

2014 Big Ten Media Days – Kirk Ferentz transcript, Day Two

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

During the second day portion of Big Ten Media Days on Tuesday in Chicago, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz spent two hours talking to reporters – both local and national. I placed a recorder at his table and managed to record the entire 2-hour duration he was speaking.

Like last year, I agreed to a collaboration of transcribing the entire 2-hour segment along with Marc Morehouse of *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*. Morehouse and I each took one hour and transcribed everything Ferentz said verbatim Tuesday morning and have it all presented on each of our platforms.

Two things to keep in mind: 1. We split this in half. Morehouse transcribed the entire first hour Ferentz spoke, I transcribed the second hour. 2. Questions came from numerous reporters who were on hand. I'm pointing this out because you'll notice some things get repeated over the course of two hours and it wasn't as though Morehouse and I each asked Ferentz questions for an hour straight.

All questions are labeled with the letter "Q" while Ferentz's responses are labeled with his initials, "KF." Without further ado, here's everything (literally) that Ferentz said Tuesday in Chicago.

PART ONE (as transcribed by Marc Morehouse of *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*):

Q: [inaudible] on DE Torey Hendrick

KF: We did? OK, OK.

Q: Can you officially talk about him?

KF: Not yet, not yet. What's that mean, I guess?

Q: He's in the roster section.

KF: He's still completing work, pretty much a similar situation to Damond Powell from last year.

Q: Still at his juco?

KF: He's got a math class he's finishing.

Q: You have to wait on the grade?

KF: He's not eligible this year, so he's probably not going to be in camp. It's a redshirt year, no matter what. We could sit here for a half hour and I couldn't explain why he's not. I don't understand the whole thing, I just know what I've been told. He has to redshirt. He hasn't signed a letter of intent, so I officially cannot . . . But there is a guy out there like that.

Q: With that name?

KF: Well, like that.

Q: Weisman, he could be a top 5 rusher in Iowa history if he has a Weisman year. Does it feel like that?

KF: To me, it does. His story is a good one, and that storyline probably parallels his story. His path to the running back position was unusual. He's kind of quietly, semi-quietly, done a lot of good things for us. I think what he does is pretty impressive. I think the big thing is he was a better back last year than two years ago, for obvious reasons, and we think he has the potential to be a better back this year. As I said yesterday, too, I think the thing I'm most excited about is that he has a little company now, too. It

seems like we've had only one player we could go with because we were trying to get the other guys healthy. At least now, we can use him a little more sparingly. The goal is for him to be strong in the fourth quarter of any game and the fourth quarter of the season. Last year, we just had to pull him out for a while, and get him back running to where he looked like Mark.

Q: [inaudible] about O-line depth and the void of experience on the second unit.

KF: Certainly, certainly [agreeing with needing to develop that depth]. We have four guys who have played and played pretty well when they've been in there. Obviously, Brandon has played really well. Blythe has played really well. They both did a really good job last year. I think Jordan Walsh can be a really good football player and I feel the same way about Andrew. Then, after that, we don't have any game experience, I don't think, well, at least any meaningful game experience. It's four guys who are pretty experienced and then after that, it's feast or famine. It's pretty much like the JV outfit after that. So, we've got work to do this camp. The good news is they're going against good guys on our defense. We've got a good group over there and we're a little deeper over there, so that'll help harden them up a little bit, but we have a lot of ground to cover. First of all, it looks like Sean Welsh is No.5. He came out of spring clearly the fifth best, but he's not ready to go yet, either. This is a big month for him.

Q: Change of pace with RBs. Is that all it's cracked up to be? The old Earl Campbell? You guys are at the spot now where you could throw every change-up out there.

KF: We have two sets of guys who are pretty distinctly different. Not like Jordan and Damon are the same guy, but they're one set with LeShun and Mark. The big benefit is, if we keep everyone healthy, at least we'll have the opportunity to be in control of that, instead of allowing situations

dictate to us. That's what it's really been. It's been health, more than anything, that's dictated the ebb and flow.

Q: Do you almost prefer the Shonn Greene season?

KF: Yes, if you have a Doak Walker guy who can play every game? Yeah. He was the only guy that year who went for 100 yards a game. If you can have that, it's a no-brainer then. Fred [Russell] was kind of the same way. Fred was a totally different package, but very durable. I think the Michigan game he had to come out of for a little bit, but for the most part, he took it and ran. You work with what you have. For this year, it looks like we're going to have some options and have the opportunity to mix things up a little bit, which is good.

Q: [inaudible] on guys behind the starters on the O-line.

KF: I like the guys. They're a good group of guys. We not neglected, but we've cheated that position a little bit in recruiting to patch up some other holes, whether it be injuries or attrition or whatever it may be. We've probably oversigned at the receiver position, the DB position in the last couple of years. We're going to try to address that this year in recruiting. I think we'll have to do the same thing again next year. The good news is our batting average is pretty good with the guys we have recruited. I think we have good prospects right now, we just have a long way to go with them to get them where they're ready and hopefully they'll be ready this fall. They're sure going to have to be ready next year.

Q: Last year when you compared Mark in practice to Bob in practice, that kind of rung a bell with me. You guys lost Bob a few times. I don't know if durability is a knock on Mark, but it's been a factor in his career.

KF: When you have a physical style, that's just how he is, that's just how he runs. I can't prove this, but I think the thing we can do to help him is to be guarded with how many

carries he gets in a game. Fred Russell is one of the best backs we've had in our 15 years. If he wants to come back and the NCAA lets him, I'd take him in a heartbeat. Nothing wrong with the style that he had, but there's something to be said for a physical, strong back as well. And Mark's not slow. Just having the ability to run a strong guy up in there, there's some real value in that, too. The key thing is he has to be effective. If he's banged up . . . Last year, that's what happened. It got to the point where he was just running up in there and getting tackled. That's not him. That's not fair to him.

Q: How did that conclusion get reached? I know there was some damage after Michigan State.

KF: It was earlier when he kind of hit that. If a guy can't look like himself on his field . . . It's true at any position. You play hurt, you don't play injured necessarily. If you're not effective, it's just not fair to that performer to put him out there when he looks like an 80 percent player. You don't want him to play. He's not going to take himself out, either. That's just how Mark is. That's kind of our job.

Q: Last year against Northwestern, you guys were clicking in the first half. . . . You guys ran the outside zone to the short side of the field, that's pure power. That's Scherff and Weisman, that's your strength. Is that a statement in a game like that?

KF: You use your good players, that's one of those deals. For us to be good offensively, we're going to have to do both. I think it looks like we're going to be better suited to throw the ball than we have the last couple of years. It's encouraging.

Q: [inaudible] about Weisman usage early last season.

KF: We've liked Jordan. We almost played him two years ago at the end of the year. I'm glad we didn't. We have him all

spring. He had a really good spring. He certainly did good things last year when he got the opportunity. I think his arrow is really going up right now. I think that really gives you a good 1-2 punch right now, if you will. That Wisconsin game is a good example. He came in and really gave us some juice and was a good changeup, change of pace. I think that affected them a little bit, not enough obviously. It gives us some options and that's a good thing.

Q: Is it as simple as that one carry against Wisconsin for 43 yards kind of rejuvenated Canzeri's career?

KF: It didn't hurt his confidence and it certainly didn't hurt ours. In the Nebraska game, he did some good things there, too. I think he's worked hard and earned our respect.

Q: How has Lomax transitioned and how important is that for you guys this year?

KF: I'm only smiling because someone asked me about Quinton Alston yesterday, one of the Big Ten Network guys. I just kind of started laughing. I think Quinton is one of the guys who's not being talked about who is really going to be a good player for us. Why would he be talked about? He hasn't played. I think he's a good player who got stuck behind some really good players. I'm so pleased with what I've seen of him the last two springs and last season. I just think he's really ready to go. I feel the same way about Jordan. He had the injury right off the bat last year. If he ends up not being a good player, I'll be surprised, just going off experience. He's a tremendous kid, Dean's list student ever since he's been here. He's got a good personality. He's a very tough, physical guy. He's made some hits in practice, especially in bowl preparation last year. He made a couple of hits on the running backs that, jeez, I haven't seen many safeties do that for a while around here. I'm really excited about him. I think he's going to play well. It's going to be new to him just like it's going to be new for Quinton. He hasn't played back there in a

game, but he's a smart guy and he works hard. He's very conscientious. I feel pretty good about that. I'm concerned about our depth in the back end just as I am with our offensive line. As far as our starters, I feel good there.

Q: Do you expect Alston to become the leader of that defense?

KF: Yes and no. Yes, because he had three guys who kind of stifled [him]. He wasn't out there on first and second down very much last year. But knowing he's done things right. He's naturally kind of a vocal guy, in a good way like you'd hope a linebacker might be. He's worked extremely hard. He's done a good job on the third-down package. He's done a good job on special teams. I think everyone has been around him now for three years. I think we all – and when I say "we," I'm talking about our players as well – I think everyone has a real comfort level. They know how he is and they have a strong belief in him.

Q: [inaudible] on Hendrick

KF: He's on one of our rosters, but he's not in school yet and he hasn't signed a letter, so I can't say much. Hypothetically, if he does come, he's not eligible to play this year. It's not a pressing thing. He's finishing up some academic work and we'll see where it all goes.

Q: Is it academics?

KF: I can say last year, Damond Powell finished his work, what's today, Tuesday? It would've been Wednesday or Thursday of this week, he showed up, parachuted in and it was in the freshmen meetings the first day. Damond could play last year. The individual we're waiting on can't play this year. So, we hope he makes it and can redshirt. That's what we're hoping.

Q: [inaudible] on Derrick Willies and if he's needed to be reeled in after a glorious spring.

KF: Actually, we really didn't have to. I don't want to violate the Buckley Amendment, but he carried over a 3.0 (GPA) for his first year. That doesn't happen on a high frequency for first-year kids. That's usually one of the indicators, what guys do academically. The first year, they usually drop. I know I did. When they start thinking they've arrived, sometimes those grades do that. He's really done a great job and he's worked hard. He's got a lot of older guys helping him out on that front. I've not seen any variance for him getting off the track.

Q: We saw him twice in the spring and he looked great. How did he look in the other 13?

KF: He showed off for you guys. Early on in particular, it was great catch, routine drop. That was the thing over the course of the spring. It wasn't like that at the end. He became really consistent. That's what I'm excited about. I like the big catches, too, but I like the consistency, the maturity. I've liked the way he's handled himself. He was a guy who was a little guarded when it came to coaching him last fall. He's really opened up now and is embracing things. That's fun to watch that process.

Q: Near-misses in recruiting? How do you handle those? Do you handle it differently now than you did then?

