

4/16/2014: Iowa spring football notebook



Iowa offensive line coach Brian Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' offensive line situation during a press conference held Wednesday, April 16, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – There's nothing secretive about the importance senior left tackle Brandon Scherff has on the 2014 version of the Iowa Hawkeyes. Following a similar path to former Iowa left tackles such as Robert Gallery, Bryan Bulaga and Riley Reiff (all of whom were NFL first round draft picks), Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz didn't hesitate calling him the Hawkeyes' biggest recruit of 2014 shortly after Scherff opted to return for his senior year.

On Wednesday, Iowa offensive line coach Brian Ferentz got to speak publicly about Scherff and didn't mince any words while doing so. Like he would about any of his offensive linemen, the younger Ferentz mentioned areas of Scherff's game where he

could improve. After doing that however, he made perfectly clear what he thinks of his top lineman.

“If this guy doesn’t get recognized for what he is moving forward, I think it would be a real travesty,” Brian Ferentz said. “There’s not a better offensive lineman in college football. That’s my opinion and I think you guys know after two years, I don’t say things like that lightly.”

Ferentz then added after watching various SEC offensive linemen while preparing for last season’s Outback Bowl against LSU, he felt Scherff stacked up with every single one of them.

“In my estimation, he was certainly one of the best football players in the country last year,” Ferentz said. I don’t know if he deserved or received the proper recognition for that. I would expect him to this year. If he doesn’t, I don’t know what people are watching or what they value or what’s important.”



Iowa defensive line coach Reese Morgan discusses the Hawkeyes’ front four during a press conference held Wednesday, April 16, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

“Prideful Simplicity”

While Brian Ferentz was speaking, defensive line coach Reese

Morgan entered the Hayden Fry Football Complex auditorium. Waiting to conduct a press conference of his own Wednesday, Morgan sat down and observed Ferentz taking questions.

One of the questions asked to Ferentz while Morgan was present had to do with Morgan and his impact on the Iowa program since becoming an assistant in 2000. As he spoke about the man who was his offensive line coach while playing for the Hawkeyes, Ferentz mentioned Morgan's role in recruiting. He brought up how Morgan was the lead recruiter for many of the past Hawkeyes to play for his dad that came in unheralded and not only managed to leave their marks on Iowa, but in the NFL as well.

He also mentioned the role Morgan played in recruiting some current Hawkeyes, including Scherff, sophomore wideout Matt Vandenberg and redshirt freshman offensive lineman Boone Myers.

"You're not going to find a guy who's more Iowa than Coach Morgan. You're just not," Ferentz said. "Humble, hard-working and he has a saying – he believes in 'prideful simplicity.'

Morgan joked that the phrase was something he got from a book or just randomly wrote on a white board one day. He even said mantras like "prideful simplicity" sound overrated to him. Yet in saying all of that, he also didn't completely dismiss the credence of that message.

"I think as teachers, our job is to keep things as simple as possible," Morgan said. "Everybody has got a job to do and yeah, we [the defensive line] want to make a tackle. But if we take care of our technique, that's going to free up our linebackers. That's going to help our cornerbacks.

"When we get that opportunity, we take advantage of it."

Ferentz discusses social media

One obvious difference between Brian Ferentz and his father

comes with social media. Brian joked Wednesday how if Kirk had a Twitter account, he would never be the one tweeting from it. Meanwhile, Brian (along with assistants Chris White and Bobby Kennedy) tends to use it more frequently for recruiting purposes.

But there have also been instances when Brian has used Twitter to express certain viewpoints. Just before Iowa played Wisconsin last November, he posted a tweet critical of the game day experience at Kinnick Stadium. Last week, he used it to express disappointment after another media outlet accidentally used a picture of former wide receivers coach Erik Campbell to accompany a story about current linebackers coach LeVar Woods.

When asked about his social media use, Brian Ferentz didn't shy away and also didn't hold any regrets.

"As far as my tweet last year, what I tweeted was exactly what I meant. I had a pretty good understanding of what might happen and I shared that information publicly," Ferentz said. "I don't tweet about politics. I don't tweet about other things like that. I made a comment about something that I thought was relevant.

"Has it improved? We'll find out when we get to August."

The other noteworthy off-field topic asked of him Wednesday had to do with his job status. Last February, NFL.com reporter Gil Brandt tweeted that Ferentz was likely to leave his father's Iowa staff and become the Houston Texans' offensive line coach. This came shortly after the Texans hired former Penn State coach Bill O'Brien, who was one of Ferentz's colleagues while serving on Bill Belichick's coaching staff in New England.

Sensing that the question would be asked Wednesday, Ferentz wasted no time responding once the word "NFL" came from a reporter's mouth.

"I never made a public comment and the reason was very simple. There was no need to make a public comment," Ferentz said. "I'm the offensive line coach of the University of Iowa and I'm very happy to be the offensive line coach of the University of Iowa. I have a great job."

Which D-lineman follows paths of Trinca-Pasat, Davis?

Since Morgan took over coaching the defensive line in 2012, one of the positives with his group has been a different player each season maturity before his eyes, as well as everyone else's eyes. Two seasons ago, it was Louis Trinca-Pasat, a player Kirk Ferentz said before the 2012 season once considered leaving during the team's prep for the 2011 Insight Bowl against Oklahoma. Last season, it was Carl Davis, a player Morgan said was immature before last spring when he began to take on more of a leadership role among the entire team.

Now, Trinca-Pasat and Davis are not only the faces of Iowa's defensive line, but of the entire defense. So with that in mind, the question becomes who's the next D-lineman to follow that path?

When asked about this Wednesday, Morgan seemed willing to lump every one of his position players into that category. But just as he was about to simply list off names, Morgan spoke glowingly about junior defensive end Nate Meier, a player who doesn't have any starting experience and isn't even listed as a starter right now on Iowa's spring 2-deep.

But even without that starting experience, Meier did get his opportunity to see the field last season whenever Iowa employed its Raider package and used him and linebacker Reggie Spearman as the two D-ends.

"I would say that Nate Meier is a tough son of a gun," Morgan said. "He's really doing things where he's a 235-240 pound guy taking on a 300-pound tackle and I think he has demonstrated

to us that he can be an every down guy.

“He might be a guy that’s kind of in that category.”

At the moment, the most heated competition along the defensive line is at the end spot opposite junior Drew Ott. Meier is among the candidates for that spot – as are senior Mike Hardy and junior Riley McMinn – and Morgan said Meier “has earned the trust and confidence” of the coaching staff.

Morgan also added that while seven defensive linemen (including Meier) made up the rotation up front last season, there are currently as many as 11 players this spring vying to be part of that rotation in 2014.

“These guys have an opportunity to get on the field and be successful,” Morgan said. “But they have to demonstrate it in practice situations, scrimmage situations.”

TRANSCRIPTS (courtesy of UI Sports Info.):

[Brian Ferentz/Reese Morgan \(4/16/2014\)](#)