

4/9/2014: Kirk Ferentz/Brandon Scherff teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below are written transcripts of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and senior offensive tackle Brandon Scherff from Wednesday's Big Ten spring football teleconference:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"We're probably a little bit behind a lot of the teams in the conference. We've only got six workouts done so far, so it has been good to get started, certainly. I'm sure every coach in the conference feels the same way. This is always an interesting time of the year. It's a great teaching period and I always find it interesting and fun to see how all the guys have progressed and how they've come along after the winter program. So we're really into it right now, but it's good to be on the field and just anxious to see what kind of stories might develop here in the next couple of weeks."

On if Scherff fits the mold of someone like Robert Gallery after electing to return for his senior year:

"I think it's certainly very positive and you know, we've probably had several guys in that same category. We've had Brandon and Robert, who chose to stay and finish out their careers and then we've also had guys like Bryan Bulaga and Riley Reiff who chose to go to the NFL and I think all four guys were very similar. They chose the guys that did try and

choose to come out in the early 20s in the draft. Had Robert and Brandon come out, they probably would have been in that same neighborhood.

“But choosing to stay in, to me, that’s really powerful for the whole football team and mainly I think the parallel is both guys are very, very good players and both of them have attitudes where they just like the college experience and they’re here because they chose to be, they wanted to be. I don’t mean that in a negative connotation toward the other two guys. They just felt it was time to go and it worked out really beautifully for both guys. They’re both starting in the NFL at the tackle position, so you know, it’s just a matter of choice and I think it’s up to the individual.”

“But I guess what I’m trying to articulate is the fact that when a guy chooses to come back like that, it’s usually because he really likes the college experience, he hasn’t grown tired of that and he’s here for all the right reasons. So the energy and the positive vibes that a current player shares with his teammates, that’s just invaluable.”

On if he ever saw tape of Scherff play quarterback in high school while recruiting him:

“I’m only chuckling because I think it was in 10th grade and I read somewhere where he threw for 1,400-1,600 yards in the air. I was going to say I don’t doubt that that happened, but I want to see that video. I don’t know. But I say that jokingly. Brandon is an outstanding athlete and I don’t doubt that was the case, but I’ve never seen game film though from his sophomore year. I didn’t think he could throw a ball 80 yards. I know John Alt, who played here back in the 80s, and I had seen him throw a ball that far. Brandon’s a pretty talented athlete.”

On if he has ever had a lineman make the transition from playing a skill position like quarterback:

“Yeah, that’s not that uncommon. Usually, it’s a tight end, the tight end transition. Guys that are big boned. The thing about Brandon is he was, I don’t know, maybe 250 pounds in 10th grade? I’m just guessing. But the thing I remember about him is it seemed like every time we’d see him, we’d see him in training and then you’d see him two months later and he’s 10 pounds bigger. He just kind of morphed in front of our eyes it seemed like.”

“He and Carl Davis are two of the bigger people that we’ve ever had come here as true freshmen. We don’t get a lot of guys that are up there in that 300-pound category. We just have not had that historically. The only other guy I could think of that was real big was Colin Cole, who’s still playing with the Panthers right now. Colin came here as a big guy. I think he was 285. So it’s more typical for our guys to kind of grow into it, but both Brandon and Carl Davis were both big human beings when they got here.”

On if he uses the spring more for finding individual performances or for building certain things within the team:

“Um, you know, it’s a combination. The one thing about spring practice, you have 15 opportunities to go out there and practice and the good news is you don’t have a game, not unless you count the spring game and those usually don’t go in the record books. So there’s not an emphasis. It’s not a race to get ready for any one opponent, so it really gives you a chance ... I think it’s true teaching, and then along with that, you’re always evaluating the team no matter what time of year it is.”

“But you know, you have so many players at different levels. We just got done talking about Brandon Scherff, who is already a pretty accomplished player. Not that he ... you know, we expect him to get a lot better as a player, but he has played a lot of football and good football for us and we’ve got guys in that category. Then you’ve got guys who have never hit the

football field. So it's fun just to have an opportunity to really see everybody and really not only see them, but really watch them and evaluate them and track them over the course of 15 practices to see what kind of improvement they make.