KF: The first two guys, I think, were linemen from Chicago in the early '80s or mid-80s. I remember Carter Hill committed to Texas on Dec. 2. Back in the early '80s, that was an early commitment. Nobody committed until January. It was one of the Naperville schools, and I remember walking in kid said he's going to Texas, his dad played at Texas. I was crushed. How could he do that? We were No. 2 to Texas? Blah, blah, blah. Carl Jackson looked at me and said, "He did you a huge favor." What do you mean? "It's a lot better off finding out now than in February." Back in those days, you found out a lot in February. Times have changed. And then I remember an offensive

lineman Mike Candino (spelling?) from York. Had a great visit, loved us and he ended up going to Notre Dame. My mentor Joe Moore told me on the phone a month before, you're not going to get him. Are you crazy? We're going get him. He went to Notre Dame. Imagine that, a Chicago lineman going to Notre Dame. I wish I had a pint of Ben & Jerry's every time we've come in second on anybody. That's just recruiting. That's the nature of recruiting. You lose more than you win.

Q: Have you ever had to pick your staff up? They're the ones out there all the time.

KF: The challenge is being realistic. We probably get in deeper than we should sometimes. That's probably because kids come to Iowa not expecting much and they get there and "Boy, this is a lot better than I thought." That's what I went through in 1981. We get them thinking about us instead of them just being nice to us. All of the sudden, they go from being nice to the "thinking about it" stage. Historically, we haven't won a lot of battles against USC, Ohio State. It's just the nature of football. It's been that way for a long time. It'll probably be that way for a long time.

Q: What do you think about this trend now where kids are saying they're committed but then still go and visit other schools?

KF: I learned something this summer. I heard a term I've never heard, is it "soft offer"? Non-committable offer, right? I've never heard that term until June or May or whenever it was we were meeting. What the heck is that, non-committable offer? Norm [Parker] said it a long time ago, the recruits have all the rights, we have none. Until this year, if he made an offer, it was a one-way street, a binding offer. But the prospects can change their minds at any time until signing day. That's the way it is. There's more rhetoric now. There's an all-time record for rhetoric. Non-committable offers or I'm kind of committed. It's an insurance policy. When the early

commitments began, my suspicion was some smart guy is going to figure out take the best offer you've got in August. That way, if you get hurt, you're covered and then you can re-open it up in December. Now, instead of people just doing it discretely, they say they're doing it. When a prospect chooses to do that, then we have to make a decision do we want to continue recruiting that prospect? The question you have to ask yourself, if he flips and commits to you in December, what's he going to do in January? It's an interesting world, the world of recruiting. Hang on.

Q: When you get QBs, do you have to hang on to them?

KF: That's a whole discussion within in the discussion, team within the team. We've had two quarterbacks leave us here in the last couple of months. I think it's purely because we have two guys who have emerged. It looks like there's going to be a block there for a while for younger players or, in Cody's case, a guy who only had one year left. And I get that. That's like basketball. You see tremendous movement. The quarterback society is kind of like an NCAA basketball team. Kids want to play. In both Cody and Nic's case, I fully understand their rationale. The only thing that would make me upset is if they weren't good teammates, weren't good team members when they were here. They did everything they could've done. They were great. They handled it like adults. I wish them all the best. That's great stuff. When a kid doesn't look like he's going to play and wants to go play somewhere else, I get that, understand it and support it totally.

Q: Are you still going with the idea of getting Beathard in there, in the regular rotation?

KF: We haven't gone that far down [as far as when and how CJB would be used], but that's what the next three weeks are for. We've thrown a couple of things up on the board. We'll see what it actually looks like in practice. If there's an intelligent way to utilize him and use that idea and concept,

we'll do it. What we don't want to do is screw up our team, take away the rhythm of what we're doing, those type of things. I think a big part of that will be the mindset we take, but the first part is we have to be convinced what we see is going to help us move the ball and score points. That's the only reason to do it. We're not trying to keep CJ happy or any of that stuff. We're not trying to entertain people. Or create a controversy, that too. I haven't thought about that option. If it's going to help us be tougher to defend, then I think – and I think it has that potential – so that's what we're kind of working through.

Q: You said yesterday there are differences between Rudock and Beathard. What are those? From the outside, it looks like CJ has the stronger arm and Jake has very high intelligence and football IQ.

KF: That's a good starting point. CJ has a little wildcard factor to him. He's a very nimble athlete. He's got a little wind resistance issue with his hair right now. He's really nimble and he's one of those guys who can improvise a little bit. We don't want him to go out there and just start chucking it up, either. Drew threw two interceptions against Wisconsin in the first half in '04. That was a little wildcard factor, too. We don't need that. It's something we'll toy around with. We'll see where we're at here in a couple of weeks.

Q: Iowa and skill positions and recruiting. How many guys historically has Iowa put into the NFL, how many QBs, RBs, WRs has had HOF careers from Iowa? Skill position, is that really the puzzle that's never really been solved for Iowa?

KF: Historically, and my history goes back to '81, you have Quinn Early who was a track guy coming out of high school and became a very good football player. You have Danan Hughes, who I missed during his production years but got to see play baseball during the NCAAs on the east coast. Phenomenal athlete. Tim Dwight was a great receiver here. The only one

that really surprised me was CJ Jones. I thought he would be a pro. I don't know why that didn't work out. He was in a bunch of camps and it was that close. And Hinkel is another guy who was a pretty good player.

CJ, we got him by accident. He was Brad Banks' cousin and Brad said, hey, you ought to look at him and we did. Ed was an athlete who we thought would be a free safety for us. We had to throw him in there and he did great. Kevin was a walk-on. So, yeah, for whatever reason, that's been a position. In the '80s, we didn't have many defensive backs. Merton Hanks. Now, we've had a lot more of those. We had very few defensive linemen in the NFL in the '80s and now we've had a lot of those. On one hand, you could say we've done better in that regard, but receivers are still a challenge. And if you look at receivers, for the most part, they've come from other positions. Marvin McNutt comes to mind right off the bat. There are two . . . We loved Darboh [Amara Darboh, WR from Des Moines who went to Michigan], but we couldn't get him. We tried. Talk about coming in second again. I don't know what else we could've done. I still love him, I think he's a great player. The guys who are like that tend to go to quote, unquote "blue blood" schools. I guess that's the term this year, "blue bloods" for the name schools. They don't always, but they tend to.

Q: The history of getting these guys . . . Iowa can find Brett Van Sloten and turn him into a two-year starter (and NFL prospect), but Braxton Miller . . .

KF: The year that stands out to me in the state of Iowa was the year you had Tim Dwight and Tavian Banks, two outstanding skill guys. If Banks hadn't had those injuries, who knows what he would've done. You get two in one year, that's not a bad deal. And they both stayed in-state after finishing high school. That is one that's changed, and you guys have seen it. Southeastern schools didn't come up here 10 years ago. Everything is global now, so those guys will show up anywhere.

It's a different operation down there.

Q: [inaudible] on Derrick Willies

KF: It's a great story. When I heard his story, I had one visual image of him. You always put pictures together in your mind when you read the reports a little bit. And when I met him, he was just exactly opposite, basically. He was so respectful. He's a great young man. Nic and Cassie [Gieselman] have done a great job really looking after him. To watch him with their little baby, it was pretty revealing, too. We've seen him in several instances that way during the recruiting phase. Everyone at his high school said great things about him. The more we've had him, the more appreciative we are that he's here. He's a really nice young man. He's got his head on straight. I thought he'd come in and struggle a little bit academically, based on this school that school and this school. He's come in and done a really good job. That doesn't tell the whole story, but I think it's a pretty good indicator of where a guy's head is at, typically. We were talking about Jordan Lomax a while ago. This guys is too good to be true with what he does, the way he acts and all that kind of stuff. He did get a lot of praise back in the spring and rightfully so. He deserved it. It doesn't seem to have affected him at all. That's a good sign, too, that he's not one of those "look around" guys and all that stuff. He's taken care of business. He's a delightful young guy.

And with him moving around, I haven't asked this but I sense it, I think appreciative of the fact that people look out for him. I go back to Nic and Cassie and the coaches at his high school. I think he's appreciative of the fact that he has a chance to get his degree, play in a good program, be around a lot of good teammates. I don't ask guys that stuff, but you can just tell by the way he acts, he gets it. This is a good deal for him and he's going to try to do something with his life. It's neat to see that with a guy that young.

Q: [inaudible] on moment he realized Scherff might be a special player

KF: The first thing I thought of was when Mike Martin got drafted from Michigan. They showed him beating Scherff 50 times on ESPN that day. Scherff was playing guard. Scherff isn't as good inside as he is outside and we knew that. We were trying to get his feet wet. Scherff was injured at that time. We shouldn't have had him in the game. Talking about Weisman earlier. It was another instance of not being fair to a player. And Martin was a good player. We came in second for him, too. I spent like four hours there watching a stupid track meet. I swear I went around and saw three guys in a row who committed to Michigan within the week after I had been there, in the school. It was spring recruiting and right before the meetings here. I asked our staff . . . I'm going to ask Lloyd if he needs help with anybody else to get his guys off the board. I'll show up wherever his recruit was, so they could commit to him. I'll help them out with their whole class. We were right there knocking on the door. But anyway, that was Scherff as a young player. Both he and Carl were the biggest guys we've recruited. We were tempted to play them their first year, but I'm glad we didn't. What they needed to do was play. They've combatted some injury issues over the years. Carl's were more extensive, but Brandon's injury wasn't pretty. My point is, the year Brandon got hurt was the year he was starting to come around. The way he responded to that injury, the way he handled it and rehabbed from it, made us pretty certain that this guy wasn't your average bear. This guy is going to be pretty good. He played well last year and he can play better. He knows it, too. That's what's exciting. I think that's one of the reasons he's stayed.

Q: Have you given any thought to the fact that Brian has the exact same job you had at the same age?

KF: I think I beat him . . . I don't know. I think I was 25, young guy. I've never really thought about it.

Q: Take pride in that?

KF: I never thought that far down the road about that. Maybe when I retire and get old I'll think about that stuff. I'm just happy with the way his career has gone. Not to sound like a proud dad, but the big thing with all of our kids, with whatever they choose to do, they need to go out and work at it and get beat up a little. That's part of life. We all go through that. He's done that, and he'll get beat up more. He'll have more coming here in about a week when we start. Football is very humbling, coaching is very humbling. He's paid his dues. He's worked very hard and he's been around really good people. That's all you can ask for. One of my daughters is a teacher. If you're around people, there can be good mentors, good teachers. I think whatever profession you're in, that's what you hope happens. He's been fortunate he's had that in his coaching career.

Q: Weren't you kind of in the same situation, around good people?

