close.

Q: Is speed the biggest thing between the SEC and the Big Ten?

KF: I think that's stereotypical. We're a grind-it-out offense kind of a conference. Mike White [Illinois coach from the '80s] threw the ball 70 times in 1982 against us. Was anyone paying any attention to that? Coach Fry threw the ball a lot. We've had a lot of fast guys in our conference. We've had a lot of skill position guys get drafted through the years. If you just study recruiting, the population swing to California, the south, warm-weather states. There are differences. There are a lot of ways to be successful. You have to figure out what's best for you at you're given school, given conference and just try to maximize it.

Q: As the dean of the Big Ten coaches, what does that mean to . . .

KF: That's the first time I've been asked that today. Dean Farber. I'm not sure I want to be Dean Farber, though. That's what I think of every time. First of all, you never want to call a football coach a dean. That's a misnomer. But no, I've been around awhile.

Q: Pretty proud of that? It's hard to stay at one place for a long period of time.

KF: I think it's a reflection of two things. I work with great people, day in and day out. And then I work at a place that's a little like the Pittsburgh Steelers. I think traditionally our administration gets it. They understand there are going to be highs and lows. Fortunately, our administration hasn't panicked when things haven't gone as well as we would all like them to go. They've been steady. It's a little like the

Pittsburgh Steelers owners. They operate the same way. Growing up in Pittsburgh, I have an appreciation for that. I feel fortunate to be at Iowa.

Q: Do you put Scherff with Bulaga, Reiff?

KF: Time will tell. Those have finished their careers, both ended up being first-round draft picks. Brandon, first of all, has a great attitude. He has a nice skill set, good size, speed all those types of things. Going back to 10th grade, it's really amazing the road that he's traveled. He's got a great opportunity in front of him. I think I know him pretty well now after however many years it's been, I'd be really surprised if he doesn't keep getting better. He was starting to play really well before he got injured. It's a shame he got hurt, but he's back and he's got a lot of football in front of him. He's got a chance to be a really good football player.

Q: NFL? Have you guys talked about that? You must have a plan for that.

KF: For about 30 seconds [they talked NFL]. As you get down the road, if there's a discussion to have, we'll have it. It's realistic to think that could happen. If he ends up in the same seat as Riley or Bryan, that's a good seat to sit in. You can't really make a bad decision. What I would say the challenge for him is to get in that seat. That's the challenge.

Q: Hayden had opportunities (USC). I'm sure you've had some of the same opportunities. Why stay?

KF: I can't speak for coach Fry, other than I would speculate, I know he was excited when he came to Iowa. I don't mean that he wasn't excited when he came here. I doubt he had any idea how good it would be. That's just my guess. How could you at that point? I told you about that Blue Book. — Iowa, 19 straight losing years. I know I didn't have idea in '81. I was

going to be one and done and get out of here. I just wanted to get a resume started, really, and get back east. I know what I went through. I think a lot of our coaches on the staff in the '80s went through the same thing. I don't want to speak for coach Fry, but I think he found out what a great place it is to live, to work, all of those things. We've gone through the same thing, my wife and I have gone through that, twice. First, it was a no-brainer to come back because of what we learned, but you know, it was nine years later, too, so you never know quite what it's going to be like. I didn't know anyone in our administration when I came back. That's an important thing in my job. Coaching is an interesting profession. I probably appreciated more than any thing, Iowa has given us a great opportunity to have a great coaching life. Personally, I've had a great coaching experience. We've also had a great personal experience. We've been allowed to be a part of the community. That's something really hard to do in the NFL. I think that's really hard to do in the NFL. I think it's also hard to do if you're changing jobs every five or seven years. I don't know how deeply rooted you can become. In our case, we have five kids, which makes it a little bit unique, too. The tradeoff of a better job, or what the experts call, quote, unquote, a better job, how do you define better? What's your criteria? For us, it's worked really well. I've appreciated that.

Q: What I meant by better was a school that recruits itself.

KF: When I'm talking about that, the national people say, this is a better job, like everyone would assume even the worst job in the NFL is better than the a good job in college. I've been in the NFL, and I would disagree with that. I don't think there are that many great jobs in the NFL. There are some that are outstanding and there are a lot that are OK. I don't mean that in a negative way, I mean comparatively. To me, if you don't have a compelling reason to do something, why do it? That's how I look at everything, especially the profession. If

you get fired, that's a compelling reason to look for another job. That's rule No. 1 in coaching.

Q: The word "commitment" gets thrown around a lot. It seems to have change over the years. Have you had to change with it?

KF: I think we all do a little inventory, personally, on players who are, quote, unquote, committed. You try to get a sense of what that means exactly. One thing about recruiting that's never changed is the consumer has all the rights. The customer is always right. They can change their mind all the way up to February. It's always been that way and until we get an early signing, that's going to be the way it is. I developed a motto when I was at Maine. I told my wife if I ever come home and say I'm surprised by something, just hit me with a pan. That's kind of the same thing in recruiting. You can't be surprised. You have to realize things can change, anything can happen and keep pushing forward.

Q: Is it a case-by-case basis?

KF: It is, but I think know with the commitments, an early commitment would be fall of a guy's senior year. Now, that needle has moved a long way on the charts. The farther away it gets from February, the more chance those could change. Your team could go 0-12. The coach could get hit by a bus or might change jobs, all of those things. If I were a prospect and something did happen, maybe you would want to consider a change. It's part of the game. It's changing every day.

Q: Do you think there will be an early signing day?

KF: I think there will be, yeah. I think there has to be.

Q: Where would you put it?

KF: I think as a conference I think we're all in agreement the best time would be that December signing, when junior college kids sign, that third Saturday in December. Right during that

dead period, right after the three week contact. To me, that'd be the perfect time. I still don't understand the resistance. All it is is an opportunity to sign. They don't have to sign. I don't think anyone is going to lose a scholarship. It just gives everyone a chance to lay their cards on the table and say I'm 100 percent sure now or still not quite there. That'd be great for both parties, I think.

Q: Some coaches have star treatment in recruiting. If you're recruiting a kid with a few more stars and you really need him, do you give them a little more leeway in terms of them looking around?