"So it's a wide range and I think that's what makes it unique and makes it enjoyable. The same thing is going on in the preseason too, but the time to really teach and analyze isn't really the same as what you have right now. This is really a stretched out period and it's just kind of pure football, pure teaching, but you've got a lot of different levels of performance out there. It's kind of interesting to watch it."

On what he has seen from his quarterbacks thus far in the spring:

"Well I think, you know, they're doing well. They're improving. They are improved and they are improving. First of all, [Jake] Rudock is healthy, which I guess must have gotten a lot more play outside of our building than it did in. You know, we were very, very confident. He just needed some time. He was beat up at the end of the year. He's doing great, so he's perfectly healthy.

"You know, last year at this time, those guys were competing for a job. Now, both of them have played on the game field and I say both of them being Jake and C.J. [Beathard]. You know, the thing that's important for them right now is just like every other player on our team, we expect those guys to improve and actually, they should be both smarter and better if they're using that experience to their advantage.

"We've only had six practices, but I think both guys are performing better than they did last spring or better than they were in December and hopefully they'll continue to do that."

On how the competition between Rudock and Beathard is different now (if it is) from back in 2013:

“Well you know, I can’t tell you how many snaps both have played. But you know, obviously, Jake has played a really significant number and C.J. had to come off the bench and he did some really good things for us. We felt all along that what I said last year was 100 percent true, that there’s good competition.”

“Jake has more experience right now, but it’s still a situation where both guys have to be at their best and we’re bringing Nic Shimonek along as well, so it’s a different tier. But at the end of the day, it’s a room of good guys and they’re competing well and we tell everybody on the team that every job is open, so it’s a matter of going out on the field and performing.”

Scherff’s opening statement:

“Spring football is going really well. We’ve got six practices under our belt, so we’re just a little under halfway there. We’ll be a little bit over halfway there after this week’s over, but you know, we’ve got a long ways to go. With every practice, we’ve got to take advantage of it and just keep on track.”

On the goals he set forth for himself with this year after making the decision to return for his senior season:

“The reason I came back was to just improve myself in all aspects of football – pass blocking, run blocking, finishing those things well and just playing faster and smarter and hopefully becoming a better leader and just setting goals to be the best leader I can be.”

“We’re trying to be the best offensive line in the Big Ten and my goal is to be one of the best offensive linemen in the nation, so I just got to keep working my butt off and hopefully pulling people along with me and just doing what I can do.”

On if he feels more added responsibility being in his role as a senior leader:

"Well, I think we had good leadership from our seniors last year and those guys are gone, so we've got to find new guys to step up and that's my goal and hopefully a couple of other people's goals to step up with me."

On when he realized he'd grow out of his role as a quarterback while in high school:

"I realized that pretty much my junior year. I got recruited for offensive line here and I played half my junior year at quarterback, then switched over to tight end that year. I committed here and then my senior year, I decided to play offensive line because I didn't want to come here not knowing what to do, so it'd just be a little one year under my belt at offensive line and they're doing a heck of a job with me right now and I'm just trying to improve."

On how much offensive line he played while recruited by Iowa:

"I didn't play anything. I just did quarterback and tight end."

On the skill sets that Mark Weisman, Jordan Canzeri and Damon Bullock all bring to Iowa's running game:

"Yeah, you know, we got Mark. He's a downhill runner, you know. He's not afraid of contact. Then we've got Jordan and Damon who like to get out on the edge, but they're not afraid of contact either. But we've also got LeShun Daniels, who's a big bull and we've also learned he's not afraid of contact. So whoever they're going to put behind us, we're just going to do our best to get them to the second level or past that. They'll do their job, we'll do our job."

On how explosiveness has been emphasized this spring to the offense by Greg Davis:

"We're just trying to play faster. We've been working on the no-huddle tempo and we're just getting our feet wet with it again. At first, it's tough learning all the signs again, but I think it's really going to help us in the fall here."

On if that's an element of the offense that will be used more in 2014:

"Yeah. We used it a little bit last year, but we've just changed some things up. So when you add something new, you just got to get used to it and I think that's what we're trying to do here. Then after a couple more of practices, we'll be able to play faster and faster and then hopefully carry that over into the fall."