KF: That's the story of my career. I've never had an original thought, but I've been around so many good people. And not just the head coaches and the marquee names, but I've worked with assistant coaches who . . . starting with Bill Brashier and Carl Jackson, guys who were great coaches. Barry Alvarez was there as an assistant coach. Bill Snyder was there as an assistant coach. Those guys were nobodies like I was in the '80s. In the NFL, too, some of the staffs I've been on and people I've worked with, just a lot of good people. That's a big part of life, just being around people you can learn from. That's a great help when you have that.

Q: Is he similar in his day-to-day that you were as a coach?

KF: I think our personalities are very different. There's some commonality, obviously, but I think our personalities are probably different. All the coaches on our staff are really

smart. The young people are really smart and tech savvy and all that jazz. He's had the benefit of working with the Patriots for five years or whatever it was. It was a really good training school to work with a guy like Bill O'Brien day-to-day and obviously working under Bill Belichick and being around a great personnel department and Scott Pioli and all those people. He got a really good education that way. He's learning right now, from Greg [Davis, Iowa's OC], Bobby, from Chris. Everybody's learning from each other. And that's the fun part of what we do. I work with a staff of guys who are really smart, who are good coaches and good at what they do. I learn from those guys every day, both sides of the ball.

Q: Knowing the pressure, do you want him to be a head coach someday in college?

KF: It's up to him. I never had that dream. It wasn't like I had a master plan. He may. I've never asked him that. That's just one of those things. To me, the objective is to have a job you enjoy, is gratifying. The best advice I've ever been given professionally was in 1989. I had a couple of options and Thom Bresnahan said it's all about your day-to-day, the people you work with day-to-day. The best advice I've ever been given.

Q: [inaudible] on Tim Beckman [under fire in his third year at Illinois]. Is year 3 when coaches really have to come through?

KF: It wasn't that much different 15 years ago. What you have to do is put one foot in front of the other. I know Tim is doing that. There is no magic formula. There is no circumstance that is exactly the same. I was talking to someone, we had a recruit on campus this past weekend who had just come back from Virginia Tech. I think coach [Frank] Beamer has been there 27 years. I was at Maine when he was getting started. They barely beat us on a lineman. They were on the ropes. I really to this day believe if coach Beamer wasn't a Virginia Tech grad, he would've been gone. For

whatever reason, they gave him another year and the rest is history. Every situation is very different. We live in an era where it's not "win today," it's "what are you going to do tomorrow?" "What are you going to do for us tomorrow?" I think all you have to do is look at the Pittsburgh Steelers. They've had three coaches since '68. You've got to try to build something, and to do that, it takes time and patience. That's a warm front, cold front situation. As a coach, all you can do is try to do your best and ask everybody around you to do the same thing. Basically, the breakthrough happens whenever it's going to happen. It might three years, it might be five, it might be two. Some people have done it in one year. There are no magic formulas. There's no set pattern for it.

Q: [inaudible] on the year 3 of a five-year deal.

KF: That depends on your administration, that depends on the world you're living in. I'll never be an administrator, I can't envision that, but if I were, I've always wondered in the NFL why some smart owner just didn't look at what the Steelers did and say, "Hey, let's model our organization after theirs." The Steelers had some bad years with Chuck Noll and they had some bad years with Cowher and they've had some bad years currently with coach Tomlin, but they don't panic. They work through their issues. They try to improve and get better. What we do is very competitive. If there was a team in the NFL that got 15 No. 1 picks every year, chances are they'd probably win more than the other teams. There are some colleges that are like that. If you're not at one of those places, then you better be prepared to have some ebb and flow. That's the nature of what we do. Me personally, I don't think changing clothes is the answer. We went 1-10 my first year. I tried a different tie every week and it didn't help. Did not help. It's more about what's going on. That ain't gonna sell in today's world. Even if it works, it ain't gonna sell.

Q: Brian has followed a similar career path as you, with the offensive line coach. Where I see possibilities, and I could

be completely wrong, could he be a playcaller?

KF: I think he could, yeah. I never had any interest in it. The only year I did it was in 1992. I had other opportunities, but that was never my deal. He's a lot more global. His knowledge base in football is way more global than mine. That's kind of how I was raised versus how he was raised. My mentor was a line coach [Joe Moore]. He's had line mentors, too, but the other mentor he's had is Bill O'Brien. Bill's a big-picture guy and Brian tuned into that stuff a lot more than I ever did at that age. My deal was I was going to try to get as good as I can at this. Not that he's not doing that; he had to break the film down; he had to do a lot of things with Bill, so that forced him to be . . . he had to know coverages inside and out. He had to know footwork of the DBs. All that stuff. He knows all of that. He had to because that was the circumstance he was in. His training was a lot different than mine was at that age.

Q: I don't know about short-term, you have Greg and as far as I know things are great. He's getting up there in age, we all are. Could Brian morph into that role?

KF: I think the two most experienced guys on our staff are Greg and Jim [Reid, linebackers coach]. And Reese [Morgan, Dline coach]. I wish I had all three of their energy. I don't see them quitting it. They're football coaches. They're awesome with their expertise, technique, knowledge, all that stuff. This is what they enjoy doing. Whenever the day comes and we have to address that, hopefully it's not in the near future, we'll have some candidates. That's like everything we do. We'll take a step back and look at it and see where everything goes, what's the best option.

Q: Brandon coming back, I know there's insurance. How did you help him with that?

KF: We worked through the NCAA. Brandon could've gotten more

than he got. I think he took a \$1 million policy out. He's not too worried about it. I'd love to know how many of those have been paid off. It's stupid not to take it, but the reality is it's just so rare that happens. It's stupid not to take it. It's one of those things you should do and the decision, that was up to him, was how much to take.

Q: How did you teach your offensive tackle how to lift like that?

KF: Doyle literally makes fun out of me in the weightroom, our strength coach. I told him in my dreams we have a rack of shoes, my dream is to put those on some day. He looked at me and said, you'll never wear those. So, I've done nothing in that regard. That's just part of what he is. He's got good natural gift, obviously, but the thing about him, you don't throw weight around like that on accident. He works extremely hard. That's kind of illustrative of everything he does, he works extremely hard.

Q: Is there anything that surprises you with him anymore?

KF: No, not really. He's just a guy who has a great attitude. He realizes he could get better and he's already pretty good, but you'd never know that by the way he acts, practices and trains. He's all about what he's all about. He's a delightful young man on top of it. The only bad thing about him is that he's not going to be here after January. He'll be around training, but he's not going to be on our team after that last game. That's the downside to college football.

Q: What do you tell NFL scouts . . .

KF: Just look at the film. That tells it all to me. That's the most important thing for any player. He was projected probably in about the same spot as Bulaga or Reiff by the board, everyone I talked to last winter. That's what I told him in December. I think right now, you'll be a 20-to-30 guy. But I do believe this, if he had come out, once they [NFL] started

coming through and finding out about him, he would've been top 15. He's just a rare guy. He's very much like Marshal Yanda. Marshal's biggest attribute is his attitude, along with being strong and tough, but his attitude is so good. The Ravens figured that out and they really know it now and they've rewarded him for that. I'm not saying the other guys don't have that, but Brandon is kind of an infectious guy. He's a guy who makes teams better, other players around him better. There's a lot of value in that. There are a lot of good players, but not every player brings that part to the equation. There's a lot of value in that when you're trying to build a team.

Q: What did you see in him as a young guy or recruit? What do you look for in a young lineman?

KF: He was a big athlete. He started out as a quarterback and tight end and then finally. But even when he was a younger guy, he competed as an older guy in the at the state meet, that wasn't his deal. He wasn't first, the other guy was. The other guy came to our program. The other guy had a lot of training, but Brandon competed with him in the shot competition. How guys approach things and what they do. He's got an unbelievable mom and dad, family support. So a lot of the things we're benefitting from now, that started years ago. The way he was raised, his mom and dad are just tremendous people. He's got a great family, a great high school coach. This guy came to us thinking right and he just continues to push and blossom. He's never satisfied. He's the nicest kid in the world, but he's never satisfied with what he's doing. That's a good trait, and most of the great players I've been around share that trait.

Q: He talks about how he gets away with hunting and fishing. How important is that for a player like him?

KF: It probably helped our discussion in December. You probably read, one of his dreams is to shoot boars out of a

helicopter in Texas, so . . . OK. He's not talking about building a huge house, but he will get a nice pickup truck, I will predict that. He's got a nice one right now. He keeps his things pretty simple. He's a grounded guy, a real guy, a real person. I think all players need to get away. I think that's really important. Coaches need to get away. You have to do something to get away from this stuff because of the intensity of it all. That's kind of reflective of him. He just wants to go out and enjoys easy does it with a couple of guys. We've had a lot of guys who historically like to go hunt and fish. I think of Joe Thomas, who skipped the draft, he's out on Lake Michigan or maybe it was Lake Mendota. I don't know where the hell he was, but he's out fishing rather than sitting in the green room. My guess is Scherff will probably do something like that. I'm really impressed he wore a suit yesterday. I haven't seen him today.

Q: Clip-on tie.

KF: Is it? That wouldn't surprise me. Or they tied it for him upstairs. He's just a normal guy.

Q: Why do you keep your hand in the line coaching?

KF: When I went to Maine in 1990, it was my first head coaching job and I discovered what a boring . . . God, is this boring. I'd just stand there. So, it's just stand around and watch 7-on-7 all day and that stuff. I'll make the rounds, but I don't golf. I've gotta do something. That's my fix, I guess. It's just fun to get in there. What you miss as a head coach is the face-to-face interaction. My most Kodak moment is standing in front of 100 guys instead of 20. It's a very different communication skill that you have to learn. You learn to minimize those things as you go along, but part of that is I like to work with players. That's what I liked about coaching more than anything, even more than going to media days in Chicago or wearing a suit. That's the fun part about coaching. Fortunately, we've had three line coaches and

they've all been kind enough to let me butt in and work with the guys for a period here and there during the week.

Q: It looks like it'd be fun to coach Brandon.

KF: The fun part is in anything you do, the one-on-ones with people. I'm sure it's that way in your business, too, the interactions you have. As a head coach, you don't get as much as that unless you find different ways and that's one way to do it.

Q: [inaudible] on Weisman, local Chicago guy.

KF: We're allowed to bring three guys. Sometimes, we have a hard time bringing three. This year, I wish I could've brought six. One of the guys I wish I could've brought was Louis Trinca-Pasat. What a great kid. Another unbelievable kid. Mark is a great guy with a great story. Thank God those guys were bouncing nickels off his bed at Air Force Academy or whatever they did to him. He transferred in. Two springs ago, we didn't know if he'd block or not. The first spring we were really looking at him, we threw him in there, OK, this guy will block, this guy is really good. He's an athlete. Typically, we convert guys into fullbacks. It was in the fall of 2012, and I don't know why I did it, the Sunday night before the Northern Iowa game, we had no backs, I mean basically. I said, "What about Weisman? What if we let him carry the ball a little bit in practice and see what happens?" Sure enough, that Saturday, we had two guys get knocked out and he went in and had whatever he had, 250 yards, I don't know. It hasn't been exactly a road map that got him to where he is.