KF: That's one of the benefits of early signing. It would give you chance to find out how firm that commitment really is. We're still talking about December. There are exceptions, but until you get into the thick of the winter time and who's who and what's what, You just have to keep an open mind about everything and cover your flanks. All of your flanks.

Q: Is September too early for a signing period?

KF: I think down the road that could happen. I could see this thing moving up farther and farther. I would be in support of official visits in June. With the way it's going right now, I think that would be a good thing. I think we'd all like to see one parent involved if not two or guardians involved in the process on official visits. We've got some catching up to do. Recruiting has changed so quickly. The standards we operate by, the regulations, haven't changed. There's a lot of work to be done there. It's got to be good work and logical work, well-thought-out work, not some of the stuff that was presented back in the winter time. I think we need to be a little more thorough and develop more of a consensus on what needs to be done.

Q: More like basketball?

KF: Two things. I'm smiling because, and I tease Fran, but

they've done a much better job lobbying than we have, basketball guys. They get things done, I give them credit. They're a lot smarter. They go to the Caribbean and Hawaii to play tournaments, we go to Syracuse and Pittsburgh. So, they're a lot smarter. But again the differences, and I said this earlier, as a basketball coach you get the opportunity to go watch camps where a young guy from West Branch might be competing against name a great basketball school, maybe one from Indianapolis. They get to watch guys compete head-to-head. We don't get that opportunity. There's a lot more projection in football. I don't think we want to go as far as they've gone calendar-wise, because I think it's a little bit easier for them to evaluate their prospects. To that point, I think in the years forward we'll see a shift towards the spring. Realistically, in the last few years, prospects hit it hot and heavy starting in March. Families visiting campuses unofficially. Last year March, that was really a landmark. Before our spring break, we had a young guy in, a scholarship guy and his family, I can't ever remember that happening for an unofficial visit. I can't ever remember that happening, and it just kept coming.

Q: Do you speed up the evaluation now, too?

KF: Yeah, yeah, everything is accelerating. We'll be doing a lot of junior recruiting this winter.

Q: [Question on projecting verbal commits]

KF: I think you have to understand what appears in front of you might not look that way in October, November, December. That's what you have to understand.

Q: [Getting what you want out of recruiting as far as the personnel you need]

KF: Those are questions you ask yourself every day. You've got to keep a bullpen going and you've got to keep looking. The good news is in our sport, there will be good stories that

emerge in the fall. This is one of the biggest phenomenons to me is that I'm still trying to figure out how a guy in January who's a two-star guy becomes a four-star guy in March. So what happened? I think remember a guy we visited at a high school in a Midwestern high school, I was there in high school, and the young guy had been on our campus for junior day and I went to his high school and watched him play some basketball and thought, we're nuts if we don't offer this guy. So we offered him and then I think it was just a dog pile. We were the second team to offer him. Two weeks later, it was just like a dog pile. I'm trying to figure out what happened in that two-week period. Maybe all the other coaches came in and saw the same thing I saw. It's an interesting phenomenon and it happens to a lot of guys. But again, there will be a lot of new stories that emerge this fall. So, our list right now that we're working off of, we'll put the brakes on it and then in October, November, we'll see what it looks like. There'll be some new prospects added, so if someone jumps off the boat, there will probably be someone there to put on the boat. Some schools will have their guys locked up and they won't be worried about that. They'll be working on juniors in September.

Q: What's your number of scholarships this year?

KF: Probably 20, 19 or 20, somewhere in that ballpark like usual.

Q: Made some inroads into Nebraska the last couple of years. What have you seen out of Drew Ott?

KF: We took the redshirt off Drew last fall during the season. It was two things, we were inexperienced on the defensive line and had a real need. We also were really impressed with the way Drew was working everyday. It was a 50-50 proposition. We decided it would be the best thing for him and he was in agreement with it, so we through him out there on the field and thought he did a really good job. The good thing is I

think that experience would help him moving forward. That was our thought process. He wasn't really ready to play Big Ten football last fall, but I think that experience will push him forward faster than we could've done. He had a really good spring and we're looking forward to seeing him on the field the next three years.

Q: Has he developed the way you thought he would?

KF: Absolutely he has. He's got a great attitude, mindset. He doesn't say a lot but he works hard.

Q: I know you're not out on social media . . .

KF: How do you know that?

Q: You're right, I don't know that.

KF: I read some of those sites. The NBC stuff, they have the "Talk." Those are some awful reports, by the way. I guess they're short because they have to be, anyway.

Q: Some of the stuff that I get it about James and his career has been pretty bruising at times. I don't get it. The expectations he faced coming in as basically the best high school player Iowa has had in a long time, do you think there was some incongruence there?

KF: I don't get that. I've gotten some feedback on that. I just don't get that. I don't know. Other than the fact he's had an appendicitis attack, I'm trying to think of something negative I could say about James and even there, he had it at a good time as opposed to October, November. It started with his first appearance, the Penn State game [2010]. It was pretty phenomenal really. He's an outstanding football player. If there's anything negative being said, I don't get it. What's the knock on him?

Q: He hasn't taken his game to an all-Big Ten level, based on his reputation coming out of high school.

KF: I read the preseason watch lists. There are like five Ohio State guys on there. There is a good group of linebackers in our conference right now. I'll go back to when I was here in the '80s. In the '80s, for awhile at least, every year Michigan had three offensive linemen on the all-Big Ten team. I told our guys your all-Big Ten will come in April when the draft comes. The best evaluators in football are the NFL people. They're they best evaluators of college football players. And I'll put an asterisk by that, you can be a great college player and not be a great pro prospect. The objective is to be a great college player if you are a college player.

James Morris is going to play for a long time when he gets out of college. He's an excellent player, he's a great athlete. His attitude and the things he does where the fans can't see and the media can't see, he's over the top. He's in an elite category. [LB Christian Kirksey also was at the BIG media days.] The last time we brought two linebackers to media day it was Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds. Certainly, two very different personalities now we're talking about. Two totally different personalities, and yet in a way very similar. Edds plays a position, as you guys know, that position is invisible in our defense, pretty much, but we don't play very well if we don't have a good player at that position. Chris is as talented of a guy as we've had at that position since I've been here. You guys have met him. Tremendous young man, unbelievable attitude. And then James, I mean this guy is a really good football player and he's a tremendous guy. Pat was a great leader and he had his own delivery. James' delivery is certainly different, but I listen to James talk and the depth of his thoughts, (whistle). What award did he win? That political science award? I was definitely not a candidate for that award. He's just on a different level.

