

10/15/2013: 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:

"We had, I think, a productive bye week. It gave us a chance to work on some things and get players healthy, so I think all in all, things went pretty well and we're eager to get back on the field today."

On whether Mark Weisman will be ready to go and the role he has on the Hawkeyes' running game if he can play:

"Yeah, that was one of our problems last year. We came into the season really with two backs who had no experience carrying the ball in the Big Ten and I think both Mark and Damon Bullock did a good job last year when they were available. But basically, I don't know if we ever had them both together for a game, so that's something we've enjoyed this year."

"We've had them both available, for the most part. Mark had to come out of the game last time, but he's doing fine. We're better with the more players we have that are experienced, that are healthy. It's better for us."

On whether he sees vulnerabilities with Ohio State's pass defense:

"I mean, we look across and see a team that's very, very talented and that includes their defense. They've got phenomenally gifted athletes in the back end and I think they're playing well. Certainly, that's the case with their guys up front, too. They have very talented guys who can get after the passer and make it tough."

"It's hard to find a weak spot on their football team. They've won however many they've won in a row, it's approaching 20. You don't do that by accident. It takes good players, good coaching and guys that are ready to go every Saturday."

On what he remembers most about Iowa's last trip to Columbus in 2009:

"It was disappointing. It was a great football game. I mean, both teams competed at an extremely high level. It was a great environment. I think that's one of the great things about our conference. You know, you travel around the conference and there are a lot of great environments to play in. That's certainly the case in Columbus."

"Any time you go there, you know you're going to be playing a tough, well-coached football team and that was the case in '09 and will certainly be the case this time."

On how close he thinks his program is to getting back to where it was on that night in 2009:

"Well, that was 2009. This is 2013 or whatever it is. You know, every season's different. Every team's different. Right now, we're a 4-2 team trying to figure out a way to win No. 5. That won't be easy this week, but that's where our focus is."

On how he feels his defense matches up against Braxton Miller and the rest of Ohio State's offense:

"Uh, well, we're going to find that out Saturday. They're extremely talented and it's interesting. If you look at them

statistically, their back-up quarterback and running back have better statistics than the guys that have started the last couple of weeks. So I think that gives you a little indication about their depth as well and then you go back to last year and that one example when Miller came out, they just kept moving.

“So they’ve got a lot of good players and if you look at their offense, pick a position and try to find a weakness. Good luck on that one. And then they’ve got some young guys that they’re trying to integrate as well, but I think that’ll make them much more dangerous.”

On if it’s more difficult to game plan for Ohio State because of the depth it has offensively:

“Well again, yeah. They’re approaching 20 straight wins. You don’t do that by accident. It takes a lot of things. It takes more than just having good players, so they’ve been very, very consistent. They’ve been pretty successful that way and if you look at the rate they’re scoring points and moving the football, that’s not by accident, either.

“So it’s everybody doing their jobs and you know, it doesn’t matter what 11 guys are out there on the field. They’re playing really well and playing at a high level.”

On whether having a heavy class load helps Jake Rudock handle complex things on the field like he’s able to off the field:

“Yeah, it doesn’t hurt. You bring that up and I’m just sitting here thinking about Andrew Luck. Not by any stretch of the imagination am I trying to compare the two as quarterbacks, but I think he was an architectural engineering major. It was something ridiculous at Stanford and if you ever hear him talk, he’s really an articulate young guy and seems like a pretty deep thinker. So yeah, it never hurts.

“But I’ve got to tell you – I’ve coached engineers that

couldn't make any blocking assignment. In their minds, they could build bridges, but they couldn't correlate that to football, so it's not always a given. But I think in Jake's case, certainly he's a sharp, young guy. He's very serious about his academic work, which is commendable. But he also does a really nice job of grasping things in the football realm as well.

"But again, I'm just going off past experiences, both here and coaching in the NFL. I don't think there's a strong correlation between that sometimes. Test scores and practical football knowledge, they don't always mesh."

On how Rudock has progressed as a quarterback:

"Well, you'd like to think you know going into things, but until players really get on the field, you're not quite sure. That's especially true at quarterback because in most systems, I think it's a position that really requires a little bit more experience. Typically, that's a better thing.

"You know, the other part is everybody is an expert about quarterbacks, so they get a lot of critiquing from everybody. So all that being said, I think he has really done a good job and I think probably the thing I'm impressed with as anything is whenever something doesn't go the way we plan or hope, he just seems to play on.

"I think he has shown a lot of resiliency and we've been on the road a couple of times this year, so that's a good thing. But we haven't been in an environment like the one we're going to be in on Saturday and against an opponent like this, so that's going to be another degree of difficulty."

On recruiting Damond Powell and what he has brought to the team so far this season:

"Well you know, we're very inexperienced at the receiver position. That was probably – outside of quarterback – our

most inexperienced position coming in this year. We obviously knew that awhile back, so last year, we looked around at junior college players. We typically don't recruit an awful lot of junior college players historically. But we thought if we could locate the right guy, we'd have an interest.

"Certainly, Damond, we thought was a good prospect as a football player. Then we got a chance to meet him and know him a little bit and I was really impressed with him. Coincidentally, he's from Big Ten country. He grew up in Toledo. So a great mom and dad and a great family. His sister is an Ohio State grad, I believe. So a little aside for you. But he's a great young guy and we're just trying to bring him up to speed as fast as we can."