Q: Does that describe his running style?

KF: No, just how he got to where he is. I think he's a really good back. I think there's still that stereotype that he's a fullback. I think he's a pretty good running back. He's a really good athlete. He could be an all-world fullback, but he's also a pretty good running back and that's where we plan

to utilize him. On top of that, you're not going to meet a nicer, harder-working, he's an excellent student, trains unbelievably hard. Everything he does is high quality.

Q: Does he validate all sorts of stuff you tell your players?

KF: All three of the guys who are here, they walk the walk. To me, he would've been a perfect service academy guy. As an American, I'd feel great to have him at West Point, Army or Air Force. That lifestyle isn't for everybody. I'm just glad it wasn't for him, because he's almost too good to be true.

Q: This is a great year for running backs in the conference. Where do you see him in that pecking order?

KF: He has a different style than some of the other guys, I guess. He's very different than the Wisconsin guy. The thing I'm excited about . . . Two years ago, whoever was playing was the only healthy guy, typically. This year, it looks like we have four guys we could put into a game, at least. Our goal is when Mark's out there, he looks like Mark Weisman, not a beat-up Mark Weisman. If we're smart about things, hopefully in the fourth quarter of any game, he can play full speed, because when he's full speed, he's awfully good. And then in the fourth quarter of our season, that's what happened last year, we actually had to pull him off the field. He wouldn't take himself out, we had to take him out, just so we could get him back and look like the Mark Weisman who can do damage. That's our hopes this year, that we can keep him where he can really run effectively. I think there is a place for a big, strong, physical runner. Fred Russell did a great job for us in '02 and '03, but it's nice to have a guy who can hammer it a little in there, too, and he does that very, very well.

Q: What's the biggest challenge you face in recruiting?

KF: Overcoming probably, I don't know if it's a stigma or stereotype, we're not perceived as a sexy school or a blue blood school. And we're not. We're not Ohio State. Ohio State

has been good forever. They've had great players forever and a lot of them come from the state of Ohio, a football-rich state. The trick is getting them on campus and letting them see what we have. It's a really well-kept secret. When players come, they find out we have a wonderful place. On top of that, we now have facilities that are second to none. We're opening up a new \$30 million operations building, it's a \$55 million project total. The most important thing is we've got great people. But it's still tough if you're not a, quote, unquote, blue blood or a sexy school.

Q: If you could make any change to recruiting . . .

KF: Oh my gosh, do you have an hour? The whole system needs an overhaul in my opinion. It's kind of emblematic of the challenges that are going on right now. I think why people are striving for autonomy and all the discussion that's going on now. The world in football, and I'm sure it's the same in basketball, the world of revenue sports have changed dramatically in 15 years. The revenue, the TV, all that stuff, I'm not sure anybody could've envisioned it, and I'm not sure it's affected the game in a really healthy way. I think there are a lot of things we can do for the student-athletes and their welfare. Those things are being discussed right now and I'm very confident they'll take place and that will be a good thing.

On the recruiting front, people who resist early signing, they use the alibi that it's just going to expedite the rate on recruiting. Are you kidding me? Are we awake here? Is anybody looking at what's going on? That train left the station years ago and it's not coming back. That's a "putting your head in the sand" mentality, and that's ludicrous. If we don't adjust to what's actually going on, I think we're foolish. There are an awful lot of prospects, a record amount of prospects, who travel and make visits to campus on their own expense right now in June, July. We've done nothing to respond to that, and I think that's silly. If we don't get moving here, we're going

to screw up a really good game. That's just one area. The game has changed, the world has changed and I think we have to be a little more responsive. From what I've seen over the last decade, I'm not so sure we're capable of responding to the changes as fast as they're taking place.

Q: You think recruiting has negatively affected the game of football?

KF: I think there are a lot of things going on right now that have the potential to take what's been a great game and maybe change it in a way that's not so good. It's just a fact. Things are changing really quickly right now. We in football are starting to see what basketball has dealt with for a long time, third party people – mentors, coaches, whatever they may be termed as. There was a time when the high school coach was really important in the equation, that's changing, geographically, not everywhere. There are a lot of things going on that weren't going on. That's the world we're living in. I'm not sure we're capable right now of responding. To me, in a fantasy world, if I were commissioner, the ideal major league or pro sports league is the NFL. I wouldn't want to be a baseball guy. If I were, I'd want to be with the Yankees, Red Sox or one of the have programs. In the NFL, there's some parity. The 32 teams play on the same field. If we're not careful, I think we're going to be more like Major League Baseball than the NFL. I'm not sure I have all the answers how we're going to get there. I have some ideas, but to me, that's the challenge that we face in college athletics. I'm not sure it's all been driven by revenue, but that's a big part of it. Recruiting has become an industry. It wasn't 20 years ago, but it is now. We have to respond. It's hard to respond when you've got an organization that's so big.

Q: As someone who's life has been in college football and obviously a fan of college football, is there any fear that a game that was built on tradition is losing some of that and getting too far away from what made it great?

KF: I just think the world is changing right now. Anyone who follows sports sees that. It's totally different than the '80s, but in 15 years of time, nothing has changed more than recruiting. I'm just fearful, we're not able to keep up with it. I'm talking more specifically about basketball and football, I don't know if it's the same in wrestling, I don't know if it's the same in women's basketball. In our two sports, I know it's changed. Somehow, somehow, we've got to come to grips with it a little better and be able to respond quicker. We have a lot of real hot-point discussion items out there right now that are being addressed, but there are a lot more that need to be addressed in my opinion. And again, to put it on a pro sports level, I hope college football doesn't go the route of Major League Baseball. I would hope it goes the way of the NFL , where all 32 teams have a better opportunity to be successful. If I were in MLB, I'd rather be the with Yankees than my hometown Pittsburgh Pirates.

Q: When NASCAR went national and expanded, it lost a little of its home base and struggled. Is there any danger that conferences like the Big Ten that get spread so thin, can kind of lose what made it so popular in the first place?

KF: I don't know if I'm qualified to answer that. My answer to that would be what do you think it would look like if we stayed with the original 10 or 11 teams, wherever you want to draw that line. That's illustrative of what I'm talking about, the way the world is changing right now. I'm pretty confident if we had stayed at 10 or 11, the future wouldn't be looking bright. I think the commissioner has done a wonderful job. He works with our leadership, the athletic directors and the presidents. He's stellar in his approach. I think he's spot on. The world is changing right now. I don't think that's going to come back or slow down, so how do we manage those changes, how do we deal with those changes and not lose what's been a great sport and a great game.

Q: Do you think there's a push from a lot of coaches to

address these issues you're talking about?

KF: I'm not sure there is. I'm old, I'm a fossil. But I've seen good and I've seen bad. I like the good better than the bad.

Q: Do you think that's what it would take, more coaches pushing for the NCAA to address these issues?

KF: I think we're going to have a hard time getting everyone together on a national basis. I have no idea how that would all go. I'll give you a good illustration. In the field of strength and condition, there were no boundaries years ago. Now, I think we have that in a manageable position. We have five guys who work with our players. They're all trained and educated in that field, so they are truly strength and conditioning coaches. Whereas years ago, there were a lot of people in that field who were pseudo-coaches and helping coach football in the name of strength and conditioning. We've gotten that part of our game manageable and under control. But there's always going to be a school that might be able to pay their strength and conditioning staff \$2 million in salaries. We might only be able to pay \$500,000. As long as the numbers are equal, hey, we'll deal with our circumstances. Some people have 100,000 and some people have 70,000 in their stadiums, but we'll be able to deal with the manpower. To me, the issue is manpower. Where I've seen the biggest change, and I'll go back to recruiting, there are people who have armies of recruiting people – analysts or whatever you want to call them. Analyst seems to be the big name right now – because they can. Does that make it right? We just kind of need to come to an agreement of what's a fair number of personnel and how many people can work with our athletes. It's mushrooming right now and I'm not sure that's good for the game.

Q: How do you feel about not having a signing day?

KF: I kind of get the drift on that, and I guess my answer

there would be that there has to be some kind of minimum because I'm not sure I'd want my 10-year-old driving a car. They have parameters on when you can get a license, when you can start having alcohol, those kinds of things, and I would put signing a national letter of intent in that category. You might have a 14-year-old who has a good mom and dad and they might see things clearly and six generations of the family might've gone to the school, that might make sense for a 12-year-old to sign a letter of intent. Not every young person has that kind of support or those kinds of circumstances. I think there has to be some kind of parameter. But as far as February being the only time, I think it's ludicrous. The answer to the argument against it from what I've heard is if we move it forward or offer an early recruiting signing date, that's going to accelerate the pace of recruiting. Is anyone paying attention to any of it? That's just ludicrous. I'd like to meet someone who really believes that and talk to them about it. I'm all for giving a prospect an option to sign. It wouldn't be mandatory, it would allow them to declare or not to declare at that given point, be it in June or December. I prefer December quite frankly.

PART TWO (as transcribed by Brendan Stiles of *HawkeyeDrive.com*):

Q: Your guys can't take official visits until the first day of their senior year, right?

KF: It has to be September, yeah.

Q: Basketball, I think, is in January of their junior year for their official visits...

KF: Basketball has got, I'm convinced they've got much better lobbyists. They've done a far better job than we have, and I can't give you an answer for that other than... at least they've, I think part of that is too, I've mentioned third-party people in recruiting. They dealt with that. We're

starting to see that now with football. They've been dealing with that, so I think they were motivated to... they get the problems before we get them. Now we're starting to go through some of that stuff, so they've done a much better job of getting out in front of things. But again, it's just an illustration I think of, it's really hard to get things done. From my vantage point, I don't know how it all works, but I just know this, it's hard to get things pushed forward.

Q: I know they have rules that you can't pay for parents to come on the official visits, right? That would seem to be towards the top of the list that you would want to pay for the guardians to come on the visits.

KF: I would prefer June visits, official visits, and I would propose at least one parent – if not both – but at least one parent accompanying the prospect and again, the revenue has changed. But to me, it's just like any business. I don't know anything about business, but I would assume if you ran a business, like if you had a good profit, you would take X amount and re-invest it in your product. I'm not sure we've done that and that would be one way to do it. You know, allowing parents to come. But I don't know if it's cost-prohibitive this year or not. I don't know the answers. I'm not privy to that information, but to me, it would just make logical sense. That would be one way for some of the revenue to be re-generated.

Q: Now some of my boring, more specific to you, recruiting questions. Where are you at in terms of your class? What do you think you'll get to, numbers-wise?