I know this, I wouldn't trade him.

Q: [Are Iowa's LBs underrated?]

KF: I don't know if they're underrated. There are a lot of good players in our conference. I'm not slighting anybody. It's conceivable there could be six or eight [candidates for all-Big Ten linebacker]. [Max] Bullough is one, right? [Ryan] The guy Shazier at Ohio State. And there's another one . . . [Chris] Borland from Wisconsin. Those three guys are really good players, but our guys are really good players, too. We have a lot of good quarterbacks this year, which one do you want? There are four or five you'd love to have who are coming back. In '02, there wasn't anybody. In '02 at this meeting, quarterbacks were terrible in this league. The sky is falling, our conference is getting beat. So, Ohio State wins the national championship that year and Brad Banks is player of the year and runner-up for the Heisman. You just never know, but our three guys are really good players. If James is a lightning rod, that's a shame. I thought you were talking about Vandenberg. I know he was a lightning rod. Greg, me and him. I was just visiting with someone last night who was up in Minnesota visiting with Chad. Chad said they love James. It wouldn't shock me at all if he made their team. Sometimes, you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, but you're still you. There are a lot of things that go into it, but it's easy just to say it's that guy. I'm trying to figure out what James Morris' downside would be. If we could find 10 more of him . . .

Q: Is it as simple as you guys were 4-8 last year?

KF: Yeah, it's as simple as that. When you're 4-8, everything is bad. Believe me, first-hand I understand that.

Q: Could it also be he's the local guy? The expectation is four-year all-American.

KF: Marv Cook was a local, too. He was pretty good. They're the same kind of guy. I don't know what people are expecting or what they want him to be, but we're thrilled he's on our football team.

Q: QB question [Freshmen maybe and the possibility that Nic Shimonek could play next year?]

KF: I don't think ever. Tate was a run-and-pass guy. I can tell you one who was good as a freshman was Dan Marino. I was there when he was a sophomore. He did pretty well when he got in there and the rest is history. It happens. If a guy is good enough, it's not impossible.

Q: [Question on Northwestern and the difficulties of prepping for two QBs]

KF: They're both good players. They're very different players, but they're good players. We certainly had a hard time containing their offense. [The one-two QB punch keeping Iowa off balance.] It's like preparing for two different offenses, absolutely.

Q: You always use baseball metaphors. What does that go back too?

KF: I love baseball. I loved it when I was younger. My dad coached it. It was to the point where I almost played that in college. I thought about that. I got derailed for a good reason, but I just like baseball. There's carryover in all sports. I wasn't a great basketball player and I didn't wrestle. Baseball was something I enjoyed. I don't follow it closely, but I just like baseball. It's part of my DNA.

Q: Do you follow the Pirates much? They're in second place.

KF: [Someone got hurt, didn't catch the name.] Keep your fingers crossed. Clint Hurdle is an excellent manager. He's got one downside and it's that he's a Michigan fan. That's a downside. So is Jim Leyland, by the way. I got to meet Tony LaRussa through Cal Eldred. That's one of the thrills of my life to get to visit with him a little bit. All three of those guys would've been great football coaches, too. They're great guys.

Q: Do you get a chance to go to any games at all?

KF: We used to go to an Indians game every summer in July. We haven't done that now in a couple of years, but our kids were Indians fans. We went to a Pirates in the new stadium. I remember it being 105 degrees in the sun. Not a lot, though. I still like baseball, but my wife doesn't especially, so that ends that discussion, right?

Q: You could go to a Kernels game?

KF: We just never seem to find the time.

Q: You're enjoying the Pirates?

KF: This is the year. This is the year. They finally invested a little bit and they're keeping their players.

Q: Who was your favorite player growing up?

KF: Baseball? Probably the most memorable thing I can give you, my first trip to Forbes Field. I was in elementary school or might've been in junior high. I'll never forget seeing Roberto Clemente for the first time. You just talk about beauty and grace. There was a certain charisma and electricity that he gave off. And then in the bottom of the ninth, he drilled one to center. When he hit a ball, it went on a line. When he threw a ball, it went on a line. There wasn't much out his way that he wasn't going to track down. He was a great defensive player. If he had played in Chicago or New York, he'd be an all-time legend. He comes to mind. I was born in Detroit. I saw a guy wearing an Al Kaline T-shirt the other night. I checked in the other night and saw a guy in a No. 6 Al Kaline T-shirt. I thought, you've got to be kidding me. No. 6 Bill Russell, a great number. Al Kaline, Clemente, those are two pretty good guys. I always liked Manny Sanguillen. He was enthusiastic and unorthodox, but a great player.

Q: Where were you when you heard about Clemente?

KF: You never forget that. My dad always had the radio on in the morning. I remember laying in bed and his room was around the corner and both doors were open and I heard the news. It was really a sad day. The guy who wrote "When Pride Still Mattered" also wrote the Clemente book. Brian has read it and said it was excellent. I haven't gotten to it. My eyes are bigger than my stomach. If I retire, I'll at least get to read that. It's unfortunate. He's misunderstood a little bit because of the language barrier. He wasn't comfortable with the media, so he got unfairly slammed a little bit sometimes. Tremendous human being. That was a tragic thing. Tremendous player and a great person.

Q: Northwestern question on the two QBs, Trevor Siemian and Kain Colter.

KF: It's like preparing for two different offenses. Whatever the solution is, we have to come up with a better one because we sure didn't contain them last year. We really struggled. We'll have to find a better way to defend them. It's a challenge.

Q: Have you ever used a two-QB system?

KF: We did in 1981. I'm dating myself a little bit. Probably not the same ratio, but there are some parallels. It puts more pressure on defense. You have to prepare for a throwing game and option game. The only good news is depending on who's in the game, at least you have some idea of what to expect. Nonetheless, there are only so many hours a week to practice.

