

11/19/2013: 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:

"It was a little different certainly for us to have a bye week this late in the season and it probably came at a good time. It gave a few guys the chance to get healed up a little bit and also start getting ready, so we had a good week and we're eager to get back out on the field today and really start our preparation for this week's game."

On what Iowa's senior class this year has done for the program:

"You know, I've been talking about these guys really since August. They've done a wonderful job leading our football team through the out-of-season, certainly through spring practice and camp and they continue to do so. It's always a bittersweet day I think for all college coaches and teammates. It's a celebration of a lot of good things."

"Obviously, none of them are done yet, but a lot of good things have happened in the past and then obviously it's a little bittersweet knowing that they're not going to be around much longer. So it's a very, very special day and we've got a really good group of guys. They've done a nice job and we're very, very proud of all those guys."

On if it's fair to say he's as concerned with Michigan QB Devin Gardner's feet as he is his arm:

"Yeah, we are. If you go back, I'm just glancing at the Penn State thing here recently a few minutes ago and I think he rushed for 150 yards in that ball game. You know, he's just a guy that can hurt you in a lot of different ways. He was responsible for 350 yards of offense against us last year, so we certainly didn't have the answers a year ago, that's for sure. We'll try to work on that this week and see if we can put up a little bit better front."

On whether the visits to the UI Children's Hospital he has the players do regularly provides them with perspective:

"Yeah, I think there are an awful lot of ways and I'm sure a lot of people in college athletics do the same thing. We had a bye week last week, so we had some visitors over on Thursday. It's a totally different story, certainly. But with the Children's Hospital only a couple hundred yards from our facility here, it's a real benefit for us and you hear a lot of nice things back from the patients and their families, their appreciativeness."

"But I think it's just as important for all of us. It's just a constant reminder of how lucky we are. If you're a college athlete or a college coach, you're doing it because a) you choose to, and then b) you're able to. Not everybody is as fortunate or has the fortune to be able to say those things that they are doing. So it's really a great reminder and I think it keeps things in perspective for our guys, hopefully."

On how he went about scheming for Wisconsin's tailbacks and if each guy presents a different challenge:

"Yeah, I mean, they're a little bit different. Just two thoughts – I thought we did a good job overall stopping the run for 50 minutes. Then the last 10 minutes, it was a little bit of a different story. Two parts to that story – you have

to play the full 60 obviously, but we didn't do enough offensively to help our defense. You know, sooner or later, if you're not careful, they're going to break through on you because they're very, very good.

"But I think the two understated things about Wisconsin are No. 1, their defensive play. They make it very hard on you and as a result, their offense, they get to keep cracking at you and that's a tough, tough task. And then I think James White's career is kind of interesting. You know, everybody talks about [Melvin] Gordon and rightfully so. He's a tremendous football player and a year ago, they had about as good a running back as we've seen in our conference with [Montee] Ball.

"But you know, for the last four years, White has just been extremely productive. He has done it in a great way and he has done a lot of things for them and does them awfully well. So it's kind of like he's flying under the radar, which is interesting because he's one heck of a football player."

On if he would say Gordon has more speed than White when comparing the two Badger backs:

"Yeah, I guess. I guess he has maybe had more big plays. Got to watch some TV on Saturday and saw White pop out for 92-93 yards, whatever that was. So they're both excellent backs and Ball was an excellent back. It's just a credit to them."

On what the most improved unit on his team is through this point in the season:

"The first thing that pops into my mind is our defensive line. You know, we would have a hard time and did have a hard time just about against everybody last year. We were just awfully inexperienced. We knew that going into the season. We had two seniors who had never played. You know, this year we're not a lot older chronologically. We have one senior who has basically missed our Big Ten schedule. He hasn't played this year in the Big Ten very much.

"But we have guys that play right now, guys like Louie Trinca-Pasat, who maybe personifies the whole group. You know, he took his lumps last year. But he's playing pretty, pretty stoutly right now and gives us great leadership. You think about a guy like him and I think of him kind of like I think of Matt Kroul, who flew under the radar. We talked about Mitch King, but Matt Kroul was one of the real key components of our defensive teams several years ago and I think Louie is kind of that guy, too."

"We're not flashy, that's for sure. But those guys have been real productive and I believe are leaps and bounds better than a year ago and that's a positive."

On how he feels about his current and future depth along the D-line:

"Well, you know, we're thin there like we are at every position. That's just kind of the nature of our team, typically. Even our best teams have been that way. So we're constantly trying to bring other guys along and it just never ends."

On what he sees from Michigan when he watches the Wolverines on film while preparing for this week's game:

"You know, a very talented team. They're very dangerous. They're very well-coached. They've had a couple of ups-and-downs, but you know, you don't have to look back too far to see a lot of their ups. Again, I think for us, if you just go back to last year, their quarterback had 350 yards of offense against us. I mean, we didn't even really put up a fight. I can't remember how many points they did score. I'm trying to forget that. But it could have been a lot worse, I know that, if they had chosen to."

"So they're very potent and they're very well-coached on defense. They've got a lot of young players that are doing a good job and if you just look at the running back that jumped

in last week, he didn't have 100 [yards] rushing in the game, but it looked like he had 150 just watching the tape. I mean, he's a really, really good player and they've got another guy with him. So they've got a lot of good young players who are really making progress and coming on.

"You know, we're going to have to be at our absolute best to have a chance here."