KF: Commitments? Or hard commitments? Soft commitments? You know, we're doing fine. We're doing fine.

Q: Where are you getting to? Are you thinking high teens with this class?

KF: Probably. That's what I think. Mid-teens, high teens.

Q: What positions do you feel like you still need to address?

KF: Um, probably... we haven't, defense is an issue right now, an area of focus. Then probably skill positions on offense.

Q: You talked about hiring that extra position behind Seth and how a lot of schools have done that. What are you looking for that position to do?

KF: Uh, you know, basically what we're going to do is we're going to have... I'll backtrack to share where I'm going. How do I phrase this the best? Tyler Barnes did a lot of things more logistically for recruiting and we replaced him with Max Allen. Max has been more social media, promotions. So really, we gained in that area, but we lost in Tyler's area when Tyler went to Vanderbilt and what I'd like to do is have both of those positions filled. Right now, instead of having one guy, I'd like to have two guys in that and they'll work under Scott Southmayd and then, you know, that will all be working with Seth. So kind of form a personnel department with those four guys.

Q: So specifically, you said Max doing the social media part, what's the other part of what Tyler was doing?

KF: There's a million things that have to get done logistically, you know, starting with paperwork, when kids drop in, parents drop in, hosting and all those kinds of things and right now, Max has to go back and forth. So I would like him just to be able to focus on the ideas, creative stuff and social media things and just let the other person continue to do what Tyler was doing. So what we gained with Max and lost... just try to cover both bases.

Q: Is it kind of crazy to you that you send puzzles to kids and stuff on Twitter and that it gets their attention?

KF: Well, where I would parallel to is in the '80s, we were ahead of the curve. You know, schedule posters and things like

that back in those days, nobody did it and we were doing them. You'd go out to a New Jersey high school or a New York high school with Bernie Wyatt and those things would be up on the walls and they were really helpful. We have to because we're not in a populated area, so it was that little extra that was being done back in the '80s. Bernie was the recruiting coordinator for Coach Fry during those first couple of years. So to me, it's just kind of piggybacking on that concept. You know, we're still not a household name, if you will. So we still have to do things that are maybe... trying to get ahead of people a little bit and Max has been able to percolate a few of those ideas.

Q: Kirk, over the last couple of years, your conference would be criticized a lot for its performance during non-conference play. Coming into this year, you have legitimately 3-4 candidates for the Heisman in this conference. What does it say about the overall level of play in the Big Ten?

KF: I just think, you know, there are peaks and valleys in everything and clearly, I mean, the Southeastern Conference has been on a great run and you know, if you think about it, population, proximity to players. Ohio State has been dominant in our conference. Not dominant, but very successful a long, long time, like pre-Paul Brown. Just think about that. Football in Ohio has been pretty good, forever. It's a heavy populated area. Football is very important. It's part of the culture there. So you know, that's a good place to start. But the bottom line is we've had great teams in our conference historically and my guess is we'll have more. All that stuff kind of rotates. You know, the Pac-12 appeared to be down a couple of years ago and it seems like it's doing pretty well right now. It's just part of sports. Things rotate around a little bit. But you know, if you've got a good population base and a lot of good athletes, that's a good place to start.

Q: (inaudible) about Scherff and the stability he brings to the program.

KF: We've been really lucky in that we've had five national award winners since I've been back in the last 12 years and every one of the guys, they had to be outstanding players to win a national award, but they're exactly what you want in terms of what they did in practice, workouts, meetings, and for the most part academically. So when you're best players are your best guys, there's so much value in that and it just kind of works out that way. Guys who didn't win national awards, Greenway didn't win one and he has done pretty well. Marshal Yanda never won a national award, but he's winning them now in the National Football League. You know, when your best players are your best guys, it's just so valuable and Brandon is every bit of that. Everything he does is just full speed, full effort, extremely humble, and a very hard working guy, a very prideful guy.

Q: When you talk about potential, what kind of player can he be?

KF: You know, it's really going to depend on what he does this year. He has already got a great résumé and his NFL value is pretty high. But to me, it's just going to keep going north because he'll get better this year as a player. That's one of the reasons he wanted to come back. He wanted to improve and he wants to enjoy playing college football. It's a lot of fun playing college football, especially if you could play like him. I'd love to do it for a day. So you know, just based on the guys we've had, I mean, that's what I know and the guys I've coached and know in the NFL, there's going to be a lot of people that would love to have him and not everybody's going to have that chance.

Q: Having a guy that wants to play college football, is that rare to have a guy want to come back like that?

KF: I think especially in this day and age, it is because there's so much outside... pressure's not the right word, but that's just kind of the thing, to go to the league and I think

what Brandon realized – and I tried to point out to him – is when he's 27, it isn't going to really matter a whole lot whether he came out or didn't come out. You know, odds are he's going to be pretty successful financially when he's 27 or 30 and so based on what he has done so far, he has put himself in a position where, to me, he couldn't lose and to me, it came down to, "Do what you want to do." Because it's rare in life when you get to do what you want to do. It's a nice thing when you get that option and I think he wanted to play college football. It's fun. A lot of guys think it's fun and that national discussion about this and that, there are a lot of good things about playing college football. You know, having a scholarship and all that stuff. So I think he realizes he has a pretty good life and he'll realize a year from now when he goes to the NFL, it's a pretty good life too, but it's not being in college, it's not being a college student-athlete. In the NFL, it's all about business. Nobody's going to care about his development, his feelings, his sensitivity, all that stuff. It goes out the window. It's like every job. We all have jobs and that's the way it goes. So if you could prolong it... my daughter stayed in school five years after college. What a deal. She got to hang around. What a good deal. She had a scholarship.

Q: Obviously, he has the strength and size. What does he do from a detail, technical standpoint that makes him so good?

KF: He looks at himself very critically and that's what good players do. That's what outstanding players do. So I think he enjoys the good things that he does, but he also is focused on the things he can get better at and there are some things on that checklist that we'll continue to work on and he'll be doing that 10 years from now, too, because it never ends. It's always a challenge. I've never had the privilege of talking to Derek Jeter, but he'd probably tell you the same thing. There's always something out there that you're always trying to focus on or improve on and it changes in your career, too.

You know, for him to be fortunate enough to become an older player, as your skills start to diminish a little bit, you become better because you have more experience. So that's the neat thing about sports. There's always a challenge and Brandon gets that.

Q: Coach, I got to ask you about a Nebraska guy – Drew Ott, out of Giltner. What does he need to do to take that next step and progress from this past year?

KF: I'm just smiling because two things. You think about the infamous moped ride. You know, stop at 80 all the way to Giltner, and then the other thing I'd tell you about Drew, Drew came to us in the spring and wanted to flip over and play on the right side. He has been playing on the left and what he wanted to do is he wanted to go against Scherff every day. I can't remember anybody volunteering to do something like that. You know, we've had some good players historically. But it just tells you about his attitude. You know, he has really developed into an outstanding player. He's a delightful young guy and he adds a lot to our team, just by his personality. That tells you about the kind of attitude he has and when you have somebody like that, that says it all. He's just a great young guy.

Q: How much more improvement can Carl Davis make this year?

KF: It's not the same as, but Carl and Brandon kind of mirror each other. Carl had some injury issues and it's almost like he's a step behind in his development, if you will. He did a lot of really good things last year and I'm excited because I think he's going to take a real... another big step this year. Based on what I saw this spring, he's already on that path. He really had a good spring. He was up against Jordan Walsh – who had a good spring and I think is a very good player – and at times, he made Jordan look average. That's hard to do. He has got a great attitude, he works hard and I'm just really excited to watch him play this year.

Q: He said he didn't even ask for feedback from the advisory board last year. When you were talking with Brandon about making that decision, was he also that same mindset?

KF: It's kind of what I was alluding to. You know, I think he was a little... he and Carl were smart enough to know, he would have been drafted obviously and we never even had the discussion. If we had, I probably would have told him, 'Bad decision.' But it was not my decision to make for our guys. But, if he's going to go in the first round, it's a good decision. You know, I'm pretty sure that wouldn't have happened for Carl. Next year, he'll have that opportunity if he plays the way we think he can. He'll have that opportunity, so to me, it was a good move on his part and you know, again, I think it'd be fun to be a player like that. I never had that opportunity.

Q: Of all these materials that you and everybody have put out, this video last week of Scherff is like publicity you can't buy and it's done without anybody saying a word. It's just him doing. Is that like the most symbolic thing?

KF: It's pretty fitting for him, isn't it? That is him, first of all. And it's a fine line. I mean, you know, we'd be negligent if we don't promote him. We promoted Robert and we sat here in 2002 and nobody said a word about Brad for obvious reasons. He never started a game. But when that thing started gaining momentum, I think we did a great job of promoting him and we got him in the Heisman race. But ultimately, Robert won the award based on what he did and Brad was the same way. That's why he won the Davey O'Brien. It's all about what they did on the field. So I think we'd be remiss if we didn't get that out there. But it's a fine line. We just don't want to turn it into a circus. But I think, yeah, that clip is pretty representative of what he is when he trains and we'll have some clips of him blocking and playing on the game field against good competition. There are plenty of tapes. I'm thinking about a play where he blocked the linebacker from

Ohio State and he was a first-round pick. So you know, to me, it's more about the doing than it is the talking. That's what football is all about and certainly, that's Brandon.

Q: He's doing a nice job and doing what's asked of him here, but you could just tell...

KF: Yeah, he'd rather be fishing. No doubt about it. I said that earlier and my guess is he'll get invited to the ESPN green room or whoever ... it's ESPN, right? It's the draft green room. ESPN, NFL Network, everybody. He may be the next Joe Thomas. Instead of Lake Michigan, he might be at a pond in Williamsburg over at Blythe's fishing. I can see him opting for fishing over going and getting a new suit, those \$1,000 suits or whatever those cost. That's just not him.

Q: (inaudible) something about Scherff winning the Rimington Trophy.

KF: I hope he does because, you know, the nice thing about being a coach is you get to freeload. You know, when your players... I love going to that dinner. Yeah, my wife might get to freeload whenever one of our guys wins an award. It's great. It's a nice trip. I mean, even I like going to Omaha.

Q: This might be a weird reference, but in 1981, the Big 8 Offensive Player of the Year was a center. I know in this day and age with all the skill people, that would never happen, but do you think in a different time, he could have been that kind of guy?

KF: I know of one head coach, and it's not me, who voted for him for Big Ten MVP. Uh, you know, that's really rare. I was in Pittsburgh when Rimington came in the Heisman voting and I'll tell you, Russ Grimm could have that year. Russ was unbelievable. But you know, anything could happen. There is a quarterback. It's hard to beat quarterbacks. I think he has won one or two of them. People have probably already written in their votes. But it's fun to discuss I guess, right?