Q: What do you think is tougher to defend, the pass or the read option?

KF: I'd say based on last year, they ran for about 380 on us or 400. It seemed like 500. We'll have to stop it a little bit better. That's the starting point.

Q: Question on Northern Illinois

KF: We had tremendous respect last year. They've done a great job there, going back to coach Novak. He really built a great program there. The coaches who have come after him have done a wonderful job. They've been a good football team, a good program, for quite awhile. We went into that game last year with tremendous respect for them, knowing that they had just graduated a quarterback. So here we are a year later, they have a Heisman candidate replacing a guy who could've been a Heisman candidate. It's going to be a heckuva game. We were fortunate to win last year. It's going to be a big challenge for us this year.

Q: [Rather play them at home than Soldier?]

KF: I'd rather play at home against anybody. We lost at home plenty last year. That doesn't guarantee anything. Home or on the road, they're a good football team. To do what they've done over the years, that means you can win on the road. They've been in Big Ten stadiums, BCS stadiums, that's not a big deal to them. It can only be a factor if we make it a factor. We have to play well.

Q: [Familiarity with NIU help?]

KF: We're familiar with them, but they're familiar with us. That stuff is all a wash. They were a good team last year. They lost to us in a game we easily could've lost and then they didn't lose again. That didn't surprise me. When we left Soldier Field, they were every bit as good as we thought they were going into it. The quarterback just kept getting better and better and that's a good combination.

PART THREE (as transcribed by Brendan Stiles of *HawkeyeDrive.com*):

Q: What's your policy for students and players who are dealing with off-the-field issues and disciplinary problems?

KF: In terms of...

Q: In terms of getting arrested or having issues, just what's your policy that you have established from the beginning?

KF: Uh ... OK, behavior or academics?

Q: Either way.

KF: Well, both sort of go either way. You know, if I become aware of something, probably like most people, you want to gather all the facts and then you do what you feel is appropriate. And it's probably about as simple as that, but it's hardly simple typically. And then, you know, every case has its own individual set of circumstances and there are different levels of conduct issues if you're talking about underage possession of alcohol versus something a little bit more egregious. It may require an immediate suspension. I don't know about immediate dismissal. We'd have to have all the facts in front and that's possible I guess if something is just obvious. But if you're not sure, I think if it's something very severe and bad, then we'd probably suspend the player, get all the facts and then make an appropriate decision.

Q: Some other coaches have said it starts with recruiting. Would you agree with that? Like, looking for...

KF: Policies?

Q: Yeah, kind of like looking for if you see any red flags with a prospect who has issues?

KF: That's a whole different discussion. Yeah, if you want to talk about evaluating prospects, certainly yeah, those are red flags and if we're aware of those types of things, yeah, that's a huge factor. I'm talking about players on our team that we've brought into our program. Once we brought them in, they're our players and we're going to try to be as fair, much like you would as a parent. And I'm not saying you'd never kick a child out of the house. Sometimes, I guess you do that

with an older child. But again, it's important to have all the facts and if it's something that I'd consider to be very severe and egregious, then yeah, there might be an immediate suspension until you have all the facts. There's something that I would consider to be a typical college violation. Speeding tickets, underage possession. I doubt a suspension would be merited at all for that. But it's a really subjective process and the big thing is to be fair. Because you have a lot of people ... it affects not only that player, but your entire team, your entire population.

Q: What do you feel Gary Andersen brings to Wisconsin?

KF: You know, we're going to find out. Obviously, Gary did a wonderful job. We played Utah State back in 2002 and I'm not sure if he was the second or third coach since that time. But it's really obvious they did a great job, not only last year – they had a really good team last year – but that didn't happen overnight. I got to see them on TV a couple of times last year. They were very well-coached and played extremely well. The fact that Gary is hired by a guy that knows a little something about football, he knows Wisconsin about as well as anybody, you know, I just think it's probably going to be a great marriage and my guess is we're going to continue to see great football out of the Wisconsin football program.

Q: How much do you feel like you've changed over the years? I think the speculation outside is Kirk Ferentz is conservative with play-calling, stubborn, doesn't want to change with the times, things like that. How much of a misperception is that?

KF: I think everybody evolves. In any profession, you have to do it. You know, we work with a young population and particularly in recruiting, things change and have changed just really dramatically. You have to evolve. I don't know if you change because you don't want to lose, I don't think ... not that you don't constantly evaluate your core beliefs, but I don't want to change those everyday. I don't think you always

want to change your identity. But things evolve and things change each week and all those types of things. But you know, I would just suggest this: Not to make this too general, but in sports, when you're winning, whatever you're doing is pretty good and when you're losing, whatever you're doing is the reason you're losing. So it really kind of boils down to that. You know, whether a coach is stoic or demonstrative on the sidelines for instance, if that coach wins, you need to be more stoic and that's the answer. Or if you're a very demonstrative coach, 'Hey, that's why that team's winning. The coach is very demonstrative.' And then when you lose, it's exactly the opposite. You know, it's interesting. If you watch NFL teams and they fire coaches, which happens, you know, 6-10 times every year, if you read the stories, typically, you know, 'We need a player's coach.' So they hire a player's coach and then two years later when they go to the next guy, 'Hey we need a guy that's stern.' You can write the scripts and the bottom line is there's a lot more upside when you're winning. Everybody's happier and everything you're doing looks a lot better. Case in point, up-tempo offenses, spread offenses, that's what you got to do. So ironically, that in our first championship game in the history of the Big Ten, you've got two teams that didn't get the memo. 'Oh my gosh, how did that happen?' We've had two teams go to the Rose Bowl, or emerge as championship teams out of the Big Ten championship game, that didn't get the memo. 'How could that be?' So it's simple as you got to do what you do and do it well.

Q: When Ken [O'Keefe] decided to go to Miami and you were looking for an offensive coordinator, were you looking to change what you guys were doing on offense?

KF: I was looking to get the best coach and part of being the best coach for Iowa is being the best fit for Iowa and believe it or not, I'm not so set in my ways. I don't want to call every play and I don't want to tie a guy's hands. But there

are certain things that I just don't want to see and you know, those are discussions you all have when you're in the dating process...

