

10/29/2013: 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:

"Obviously, just happy for James [Morris] to be recognized. A lot of great performances over the weekend by a lot of people, so it was nice of him to be recognized and then we were pleased to get the win. It was a hard-fought game. Both teams really competed hard, obviously. It went into overtime. So it was a tough ball game, happy to get the win, and we've got a big challenge on our hands now playing a very good Wisconsin team this weekend."

On what makes Iowa's rivalry with Wisconsin unique:

"Well, I think it starts out with the geographic proximity and then the history of this series. I only go back to '81, but we've had some outstanding games through the years. They've done a wonderful job up there and it has been a real challenge to play them, usually. If you like football, it's a fun game to be competitive in."

On what has been his favorite moment coaching against Wisconsin:

"I don't know about a favorite. I guess what I remember most distinctly is when I left here in '89, the program there, for whatever reasons, had really taken a turn. Attendance was not

good and the team wasn't doing really well on the field. I left here to go to Maine and that was the same time Barry Alvarez was hired there at Wisconsin.

"I come back nine years later and it's the exact opposite. In fact, we were the people invited to the celebration at the end of the '99 year. You know, Ron Dayne ran it up and had a great performance and his team clinched the Rose Bowl that year in that last ball game. That's a little contrast to what I had seen nine years previous and it's a real credit to Barry and everyone involved – the players and coaching staff.

"And then since that time, they've really done a great job. That began before the '99 season, certainly. So it's a real tribute to what can happen at a place where people work hard and work together."

On the importance of his program being able to have a consistent identity throughout the years:

"Um, I think most teams ... you know, everybody involved – offense, defense, special teams – if you're somewhere long enough, I think your thoughts evolve and you have changes and shifts. We just played Northwestern and I talked a little bit about that last week. If you look at them historically at least, at least in my opinion for sure, I was back in '99 and they were one team offensively and very distinctly different the next year.

"They went and visited, I think, the Rams, who at that time were 'The Greatest Show on Turf.' They had a very different style and that, I think, has continued to evolve. But I think they certainly have an identity and you know, they've really established one defensively, too. So I think teams that are successful and that sustain success tend to do good that way.

"You know, at some point, you just have to decide, 'Hey, who are you? What do you believe in?' and then try to work to that end. But it's I think a challenge to change – every year or

every two months, change – what you think is important. It's tough to get anywhere doing that."

On if he ever considered making radical changes:

"You know, that has happened. If you look back at Alabama and read about Bear Bryant's life, at one point they were a Wishbone team with Johnny Musso and some of those players and I think they were impacted a little bit.

"He was impacted by a coach when they played Southern Cal and you know, some of the players you recruit first and foremost, you have to recruit the best players you can and you bend towards what they do best. I think that happens everywhere. But ultimately, there are certain things that I think everybody believes in, certain parameters and principles, and you have to have some sort of identity in that way or it's hard to get anywhere.

"But everybody bends a little bit and that's the thing with college football. We're not drafting, so you get the best players you can get. If you've got a great option quarterback in your state, my guess is you'd recruit him unless you've got five other guys to choose from. You recruit the best players and then try to fit your system towards those guys."

On the key to keeping Wisconsin RB Melvin Gordon in check and whether he's as effective now between the tackles as he is out on the edge:

"Yeah, I think his average from the running back position is over six yards a carry than his overall average. I mean, he's effective in other ways, too. But you know, he's no surprise. We tried to recruit him for obvious reasons. A lot of people did. They did a great job of keeping him home. He's an outstanding football player, as is James White. James has done an outstanding job throughout his football career. He has been a four-year player for them and has done a wonderful job.

"They lose one outstanding running back and then they pick up another, install another. I think that has been part of the deal. When Ball was there, Ball and White were a great combination. Now you've got the same thing going with White and Gordon. You know, how you slow these guys down or contain them, that's probably easier said than done because they have really good guys up front to block for them. The fullback's a good blocker. The tight ends block well and they throw the ball very effectively.

"I don't know if there's a better player in our conference than the receiver [Jared Abbrederis] at any position. So they make it hard for you. It's a different challenge than what we faced last week, but another challenge in the same that you can't just load up for one area. You have to try to defend everything and that's easier said than done."

On what he recalls from his recruitment of Gordon, who originally committed to Iowa before de-committing and then signing his letter of intent with Wisconsin:

"Well, if you want an honest answer on that one, I remember the day he committed to us and all that. But I never got the feeling everybody was on board with that in his entire family. You know, recruiting's an emotional thing and all that stuff. It didn't work out that way. It's hard to recruit across state borders. I'm not saying that was the sole deciding factor, but Wisconsin, I think it's a matter of fact that they've done a wonderful job of recruiting their state and that all starts with having a program that players in the state want to be attracted to and identify with.

"I alluded to Barry a little while ago. I think Barry clearly established that back in the '90s and they've been going strong. Maybe some other people have gone in there and done a good job plucking guys out, but it's not easy. It's tough to take a guy out of Ohio that Ohio State wants and it's tough to take a guy from Wisconsin that Wisconsin wants. It's just a

tough thing."

On if Gordon reminds him of any other running backs he has seen:

"Yeah, you know, I'm not real good at the comparison game. But all I know is boy, is he explosive and dangerous with it. James White is a different kind of runner, but they're both equally effective and very, very tough to contain. So they fit very well with the system and have been very productive, and then they've got a young guy coming up, too, that's awfully good as well. So it's the same old story. They usually have 2-3 guys that can hurt you and that's the same case again this year."

On if C.J. Fiedorowicz is doing something different that's allowing him to haul in touchdown catches like he has this season:

"Well you know, I think it's probably well-stated or well-documented that we were not a really explosive offense last year. You know, we had a hard time scoring, period, and it was just one of those deals. So we're moving the ball a little bit better now and we're scoring a little bit better than a year ago, certainly. You know, when you have a tight end with his kind of size and his ball-catching ability, it just kind of makes sense that he's going to be a good target down there in the red zone."

"He has done a wonderful job. He has made catches and the one the other day was a little different than some of the ones he had made prior, but he has made some great catches and that was a great play on his part as well. It's a real credit to him."