Q: A coach could say anything he wants, but to cast that vote, that's a real tribute.

KF: And this is a guy I've got great respect for as a football coach. I mean, he knows football. That's not to disrespect the other coaches, but this guy is a sheer football guy.

Q: Going back to Carl, other than getting healthy, what were the keys to his improvement and development?

KF: I'm going to hold that question. You just made me think of a funny moment. Talking about Brandon, I forgot to bring this up. My "Oh, crap!" moment, O.K., our second bye week, everybody's off Saturday and I'm driving to get a cup of coffee and that Dari and Mel show on ESPN, I got it on. "O.K., Mel. Give me your three top underclassmen that nobody's talking about." First guy out of his mouth, "There's an offensive tackle, Brandon Scherff," and I almost drove off the road. I was like, "God... Son of a gun. Yeah, he's gone. Out. O-U-T." I never would have been listening to that show, but it was our bye week. "Son of a..." I'm sorry I derailed the conversation.

Q: Just talking about Carl, other than him getting healthy, what were some of the other keys for his development and improvement over the last couple of years?

KF: You know, he has got a great attitude and he came that way. Both he and Brandon both showed up big guys, great attitudes, opposite side of the ball and you know, he had to play through some things. He missed some time, springs, and that impedes any player's progress, especially... linemen tend to develop. They really, not many guys just – Bulaga was kind of the exception, although he got better. But he walked in and he and Moeaki are the two guys closest just to being first round draft picks. They showed up and, "Boy, these guys are pretty good right now." But those guys, it was more the road that they traveled and so Carl, you know, he has battled. He

has fought through injury and really last year was when it started. Two years ago, he didn't know his potential. Last year, he started figuring it out and this last spring, he really... I think he really started enjoying the fact that, you know, "Hey, maybe I am pretty good." I think he's starting to get that and not in an ego way or a bragacious way, but like, "Hey, this might be fun if I keep pushing for it." So you know, I think he worked hard this summer and he has got a great attitude, a smile on his face all the time. Brandon is the same way and it's good to be around high-energy players that are good players and that's certainly the case with Carl.

Q: He was just talking about how he was so big, yet so little (a funny way to say it), but he couldn't play football. He was always overweight with restrictions and stuff. Do you think his ceiling is still kind of high?

KF: You know, my wife has had that forever and the other negative is when you're big as a little kid, like all the other parents are like, 'You know, stay away from Joey.' And then if you even act like a kid or a do a kid thing, they're like, "Their kid's a brute." So yeah, big kids have a disadvantage. The world's tilted against them in some ways. But I think he has really come to appreciate and realize that you're allowed to be aggressive on the field and unleash it a little bit. I think he's learning how to do that pretty well.

Q: He mentioned how growing up he was playing basketball. Could you see those skills?

KF: Oh, he was a very good athlete and we had seen him jam a ball in high school. He's a very good athlete. Very light on his feet for a man his size.

Q: Do you have a recruiting number in mind, or does that change?

KF: Yeah, it will be one of our typical deals. Probably 17-20. You know, that seems to be where we come in. We don't ever

seem to come in at 38. We rarely come in at 25, although our junior class right now is huge. So we may finally have a full class one of these days. But for some reason, we're always in that 17-to-22 area.

Q: Do you have a need area that you think you haven't addressed yet?

KF: You know, skilled perimeter on offense and defensively, we don't have many committed right now. So that's something we're really looking at.

Q: Do you think Phil [Parker] will be campaigning pretty hard for backfield help?

KF: Oh, God. I tell you, it's a good thing Phil's not an accountant because all of his clients would be in jail. His math skills are amazing. Don't play pool with him. He's unreal. He should be. He's carrying the caucuses and we're at the forefront.. God, I wish we didn't have... you know, are you guys tired of political ads already? Like you know, it's only what, July? Oh, God. But he is like the... he should be a lobbyist. If he ever gets out of coaching, we'll send him to Washington. He'll stir it up even more. He's unbelievable and relentless.

Q: Expectation-wise, it seems like there's a lot of excitement around this team. Is there any certain way to motivate them to temper expectations?

KF: I talked earlier how it's Fool's Gold. Last year, we're in the outhouse. I don't know if we're in the penthouse right now, but you know, it's just... the meter swings back and forth. It's usually in that 40-60 percent range. So things are really bad or they're really good, but the truth is they're somewhere in the middle right now and all that's important is where it's at, at the end of the season.

Q: What are your concerns right now, personnel-wise?

KF: Well, on the field, we lost three NFL linebackers and that's obviously a concern, start with that. Leadership-wise, you know, that whole senior class. Brett Van Sloten was not Brandon Scherff in terms of draftability. I think he has got an excellent chance to stay in the NFL. But what he brought in leadership to our football team, you can't put a price tag on it. Same thing with our linebackers, all the seniors did a great job. So it's a work in progress. You know, we've got good seniors now, but how about the underclassmen, because these guys did a good job last year, so that next group, that next wave. You know, we've got a lot of good starters to replace and a lot of depth issues. Our secondary depth at the safety position, we don't know who our other starting corner's going to be, we don't know who our starting linebackers are, depth in the offensive line. So you know, we've got a lot of things to work on right now and it's just putting it all together like every year. It's going to be a busy month. It's a fun month.

Q: What do you say to people who look at your schedule and say, "Wow, that's a very manageable schedule?"

KF: I remember sitting here in '07 hearing the same thing and we didn't go to a bowl game. We were 6-6 and sitting at home, but we deserved to sit at home. We were bowl-eligible, but not bowl worthy. So you know, my answer would be it's easy to say those things if you're not playing or competing. Anybody who has competed knows there's nothing easy about winning at this level and you know, the last thing I would say is in '09, we ended up seventh in the country. It was a miracle – not good fortune, a miracle – that we beat UNI in our opener and I'm sitting on the couch a few months later and Butler is playing Duke for the national championship in college basketball and the announcer goes, "This Butler team lost to Youngstown State on February 27," or whenever that was, like five weeks before. I looked at my kid Steve and go, "Can you imagine these guys lost to Youngstown State and are playing Duke?" He goes, "Dad,

you lost to UNI and won the Orange Bowl." I said, "O.K." Case closed. So that's that. Nothing easy.

Q: How much of a learning experience is this year with the Playoff for coaches with trying to figure out how it's all going to come together?

KF: It's going to be different and one thing doesn't change – just keep winning. The more you win, the better things are and I can't even tell you right now... the Rose Bowl's in the Playoffs, right? So I'm not sure what happens to the team... you know, I don't even know. All I know is the more you win, the better things are, no matter what. Fifteen years doing this and nine before that. Probably the biggest difference is going to be, you know, obviously if you're in that top four, that bowl game gives you a chance to go to another one and then whatever happens after that, that's going to be new terrain for whoever goes. Those two teams are going to be in totally new territory, probably a little bit like playing in a Super Bowl. So some of those very same distractions, challenges, logistical concerns, tickets, you know, all that stuff that goes with it. So it would probably be wise for someone to maybe talk to some NFL people and find out what are the problems, what are the challenges and try to be prepared for them.

Q: You'll have someone that will know where to go. Don't worry.

KF: Exactly. I hope we get that problem.

Q: If strength of schedule does become a factor, does it change at all how you're scheduling?

KF: You know, I guess it does in theory. It's like the argument a couple of years ago. To me, if you win every game, there is no argument. You're probably going to be in the championship game, even in the old system. I guess that was not true one time with Auburn. Didn't they run the table and

not go? So it has happened once in I don't know how many years. I'm not a historian. But if you lose one, then you open yourself up to discussion and debate. So the safest way to get there is to win them all. I'm guessing there will be some one-loss teams that are in there. But to me, that's a program thing and I think if you look at, and I'll put it out there, our best teams have played their best in October and November. I'm talking about the UNI game. You know, we had a pretty good team in '09. We had a pretty good team in '02, '03 and '04. We barely beat Miami (Ohio), I mean, it was a miracle we beat them in '02. We wound up undefeated in the Big Ten and we had a hard time beating them and lost to Iowa State. For us to schedule "name-brand" schools in September, you know, that isn't real smart, I don't think. I'm just talking very honestly. Again, Brandon Scherff is a lot better of a player as a senior than he was as a freshman and that's kind of the way our program's built. So to me, it would knock us out of contention for anything. That's just my honest opinion.

Q: Should the Big Ten champion be in the Playoff every year?

KF: It should be, yeah. I think they are. If you're the Big Ten champion, you have a heck of a good chance. If you're a champion with two losses or three losses, maybe not. So you know, it's the same old thing. The more you win, the better off you are and I think it's more important to be good in November and October. That's... to me, it's all about building a team. Yeah, we're not going to be a marquee team in September. I can't remember a time that we were. I'm just stating a fact. That's history at our place. Maybe it was different in the '80s, but I can't remember it being that way though when I was there. We were good in '83 early. '85, I guess. That was probably the most stacked team I have ever been around.

Q: Do you try to change that, or is it just a "We're trying to build for October and November and that's just who we are?"

KF: Well you know, if we could recruit like... there are eight

or 10 schools, to put it on NFL terms, there are eight or 10 schools in college football that get 15 first round draft picks a year. We're never going to get that. We've never had it. I think we've had maybe two since I've been here. We just talked about Moeaki and Bulaga. When they walked in, they were ready to play as freshmen. Like, they were ready. Just like in the NFL when you get a good first rounder. He comes into camp, you can plug him in and he goes. But there's a lot – not a lot – but there's a handful or two handfuls of schools that have that luxury. We're not one of them. We have never been, at least as far as I know. I wasn't there in the '50s. There were some really good teams in the '50s, but that's not the reality. We're not going to out-recruit Ohio State. I'll put that out on the table. You know, I don't know how we're going to do it. I've been here a long time and haven't figured it out yet. But I don't lie awake at night worrying about that. We are who we are. I mean, we have to find guys that maybe they don't see the beauty in. You know, our objective, and I kind of learned this from being around our wrestling program, Dan Gable is very similar. Although at some point, they got the marquee guys. But it was not uncommon for them to maybe take the second or third guy off the list because they saw something in that guy and that's the only chance we have to be successful. We're never going to ... you know, we don't have the history of Ohio State. Maybe in 100 years, we will. But during my lifetime, it probably won't happen, at least my coaching lifetime. So I'm not lying awake at night worrying about it. I'm really happy with what we are and who we are. I think we've done a lot to build our program. We have great facilities. That's all we got. But for us, it's all about finding the right guy so we can compete with those teams now knowing what they've got.

Q: Is Damond Powell poised for a breakout season this year?

KF: Well, he had a hernia surgery a couple of weeks ago. He's coming off that right now, but he's a delightful young guy, a

great personality. His mom and dad are just great people. So we're sure hoping so. We're hoping he can get back quickly. He'll probably be eliminated from camp, but boy I tell you, he can run. He has a great attitude and I thought he really improved in the spring.