Q: Would you say it's what you don't want to see in terms of personality or what's going on on the field?

KF: Yeah, just how we play. I mean, there are certain plays and axioms in football, no matter what style you play, that just based on your belief system aren't going to work. You know, there's some common ground that has to be there, but the onside of that, I was looking for the best possible coach and I had a list that covered a lot of ground. I mean, a lot of demographics, a lot of age groups, different levels – NFL, Division-III – you know, I had a pretty wide range of people. I wanted to spend time investigating, but the bottom line is you really want to get a guy that you really thought would fit with our staff, with our program and fit at Iowa.

Q: Do you and Greg ... I guess, how much do you interject on your opinion of what you feel Iowa football is under Kirk Ferentz with a balanced attack...

KF: Yeah, it's, I think we've had a good communication system and it started right from the first conversation I think. You know, Greg was no stranger to who we are or what we were. You know, he knew Joe and he knew Ken. Joe Philbin worked with Greg. He knew Ken. Those guys had visited with him and then the Jim Caldwell connection. So there's some commonality there and Greg and I had met each other socially. But it became really apparent to me the first time he came in and visited with us that it was a consensus when he left campus that there's a common ground here. So I think he was comfortable with what he knew about us and I think it was a two-way street. You know, it's funny we get these H.R. memos about, 'Do this, do that.' In football, you work with each other in such a close proximity and there's daily communication. It's a really different working environment than apparently a lot of

jobs on campus are. So I think we have great communication on our staff and I think we're all, as I said earlier, he has been here a year now, so he knows us and knows our players. When he came here, he knew nobody. He knew nothing, he knew nobody. So it's hard when you're the new guy coming in and you've got to learn everything and everybody and what have you. It's a lot easier on the other side.

Q: How much of a departure has there been from what you and Ken have done up to last year with what Greg is trying to do offensively? I mean, is it night and day?

KF: Uh, you know, I don't think night and day. There are some differences in some ways. But you know...

Q: Well like you said, everybody wants you to do spread, 5-wide, no backfield...

KF: Yeah. Throw in the Wildcat. That had a crash landing. A quick crash landing. But you know, that's just football. The 46, up and down, all that stuff. But you do what you do best with your players and I think we're a lot further down the road than we were a year ago at this time. I really do. But you know, it has all gone really well. Greg is an excellent coach, an excellent teacher.

Q: In terms of change, how much do you get involved with and pay attention to what's going on with social networks and different forms of communication?

KF: We talk about it a lot. Yeah, we talk about it a lot. I'm still trying to figure out what Glide is. Do you know what Glide is? You got that one down?

Q: No.

KF: Yeah, OK.

Q: What is it?

KF: Well, I don't know. I know what Vine is. I've got Vine, I've got Instagram.

Q: Video.

KF: Yeah, so... but we talk about it a lot. Young guys keep us ... you'd be amazed. Believe it or not, we're not all dinosaurs. Jim Reid is a phenom on social media. But I mean, that's a good example. Jim's a really veteran coach, but Jim also understands you can't coach if you can't recruit and the way to get to recruits is through Facebook and all that stuff, so... and that really impressed me with Jim. But I'm not surprised because Jim wants to be the best coach he can be and realizes that's a part of. If I get to the point where I absolutely deem it necessary to Facebook or Twitter or tweet, whatever the proper term is, then I guess I'll do it. But right now, I think we have enough guys covering ground on it and I understand that's a big part of the world we live in. And then once guys get in our program, I still want to encourage them when they're in our building to look at each other and talk to each other. Communicate with each other. Do the same thing in the dining hall. I guess that's the healthy thing to do and I encourage them to do it with their friends and their girlfriends occasionally, too. You know, look them in the eye and actually talk. I think some of that old-fashioned stuff is still good, just like blocking and tackling still works in football. It'll never change.

Q: Hey Coach, speaking of football, as the longest-tenured coach in the Big Ten, what is some advice you have for the newcomers in the conference in Andersen and Hazell.

KF: Hahaha. I'm not real good at giving advice. You know, both guys got to where they're at based by what they've done, just like every other coach in the room had to obviously accomplish something to get to the point they're at in their careers. You know, you just keep doing what you do. Obviously, whatever they've done has made them successful. They're both very

successful coaches already. Much more so than I was when I came to Iowa. They come in with the good résumés, I didn't. So I don't think I'm one to be giving them advice. Maybe they could give me some.

Q: Who are some the leaders on the team that you feel will help get Iowa back on track?

KF: Well, I think you start with the three players I brought here. It's unfortunate you can't bring more. I'm just sitting here thinking about B.J. Lowery right off the bat. I don't know if we have anyone who had a better spring than B.J. I would've loved to have brought him and we've got some underclassmen too who have done a really good job. So I'm really happy with the leadership of our team since we last met in November and the feedback I get is it has been great all summer as well. So we've got some seniors, juniors, even some underclassmen and some lower guys that are all, I think, doing a good job and it's going to be a group effort. But if you look at the three guys who are here, I think they're really representative of the group of guys on our team that are thinking right and doing right.

Q: Looking at some players that maybe at the end of last year you think may have really turned it on that you think will have a breakout season this season. Are there any guys that you've noticed?

KF: Uh, really, we just got to let it all happen if it happens. I hope it does. We'll start with our backs. Last year in August, or July, I'm not sure we had a Big Ten back. In fact, I was really wondering if we did have one. I think we have two really good backs right now. How good in the Big Ten, we'll see. That's what this year's for. So we have a lot of examples of players like that, that are further down the road than they were a year ago. We'll also have to have some new guys who haven't played much step up and do a good job. Obviously, our quarterback position, if we're going to be

successful, whoever wins that job is going to have to play well. But I think we have three guys who are capable of that.

