

10/8/2013: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's teleconference on Tuesday with the Big Ten media:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"You know, we're coming off a tough game, a tough loss. It was disappointing, certainly. Michigan State played an excellent football game. So we'll take this week to re-group a little bit and try to move forward and get ready for our next opponent."

On where Michigan State's defense ranks among the ones Mark Dantonio has had after playing the Spartans this past weekend:

"Well, my guess is Mark would tell you to just let the season play out and dictate that. But I can just tell you first-hand they played an extremely strong game defensively the last week against us. It really didn't come as a surprise."

"We were obviously hoping to move the ball better and score more points and we only came up with 14. But you know, if you just go back to last year, three of the bigger games they played – Ohio State, Michigan and Wisconsin – if you average those up in regulation, those three opponents averaged 14 points, too."

"I don't think it's a new phenomenon. They played excellent defense and they certainly lost some good players from a year ago, but they replaced them with very good players, too, and"

they played an excellent game Saturday."

On the role fullback Adam Cox has played on the team this year:

"I think Adam is a great story. You know, he came here a couple of years ago, pretty much an unheralded walk-on. We certainly had plenty of those. But he's just a guy that shows up. He has got a great attitude, first and foremost, and that was one of the first things you noticed about him. You also noticed he wasn't the biggest guy in the world, or certainly wasn't when he first got here.

"But he has worked extremely hard every turn of the way and then last year about this time is when we moved Mark Weisman to the running back position. The down side of that was we lost a really talented fullback. So when we first went into spring practice earlier this year, we certainly had a strong need to try and locate somebody that could maybe help out and Adam and Macon Plewa – both of those guys – have just had really good springs. They got an opportunity and they stepped in there and did a great job with it.

"So it's a real credit to Adam. But he's a tremendous person. He has got a great attitude, a very positive attitude and a very strong work ethic. He's a tough guy and at that position, there's not a lot of glory and you don't get to touch the ball too often. But you better enjoy blocking and you better enjoy being part of the team and he has just done a great job at that position."

On how Cox has fit into his tradition of walk-ons at Iowa:

"Yeah, we've had success. The first guy I'm thinking about is Sean Considine, who is from the Illinois area. Sean came over here from Byron and ended up being a three-year starter for us and was part of a Super Bowl team last year.

"So we've had some great luck with guys from Illinois and also

with guys from Iowa. You think about guys like Dallas Clark, Bruce Nelson, and you can go right down the list. We've had some great people come through our program. I'm just really happy for Adam and I'm very proud and appreciative of his efforts."

On the status of his players that were injured last weekend against Michigan State and if the bye is a good thing this week:

"You know, we've really been relatively fortunate thus far this year, injury-wise. We haven't had too many that have really inhibited guys. I guess we hope maybe that fortune continues a little bit because we'd have a handful of guys who would be questionable if we were playing Saturday. If there's good news I guess, we're not."

"I just came out of a medical meeting this morning and I'm pretty optimistic we should have everybody back toward the end of the week, if not Sunday. So that's good news for those guys and the handful of guys we lost in the game last Saturday."

On what makes Michigan State's run defense as good as it is:

"Well, they play great team defense. That's usually what it is. Sometimes, a team might have a front that's just overwhelming or in the back end. They're good at every turn. They were good a year ago as I kind of cited here a few minutes ago. But like everybody, you graduate players each year and they graduated some guys that have moved on to the NFL."

"But the guys they've replaced them with, they just fit right in and that's part of the culture, I'm sure, with that leadership they get. It probably starts there in the middle with that middle linebacker. You know, he has been there a long time and they just play great team defense. That's the key to being successful."

"There's really no weakness in their front, in the front seven and then certainly in the back end. When you get that working together, with guys that are on the same page and very well-coached, they clearly know what they're doing on every turn and it makes it tough."

On the impact Michigan State's corner play has on the run game when it's able to play man coverage:

"It does. It allows their safeties to be more involved and they do a good job there. But if you look at our first play the other day, that's a pretty good example. You know, we blocked the ball pretty good and blocked the play pretty clean on the interior. Our receiver came in, blocked their safety and did a great job on that and then their corner was right there to make the tackle."

"We only had a 3-yard gain and I don't think you could block it any cleaner than that, so their corners do a nice job covering, but they also do an excellent job of tackling. You know, they're not those kind of NFL guys that just play basketball out on the edges. It's a really good defense."

On what he thinks of Michigan State linebacker Max Bullough and if he reminds him of other Spartan players he coached against:

"I'd go back to Percy Snow. All the way back in the '80s, they had some pretty good guys then, too. So they have a tradition of really good middle linebackers and I think he has been a four-year starter. It seems like six years. But he's a tremendous player and it's a real credit to him."

"He's just obviously a very productive guy, but from the looks on the sideline and from watching film, he looks like a real strong team leader on top of that. That's what you want with a middle linebacker, certainly, and he fits the bill."

On if the lack of organization with 7-on-7s is becoming a

dangerous concern to him in the recruiting world:

"You know, I'm not sure if it's there yet to the red-alert stage. But we're seeing some things, I think, in football that would be a little concerning to me if I was a high-school coach or if I was a parent of a high-school athlete, which I was. I had three boys that played high-school football. But none of them could run, so it wasn't a big deal.

"But yeah, I think we're going down that road a little bit and hopefully, there's a way to contain things. Just keep it appearing healthy for the people involved, for the players involved."