Q: Was that an injury that happened during the spring?

KF: It happened during conditioning this summer. It was kind of a freak thing. It's not a sports hernia, but a hernia nonetheless. You know, so he's going to be fine. It's just... it's a setback.

Q: What have you seen in the progress of previous guys who have tried to come back from that injury?

KF: We've had a handful of guys in my 15 years back. It's not a deal-breaker. It's just one of those things that takes a little bit of time. He has a great attitude and he'll be fine.

Q: Andrew Donnal, this will be his final go-around for you guys. What do you expect from him?

KF: Obviously very excited about him and he has done a great job playing for us. We've had two very good tackles playing, so he has been playing at guard more so. He's more natural at the tackle position and he's a little bit like Quinton Alston. Quinton Alston got stuck behind some really good players and Andrew has gotten stuck behind two very good tackles. But I'm very confident he'll play well. He's a great young man.

Q: What kind of held Damond back last year? Was it not studying?

KF: You know, he got to our place like literally two days before camp started. So it was like getting a high school guy. Not a college guy, a high school guy. College maturity, but that's an awful lot for a kid to just walk in and do it. He has been on campus a whole year now and it's a different ball

game. That's kind of what held him back. It's hard. I mean, it's a hard thing. For somebody who has been in the program, it's hard. That's all. He's a great kid.

Q: Was the message this offseason any different from a year ago?

KF: Not really. You know, it's like that every year. If you're in high school football or college football, whenever your last game's over, it's over. In our case, our guys got back right after Martin Luther King Day. That's when we started school. And the message is, "It's a new season." You know, it's 2014, a new calendar year, so it's a whole new year. This is a very different team. When our seniors graduated, the chemistry changed. Everything changed. Again, you try to learn from the good and learn from the bad and then it's all about what you do moving forward. The big thing was our older guys had a chance to really see some great behaviors modeled by our older guys last year and hopefully they'll emulate that and that will help us move forward this year.

Q: Was there anything positive from that LSU game that you could take into this season?

KF: Yeah, our guys competed like crazy. That's easily one of the five most talented teams we've faced in 15 years since I've been back. They were extremely in-depth, a very, very talented football team and we knew that going in. We knew it was going to be a great challenge. I thought our guys competed. They scrapped, they fought and we had opportunities. We just came up short and we weren't good enough to get it done when we had to and it's going to happen, especially if you look at the teams we've played in bowls. You go down the list, we've played LSU twice, Oklahoma, Missouri was 12th in the country, Georgia Tech played in Florida three times – two times I guess – Southern Cal, South Carolina. So you play good teams and you're not going to win them all. You try, and we've won more than we've lost. But I'm proud of the way our guys

competed and battled. They prepared well.

Q: When you look at the Big Ten, does it seem pretty wide open?

KF: I think so.

Q: Is there the sense of this being a real opportunity?

KF: I think historically, if you look at the Big Ten – and I'm not an expert over 100 years – but since '81, when Iowa won it in '81, prior to that it was a 13-year logjam with Michigan and Ohio State. Since then everybody, I think all but two teams, have gone on [to win the conference]. I'm talking about the original teams, not the new ones. But my point is, the Big Ten has always been very, very wide open, highly competitive. Even if you look at... we've had three championship games and the traditional favorites haven't won one yet. That's a nice thing. In August, everybody has got a chance to put their hat in the ring and see what they could do with it. It's what happens moving forward.

Q: Do you think there will be competitive balance between the two divisions?

KF: I think they're pretty balanced right now. You know, you can try to do the crystal ball and I'll go back to the point, again, I just said Michigan and Ohio State had 13 straight years of Rose Bowl dominance prior to '81, yet they haven't won a championship game in Indianapolis yet. So I think it's an illustration. You can sit here in August and you think you know who's going to win, but it's really not that easy. Wisconsin has won two of them and they're in our division. Maybe the balance is tipped our way. I could argue that off recent history. It's just, you know, there's a lot of good football teams in our conference and the strong shall survive.

Q: Do you like how they set up the divisions?

KF: Oh, I love it. Especially when I know what division we're in. I get East and West. I get that. Uh, you know, I think it just makes sense from, you know, somebody living in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, can drive over to Illinois and see a game and Illinois could drive to Iowa City. We haven't played Illinois since '08. Think about that, and they're three-and-a-half hours down the street. So you know, it's just a quirk in the schedule, but to me, it makes more sense to play all the schools that you border. In our case, we play them all now. You know, if you're further towards the middle, that's not the case. But yeah, I think that makes more sense. The only argument against it I could come up with would be competitive balance and I just kind of shot that... I tried to shoot it down. But right now, the balance is towards us because we've had three championship teams and two of them are in the West, so I guess we got the unfair advantage right now.

Q: Rivalries always seemed harder to form because of the Legends and Leaders divisions...

KF: Oh, my gosh. I needed a cheat sheet. You know, I think they were great names. I just couldn't remember which one we were in.

Q: Rivalries always evolve, but it seems like the rivalry between Wisconsin and Iowa has always been the same. Just two hard-nosed teams that like to run the ball and use tight ends and play tough, physical defense. Is it nice for both fan bases and both staffs to have this game every year instead of the hiatus you guys had to deal with?

KF: You know, I go back to '81 and the first game was up there. We knocked them out of Rose Bowl contention, actually and you know, historically, it has always been a great series. Yeah, there was a little dip there in the late '80s where it became a little bit more Iowa-dominated, then it flipped the other way. Now it's back, I think, pretty balanced. You know, it's just a great, healthy rivalry game. It's a great thing

and you know, when they were on the other side, it was just one of those things. But when you have expansion, you know, there's always going to be things that may not seem logical, but that's just part of the territory. You know, again, selfishly, I think it's good that we're playing each other and it's a healthy thing. They've done a great job.

Q: I know it's just one game at a time in the Big Ten, but when you look at the last three weeks of the season where Iowa, Nebraska and Wisconsin are all playing each other, I don't want to say that's where the division's going to be won or lost, but it's going to be an important stretch for three programs jockeying themselves into position to get to Indianapolis.

KF: You know, if you're going to be in contention for something, November is a critical month. But the only way it becomes critical is if you do what you're supposed to do in September and October. So again, the best thing is a step at a time. But the potential is certainly there based on where we sit today, but there are so many things as you know that can happen. So many twists and turns in a season. But you know, hopefully – I don't know if that was intentional or not – but hopefully, that's the way it pans out. We'll see what happens.

Q: What's Jake's maturity level now after taking the reps last year?

KF: Jake's a smart guy. He's a real critical guy. He's very improvement driven. So you know, it's all good. It's all good. You know, I would expect him to be a better player this year than he was last year, just because that's sort of the flow of it and it's true of all good players. Usually quarterbacks, that's especially true. So hopefully what he has learned, he can really take that and make it work for him.

Q: Tell me about the progress Louis Trinca-Pasat has made. I went to high school with him and he looks totally different

now.

KF: I don't know if you heard me say it, but he's the one guy... I wish I could have brought six guys. He'd be next on the list. He's a hometown guy. What a great story and great guy. You know, I don't know if you knew this, but he had both feet out the door. I mean, he was going to quit a couple of years ago, which is not uncommon for a young guy, a young player. A little dismayed. He really had to transform himself. We recruited him to be a defensive lineman. He was a big linebacker in high school, as you know. Louie is just an unbelievably great guy. Excellent student. He has already graduated. He's in grad school. Everything he does, it's just full speed ahead and it's first class and he's really representative of our team in some ways because he took his lickings a couple of years ago in 2012. First year playing, undersized, up against guys that had savvy and some veteran experience and he fought and competed, but he got worked a little bit. Last year, it was a different story and I can't wait to watch him play this year because he is just a tough, hard-nosed guy and we don't have a better young man on our football team and fortunately, he thought about leaving but decided to come back and give it another shot. I'm so glad that he did. You know, he's just a tremendous member of our team and a very strong leader.

Q: What did you do to convince him to stay?

KF: His high school coach was instrumental. Coach Rio was extremely helpful and I think Coach Rio and the family all sat down and we talked with Louie. One thing kind of led to another and you know, it was just an emotional, premature decision. But you know, it's kind of representative of this experience. For most players, it's a real hard road to get to the field and he just came back, went to work, worked hard and the rest is history. He has had a great career already and an opportunity to really make it special.

Q: What are your thoughts on the new playoff system?

KF: I think it's great. I think it's great. I think it's a positive step and hopefully the last step we take as far as creating a championship format.

Q: Do you see further expanding?

KF: I hope not. That's what I was alluding to. I think four teams, all you're really talking about is a plus-one here. One game. That doesn't, I think, diminish the beauty of the bowl system, the way it is right now, and I think if we start looking at eight, 16, first of all, I think we're going to be putting a lot of undue, unhealthy pressure on our athletes, which is... we always talk about that being first and foremost in our opinions and I'll deviate for one second. You know, let's say Iowa's in the championship game next year. All we're really doing is adding 13 days or 12 days onto our calendar and in our case, it'd be taking 12 days of vacation time away from our players. They're typically home after the bowl game and don't come back until after Martin Luther King Day. I would venture to say it would be 100 percent unanimous our team would give up those 12 days to play in the championship game. I don't think it's an issue. Now if you start impeding on, you know, going into finals and those kinds of things, you know, are we doing this for the players or are we doing this for us? That would be my question. Then the other part of the equation is the bowl system, the way it works right now, works on a lot of different levels. So it's not only teams playing in New Year's Day bowls, but the Alamo Bowl in 2001, our first bowl game in three years, that was every bit as important as traveling to the Orange Bowl, which we've done twice. So the bowl system really works, I think, the way it is and to me, we're getting the best of both worlds with the plus-one.

Q: Do you think there are too many bowls?

KF: You could argue that. That's another discussion. I think

you could argue that, certainly. I would have an opinion on that, but I think it's important that we have bowls for teams that are 7-5 or 6-5 in the old days maybe. That's a different discussion, but I think, you know, when you're coming up that ladder, it's important to go to bowls. It's a big deal. It's a real big deal.

Q: With 6-6, do you think there's some gray area?

KF: That's a discussion. We didn't go in '07. We were 6-6, we were bowl eligible, but I had no argument because to me, we were bowl eligible. We were not bowl worthy. So there are no sour grapes on my part. I just think you get what you deserve and we've been 6-6 and gone to bowls and we've been 6-6 and deserved to go to a bowl. Every season is unique and different. Everything is different.

Q: Scherff and Davis relayed a story about how you had them go up against each other in practice and then have them go at it 10 more times against each other. I'm curious if you remember that and what the mindset was to make them keep going and going.

KF: I just wanted to learn a little bit more about them. That's all.