Q: [inaudible; something about if it makes doing business easier with Rutgers joining the Big Ten next year]

KF: You know, realistically it probably helps them. I think they have more to gain than we do, personally. So I think we gained a lot of TV sets, a lot of exposure. Certainly, I think we're all thrilled about that. But now they can say they're members of this conference. They couldn't say that before. I don't know if they wanted to say that. Apparently, they wanted to join. So it's probably more of a positive for them. But you know, we'll all do our part and recruiting is all about trying to identify people with whom your message will resonate with and then I can say from experience, I did coach at Pittsburgh back in 1980, there is a big difference between college football in the East and in the Midwest. I didn't know that until I went out to Iowa back in 1981. That's one of the reasons I stayed for nine years and one of the reasons I went back 14 years ago. It gets down to a matter of choice, but the first thing you have to do is get someone interested in really comparing and then they've got to make that choice. But obviously if someone would leave New Jersey or New York to come to Iowa, they've got to overcome that distance factor and you can't do a thing about that. So we have to overcome that hurdle.

Q: What differences do you see?

KF: Uh, you know, the interests, and I'll just stick with my example with Pittsburgh. You know, the year I was there, we were second in the country. I had nothing to do with it. I was a lowly GA. But, you know, if we weren't playing Penn State or Notre Dame, which we didn't play either of them in Pitt Stadium that year, we did play West Virginia, and their fans travel like Iowa fans travel, so it was a sellout. Otherwise, you know in Pittsburgh, at that time – I don't want to talk

about now, but at that time – it was all about Sundays and the Steelers. You opened up any sports section, it was all about the Steelers on Page One. Pitt was on Page Five. So I guess there's a little bit more of a pro mentality when you're in a pro area. I lived in Baltimore for three years and witnessed that. I lived in Cleveland for three years and witnessed that. You know, so we don't have to fight over that in our state. We don't have any pro teams in Iowa – major league teams or National Football League teams. So we really do have the state's undivided attention in the fall. That could be a good thing or a bad thing. But it has been a good thing most of the time.

Q: You mentioned getting to New Jersey regularly...

KF: Absolutely. Didn't get there this year. I had a wedding. I love it.

Q: What location...

KF: I'm not giving that up. Are you from New Jersey? No, I'm not giving that up.

Q: What have you seen when you've been there...

KF: We go to Ocean City. I'm teasing you. Mainly because I love it, and I screamed and kicked the first time I went there. So I'm more used to the outer banks where things are spread out. I thought my wife was insane. Actually, one of my good buddies who coaches the Falcons, he's from Philly. And who from Philly doesn't go to Ocean City, right? So she started going up there when I was in Baltimore. During training camp, I wouldn't be home for four weeks, so she took the kids up there. They all love it, so she dragged me out there the first year. 'Look at all these people.' I was miserable. Then after two days, I loved it. So that's my place to disappear. I love it.

Q: Do you think the Big Ten will be well-received there?

KF: Absolutely. I think the whole thing will be very well-received and I think it's great for the conference.

Q: When you look at the growth of the Big Ten Network, how has that changed the Iowa recruiting pitch over the years?

KF: Well you know, it has just benefited our whole conference. Everybody looked at our commissioner, I think they looked at him funny when the idea got hatched. He was sort of an enemy of the people. I can't remember the name of that character, that guy ... he was the crazy doctor. Well, that's Commissioner Delany and now everybody wants to copy him and is trying to copy him. Commissioner Delany, he's a very visionary guy and it has been great press. On the financial aspects, it has been great, but more importantly, I think we have a great conference to sell. I think we all want the conference to do well and I think it's great for everybody.

Q: How has it helped your ability to get guys outside the state of Iowa?

KF: You'd be surprised. When you talk to both fans and alums, and then obviously prospects, high school coaches. They have a feel for the Big Ten and they have a feel for Iowa via the Big Ten Network. That's something that wasn't available at one time and obviously too, the information on the Internet and all that stuff now is much different than it used to be. So there's just so much more communication and that's true in every fashion of life. But I think the Big Ten Network has been a huge deal for our conference and has really helped us.

Q: Have you thought about targeting at all?

KF: Yep. We haven't had that discussion, but it can be anybody on defense you can get nailed on it. Again, I'll just add that I think we need to really be careful about our approach to this. You know, I think I'm factual in saying there was one ejection last year in our conference and we watched it as a group of coaches last February. It was a bang-bang play and

I'll just say it – if it was one of those ones where everybody in the stands and my sister in Fort Collins watching it on TV says, 'Hey, that guy should be ejected,' then eject the player. But if there's a gray area, I think you really need to be – and again, we're not talking about a 15-yard penalty – and I can't imagine anybody involved in the game not interested in player safety and I think it was that way 30 years ago. Certainly, the rules have been tweaked and changed in a positive way, but you really need to be careful about human error and the analogy I'll give you is officiating an onside kick without instant replay. It's impossible. Even if you know it's coming. If you don't know it's coming, forget it. It's a hard play to officiate and I'd say the same about targeting, unless again, it's just a blatant ... we saw it a couple of years ago. There was one team in particular where they had a guy that was, you know, just intentionally hitting punt returners before and it was obvious. Kick the guy out. But on these ones that are too close to call, don't call them. You can't call them. It's ridiculous.

Q: Does doubt creep into the defender's mind?

KF: I think it has become more and more challenging each and every year. It still gets down to the interpretation of the rules. And then the other thing about the targeting thing, in my opinion, like the onside kick rule, it puts undue pressure and unwanted pressure on the officials and if I were the commissioner of sports, one of the objectives would be to take some pressure off them. They have enough pressure on them already, I think. I mean, that's a hard job. I have a great appreciation for their job. So I think personally, you have to be careful how much you put on them just like I would with how much you put on your quarterback. I mean, just blame it on him, right? I told the guy. I mean, that's easy.

Q: [inaudible; about targeting]

KF: I don't think anybody is teaching targeting. I can't

imagine anyone doing that. But there are players who do dumb things sometimes. I remember one we had our first year, at Northwestern, who was guilty of a really dumb act on the field and more guilty of a dumb comment afterwards. Like he thought it was OK. Yeah, you know, those need to be dealt with, those kinds of things. But you've got to be careful. It's a slippery slope and really tough for the officials, quite frankly.

Q: There are officials who would do that.

KF: Yeah. And I think the guy who got ejected last year was a DB. And it was a bang-bang play. To me, if you look at it three times and it's like, 'Yep,' there's that. 15 yards? Sure. Personal foul? Sure. That's a pretty steep penalty to me.

Q: Did you see the Clowney hit? It has been talked about recently as an example of targeting.

KF: That looked like a good football play to me, and it looked like a guy blew an assignment, from what I could tell. I mean, it was a great play on his part, but somebody blew an assignment. I mean, you don't let a guy... it was a great play on his part, but when that guy's unblocked, bad things are going to happen if you're an offense.

Q: Going back to social media, you're still a no with Twitter for your guys, right?

KF: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: But they're able to do Vine and Instagram and...

KF: They are. Yeah, it's...

Q: A lot of gray area for you.

KF: I mean, where do you draw the line? I could cite a lot of examples on Twitter. We just had one very recently in our country, right, where a very national news item took place, a

news event took place, and a couple of NFL players predictably and emotionally tweeted afterwards. I'm not passing judgment on it, yay or nay, but predictably, a day later they wanted to retract their statements and the one fact about all this stuff is whatever you put out there is out there and it's part of your DNA. So that's my concern and you know, there are countless examples of people that are older and more experienced than college athletes or college students that have regretted what they said. And it's probably a very small percentage of what gets put out there. But I've heard the argument, 'Well, if it was only one time, that's a great learning experience.' Sometimes, it can be painful. Sometimes, it can come at the absolutely worst time and the thing is, I think about my own children. Sometimes you make mistakes that really stick with you for a long time and mistakes, they're just like anything when something bad happens. It takes a lot longer to get that off your ledger. I don't see the upside to having guys out there and vulnerable to that, knowing they could do numerous other things.

Q: Do you talk about that in recruiting?

KF: I don't really talk about it. But I think if you asked any of our players, you know, if that's the most important thing to them in a college selection, then they probably don't fit well with us anyway, so that's OK.

Q: Has there ever been an instance where you've pulled an offer from someone you were recruiting because of something they said on social media?

KF: I'm not going to say that's necessarily true, but I can remember a call to a prospect. We saw some things on a social media site that were more than questionable in our minds, so I had a private conversation with the prospect about it and asked him to maybe consider taking that off his site. Then the question that would probably get asked is, 'Would your mom be OK if she looked at that? How would she feel about that?' And

it frightened me a little bit when the prospect informed me that his mom was OK with it. So that was a little bit of a scary moment, so we did make a decision to probably go in a different direction. It was a mutual decision that it probably wasn't going to be a great marriage. That's frightening.

Q: Could you talk about the progress of Cole Croston? You coached his father as well.

KF: As you know, Cole looks like a colt, or a big puppy. He has got the big hands and he's really not that much lighter than Dave was when Dave came in. But that was a little different era. But I tell you, Cole did a great job last year. He has great football instinct. He really practices hard. He works hard. He is a very good listener and yeah, he works hard. So I think he has got a really good chance to develop into a ... and we've had some really good walk-on linemen. You know, Matt Tobin started two years for us and to compare the two, I would say he's a little bit further along than Matt was at this point. But the key now is with moving forward and it's interesting. If you think about it, I coached his dad in 1982. It really puts it in perspective. It's neat. But Cole is a great young man.

Q: Have you ever coached a father and son before?

KF: Dan Hartlieb was on our team last year. Dan's just going to school now. But we have had a few instances like that and it's kind of neat we're getting to that point now where we get sons of former players that I associate with as their assistant coach.

Q: You've had some bad luck at the running back position in terms of injuries. Are you going to have to use bubble wrap this year?

KF: No. No. I wish we could, but we're not allowed. They wouldn't run fast enough.

Q: In all seriousness, is there any pressure that you could take off of them in practice?

KF: Well, one thing that I, and we've done this forever, guys that have been tackled in Big Ten games usually don't get tackled much in practice, if at all. You know for instance, Fred Russell in 2003, he didn't get tackled once in camp, carried the ball a million times in 2002. So I felt like we really didn't need to see him get tackled live. So I think it's probably a safe barometer that Bullock and Weisman will not be tackled much this camp. But the guys that we haven't seen tackled a lot, you have to see players get tackled and then conversely, our defensive team needs to do some tackling, too. But it's a question that every coach asks – What is an intelligent ratio? So it's an age old discussion dilemma.

Q: Have you seen a run of injuries at one position like you've had at running back?

KF: Yeah, you know ... I mean, probably. You know, we had a bad run last year at the line. If you think about two guys that ended up missing ... they came off the field for the seasons. Blythe never really got back to full speed once he was hurt, so there was three of our starters. And then you know, when it happens with running backs, it's a pretty noticeable position and we've had some unusual circumstances, to say the least.

Q: What's your recruiting number for this year?

KF: 18-20 like every year. You know, could be 22. Could be 18. Time will tell.

Q: How have you looked at recruiting different areas with new assistants and are you pleased with what you've seen thus far?

KF: Yeah, I've been really pleased and it's like this technology stuff. Of all the things that are evolving, nothing is evolving faster and things aren't changing any more than they are in recruiting, more so than offense, defense, special

teams. So that's just something we're just constantly looking at and then you the industry part of it is changing things, social media and how its effect is changing things, conference realignment is changing things. I mean, there are just a lot of variables. So we'll continue to look at areas and we gave a lot of thought to that one morning last week. That was one of the things I wanted to kind of go back and review. We'll have some discussion on it when we get together next week, see what we think about it. Yeah, we'll continue to look at it. But the areas we've settled in, we're not to change that, obviously. We have our core Big Ten areas, and then Texas. I don't see us changing that. The peripheral areas, it's really just how much and how little. It's not really an area we quantify. We don't have official statistics. But that's a continuing discussion.

Q: In what ways would you say you've changed as a college football coach from when you first got to Iowa up until now?

KF: It's daily. I mean, maybe not daily. That might be an exaggeration. But probably weekly or monthly. Just because things are changing around us, as I said. Our conference looks a lot different than it did in '99. It's going to look a lot different next year. So I'd start there. Recruiting has changed. To me, the game hasn't changed all that much. You could make some arguments, but not all that much and the things that are going to make you successful don't ever change. But the peripheral does change routinely and you just have to constantly be thinking about it, talking about it and then assessing how much or how little do we want to make an indentation. That's I think the key.

Q: I know you said the football stuff doesn't change as much, but when you do notice different nuances that pick up speed, do you find yourself looking at them as things you have to do more of or do you feel being the way you've been will just carry on?

KF: Well, I'll just go back to when I got here. The two

biggest complaints I heard were, 'We didn't spread it out enough,' which I assume means four wides because Purdue was having success with "Basketball on grass" and 'We didn't blitz enough.' That was the other complaint. That talk died down a bit in '02, '03 and '04. Then you know, '06 and '07 it went back up. Now it's not just spreading out, but up tempo, down tempo. I find it really ironic the championship team the only two years we've had a championship game, they didn't get the memo on tempo, they didn't get the memo on spreading it out. But I think a lot of times, you know, when it comes to football – not the other stuff, just football – we deal with a lot of generalities and whatever the buzzwords of the day were or whatever's up on the board. Again, I go back to '82. Mike White threw the ball 70 times at Kinnick Stadium, set a Kinnick Stadium passing record when we played Illinois in '82, scored 10 or 13 points. I can't remember, but I know we won. He threw the ball up and down the field, but they couldn't score when they had the ball at the 20. So you know, and at that time, we were a conservative conference. My point is, you can't just bunch things in there. The bottom line is this – if you're successful, if you win enough games, then what you're doing is pretty good, no matter what your style may be. If you're losing, it ain't good enough. Your personality, your style, whatever. The color jersey you wore. The shirts. The uniforms. I mean, Alabama's throwback uniforms look pretty good to me. They look the same as they did 40 years ago. So they didn't jump on board with the "You got to have a different uniform every week." They're the best team in college football right now. So you know, it's kind of, it's what you choose to do.

Q: Of all the labels you've heard about yourself through the years, is there one you find more annoying than the rest or one where you're thinking, "Of all the things you could say, why is this what you say"?

KF: Ah, I wouldn't call it annoying. I think they're

entertaining, actually. You know, but it has always been that way. I mean, you go back, I imagine when the forward pass got invented, that was big news, you know. And that was a big change in our game. But you know, it's one of the things you talk about in sports and what Purdue was doing was pretty good and they had great, great success doing it. But Wisconsin got their thing done a whole different way and that was probably a more renovation project that Barry did in the 90s. Just as impressive as what Joe Tiller did. I would actually argue what Barry did was more impressive just because their program was down lower. I don't think there was anybody lower in the conference in '89 when we left and Barry went there. So you know, but he did it one way and Joe Tiller did it another way, but I would say those are two of the great coaching jobs that I've witnessed in our conference in my lifetime. So you know, you just got to figure out what your best method is and both those guys changed and tweaked to along the way. It's just what you think is best.

Q: Going back to offensive philosophy, do you sense that in Year Two of Greg Davis, that the returning guys have really picked up and really impressed?

KF: Oh, there's no question about it. Greg came in last year and he was new to everything and everybody. If you've ever been through that, that's an uncomfortable thing. When you're new to an organization or group, or in our case a team, there's a lot of learning that goes on. Starting with "I know No. 14. What's his name? Does his name go with the number?" And then it just goes from there. So yeah, there's a lot of learning on that end and in his case, pretty much what he does is what we chose to do, so there's a lot of learning on the other end, too. We don't want a lot of guys learning who he was and what he was. So needless to say, you know, it's not an easy process and I think there's probably a much better comfort level with everybody involved. It'd be nice to have a veteran quarterback like we had last year, but it just didn't

work that way. James ended up being a victim of circumstance more than anything, I think. James is a great football player and a great young man. Greg is a great football coach and a great man. So yeah, I think it should be a luxury.

Q: Do you think a new offensive system takes multiple years before it becomes a luxury?

KF: Every situation is unique. You know, every situation is unique. I mean, you can find examples of it being one year before, poom, taking off. So every situation is unique.

Q: Do you think there are some offensive players that maybe fly under the radar a little bit?

KF: Well, I'll kind of go both ways on that. You know, if you go back to last year, OK. I don't know if we had a running back – a single Big Ten running back – on our team. It turns out Bullock, who would not block as a freshman, became a good running back and Weisman, who we thought could be a good fullback, became a good running back. So part of our challenges last year was we didn't have enough firepower. You probably noticed that if you watched us. We had I think a pretty a good quarterback, but we just didn't have a lot of firepower, so I think we're a little further down the road that way and we're a little further down the road communicationally. How good we'll be? I don't know. But I think we have good players like our running backs who will be better than they were a year ago. I think our line has a chance to be better because we have more experience now. That doesn't mean we don't get three players injured like we did a year ago. I can't predict that. Our tight ends, we're a little bit deeper there and we have more experience. You know, there are some things that are better than they were a year ago. But we still have some questions to answer, too. So that's what seasons are all about and that's where great stories unfold, hopefully.

Q: How would you assess from your view how Bill O'Brien handled last season at Penn State?

KF: Flawlessly from my perspective. I've got a little bit of an insider's advantage because my son worked with Bill for several years before he was named the head coach at Penn State. First of all, he was a tremendous selection. I give them a lot of credit for finding Billy. But he's a tremendous coach, a tremendous person. Great family guy. So all those things, walking into an extremely challenging situation, there's no handbook for things like that and from my perspective looking 700-800 miles away, he just did a wonderful job. I mean, he had a lot of things to accomplish before they could even practice back in August. But again, from an outsider's perspective, he handled every step as indepthly as anybody could. I think he showed during the year the kind of coach he is. He has got a great staff. Penn State has always been a tremendous program, so you know, just give him an awful lot of credit. To say it's a surprise, I can't say that. I kind of anticipated that and I only anticipate it getting better and better for him because ... that's a whole separate discussion and one I'll never really understand. That's commentary. I'm not going down that path. But I know this: Whatever's in front of Bill, he'll meet it as well as anybody can and he'll do a wonderful job, just like he did last year. And whether it's one year or five years, 10 years, growing up in that part of the country, I can never envision the day where Penn State's not a strong, well-represented program and just having a little personal knowledge about Bill O'Brien and who he is, because Bill is there, I can't imagine that program being anything but a model program.