Q: What did you see on that first snap.

KF: Good things. Two good prospects. You know, you just want to check them out a little bit mentally, too, and kind of see how they respond to something that we would do very rarely.

Q: When did you know enough was enough?

KF: Uh, you know, there's no formal... it's just a feel thing, I guess. We just saw two guys that enjoyed the competition and neither one is going to back down from each other and our summation was, you know, not just off that, but overall before the season started was that we had two really good prospects.

They probably weren't quite ready to play, but two guys that had the potential to become really good players if they kept working the way that we thought they might. And they did.

Q: Was that the first time you knew they were going to be something special?

KF: That's one moment that kind of gives you an exposure to the way a guy thinks. There was nothing inhumane about it. It was just a, "Let's try it again here," and see if anybody would back down and they wouldn't.

Q: Overall now, just how important are they to your team, given how they've come a long way...

KF: I said to somebody earlier, you know, we've been so fortunate that we've had five national award winners the last 12 years or so, and then you think about guys like Marshal Yanda and Bob Sanders that didn't win national awards, but they did in the NFL. MVP, Defensive MVP. Yanda is a 3-time Pro Bowler, all-Pro player. Greenway never won a national award. But when your best players are your best guys, you know, that's really helpful. It really gives you a great advantage and certainly all three of the players I've brought here – Brandon, Mark and Carl – have all been that. You know, that's powerful. When your best guys are acting and they embody the type of characteristics that you hope a good player would have. When they've got those, it's huge, because they're doing it. They're not taking about it. They're doing it and the players can see that.

Q: When you look back on your career, how close did you get to entertaining or being intrigued by the NFL?

KF: You know, there might have been a time or two where, you know, there was pause and thought a little bit. But for the most part, not much thought. The same thing on the college front. You know, I've kind of always said you'd need a compelling reason to leave and the one thing people don't

realize... there probably aren't a lot of people in coaching that can say they've had five kids graduate from the same high school. We have five children. My wife and I have five children that went to the same high school. Four of them were born at the University hospital. The one that wasn't is the only one that started Kindergarten through 12th grade [in the same school district] and he's two years from getting his degree at the University of Iowa. So you know, that's pretty invaluable to us. And then I've had three sons play in the program. Got one working in it right now. So you know, there are a lot of things behind the scenes that you really can't put a price tag on. It's not all about, you know, what might appear to be more glamorous or financially lucrative. There are a lot of things that you've got to consider. Like anybody, when you're in any profession, it's not just about one thing. So long story short, not a lot. I mean, I really have enjoyed my life and hope there's a lot of good years in front still.

Q: Do you shut the door on that then or do you always need to be open...

KF: Oh, you'd be a fool to, you know, never say never. But again, I just... I can't envision a compelling reason. Now if we had a whole leadership base change at Iowa... my guiding formula in life has been I want to work somewhere where I really enjoy my day-to-day. That's on my personal basis, what's good for my family, but also from a professional standpoint. It was no different when I was an assistant coach. In fact, I had a clause put in my contract in Cleveland where I was able to break my contract if something happened to the head coach. So when Bill [Belichick] was released, I was able to, in effect, become a free agent and I just didn't want to get trapped working with people that I really didn't share values with. So that has kind of been a guiding principle for me. If I have had an opportunity to be with people I like to be with on a day-to-day basis, that's a lot more important than where I'm at. You know, level, mountains, oceans, all that kind of stuff

because most people wouldn't pick Iowa City as a destination. I won't say been there, because they might. They might be smart enough. My only complaint has been the weather. At age 58, the winters get a little tough. But, you know, it's what I keep doing. I've enjoyed my life. I have a good coaching life and a good personal life. I don't know what else you could ask for. It's a good deal.

Q: Have you guys...

KF: Hey, one thing I just thought of, too. I read your thing this morning. It was not a sports hernia. Damon has got a normal hernia. It's a heck of a lot better. I mean, I don't want anybody to have a hernia, but sports hernias are dicey.

Q: Have you guys looked into alternate uniforms for this year?

KF: I haven't given it a whole lot of thought. Don't sit on the edge of your seat. If that's what it takes... I think we've got a classic uniform. You know, still got a little scar tissue from that Purdue game a couple of years ago. It may take a while to get over that on for me, on a lot of levels.

Q: What's your relationship like with Bo Pelini?

KF: It's good. I mean, I think it's good. I don't know if you've asked Bo. I don't want to speak for him. But on my end, it's good.

Q: He caught a lot of flak after that game on Black Friday last year, but that was an emotional game. What are your thoughts on how things have gone for him?

KF: You know, my history with Bo, it's not like it's close. But he visited Iowa back in the '80s. He had gone to Ohio State. I just missed him. He came to Iowa as a grad assistant, but I was gone at that point. I went to Maine. But you know, he grew up in Youngstown, Cardinal Mooney. The Stoops, they're all Iowa guys, the Stoops are. So I feel like I know Bo a

little bit that way through the Stoops family and the parallel here... you know, Mike, Bob and Mark are all very different and Bo is probably a little bit like Mike in some ways. Mike was a very emotional guy and tough, hard-nosed football guy. My picture of Bo and my interactions with Bo have been very similar to that and you know, all I know is Bo has done a heck of a job over there. They've won a lot of games from year to year during his time there he has coached. He has got an excellent staff. They have coached very well and I think he's an excellent football coach. Yeah, his personality is different than mine. But that doesn't make one better than the other. You know, everybody judges. You know, ultimately, if you look at it, if you win enough, Atilla the Hun would be worshipped by the media. I mean that with all due respect, but pretty much, if you win enough, coaches get a hall pass for anything. Whether they're too animated or too boring, too flaccid, it's all about winning. If you're successful, boy that's the way to do things. If you're not successful and you don't win enough based on your given circumstance, then geez, that guy is too animated or he's too... you know, all you got to do is look at the NFL. No matter what happens, and they change coaches a lot in the NFL, just track any coaching change and I'll promise you when the player's coach gets released, "Hey, what we need is a guy who is a disciplinarian. We need somebody stern." And then after they let that stern guy go, it's, "What we need is a player's coach. Somebody that can really connect with these guys." It's just so predictable. But the bottom line is when you get fired, whatever you did, whatever your personality was, that's why. And when you win, "Hey, that guy, you know, he's animated. That's why that team won." If you look at it, there have been successful coaches and teams with all kinds of personalities, just like some people run the spread, some people run the option, some people... and the idea is to be successful and if you do that, then apparently what you did worked and that's good. You got to do things within your personality and I think Bo's a heck of a football coach. He's a great guy. I don't understand all

that stuff, but I get it, too. It's the world we live in and the media loves that, right? I mean, it gives you something to talk about and I've caught a lot of grief on my end for, "Hey, that guy doesn't show emotion. Is he even awake during the game?"

Q: You got to bring a cat...

KF: Haha. O.K. ... Well, we do have two cats at home.

Q: You've been asked about Brandon Scherff...

KF: That's O.K. I like talking about that.

Q: ... more than enough times this week, or at least for the past few days. What has it, I guess, been like watching him develop over the past few years?

KF: You know, that's kind of how most of our players, our good players, end up. They usually travel with that and I said earlier, we had two guys that come to mind that walked in... if you're in the NFL and you're a mid-first rounder, they come to camp and it looks like they've been here three years. And the real good ones, it looks like they've been here 10 years. Jonathan Ogden, you know, are you kidding me? Bulaga and Moeaki came to our place as freshmen and they fit in pretty quickly. Not that they didn't get better as they went along. But most of our really good players have been guys that have climbed the ladder. You know, Bob Sanders couldn't backpedal when he showed up. But he learned how to and Brandon's the same way. Now the only difference is like where he is right now compared to say, another guy. I mean, it's just a little different. He's a rare player. But he has worked hard for everything he has gotten. He does have unique gifts, but he has really maximized and utilized those gifts because he has got a great attitude and is very humbling, very improvement driven.

Q: Do you have a favorite memory of his development or one

that sticks out?

KF: You know, the one I laughed about earlier was like in 2012, he was playing with a bad neck. Mike Martin got drafted from Michigan and they kept showing Martin blowing Scherff up and it was like so unrepresentative of Brandon that he's out there not playing at full speed against a guy who was playing full speed and was really good. So that was like his Kodak moment for that year, I think it was '11, and you know, he has come a long way since that time, you know, and now he's the guy blowing people up. So you know, it was just a matter of him staying healthy. The year he got hurt – that was '12 – you know, that train is really gaining momentum that he got injured. He was just starting to click and got hurt, but he handled that injury with, you know, a great attitude. "No big deal." In his mind, he came right back and then he really flashed and just kept doing that. It's all in prompt, but the best is in prompt.

Q: He credits Coach Doyle a lot...

KF: A lot of our players do.

Q: Yeah, I guess when it comes in terms of weight lifting, does Doyle kind of do uniform stuff or is there a set regimen for getting ready for guys like Scherff?

KF: Well you know, everybody's position is different and every player is different. Chris and his staff... you know, we have a really nice facility that's going to open up. I'm not going to say it's the nicest in the country, but it has got to be up there. It's pretty nice. I will say we have the best strength coach in the country and that's just a personal opinion. I think it's factual, but you know, I think it's a personal opinion. Chris and his staff do an outstanding job with our players and Brandon is one of those guys. The thing I always tell people, the people who settled under Chris' direction are the guys that not only do the right things in the weight room

under supervision, but they walk out and they take nutrition seriously. They take sleep seriously. All the things you have to do to be an elite athlete and Brandon is the kind of guy that really takes that stuff to heart. So you know, it's a combination of all those things, but it starts with Brandon's attitude and his commitment to being the best player that he can be.

Q: I cover the Packers. Tell me about Mike Daniels. Here's a guy drafted into a situational. Fourth-round, situational guy and two years in, it sounds like he's the vocal leader of their defense and not only the vocal leader, but on Saturday when I was up there, he lined up with the ones on the first team drill.

KF: We came back – I think it would have been the '05 Outback Bowl – I think I'm getting my years straight, but anyway, there's a DVD on my desk. It's a kid from Highland High School in New Jersey, Mike Daniels. I'll throw on there he played defensive tackle and running back. I thought he was pretty good, so you know, I was like, "O.K., so why is this kid not being recruited?" I'll never forget calling him. He was coming back from his visit to Villanova. This was on a Sunday, driving across the bridge there and I asked him about etc., etc. So I go out there and visit Mike. He's not tall, as you know, and that was about the only negative that I could see. But he was about 230 pounds, maybe 235 at that time. The thing that sold me as much as anything was his grandfather is a lawyer right there in downtown Newark. Not Newark, Camden. He defended tenants that were kind of getting screwed over, basically. So I got to talking to him. He was a beat cop and his grandfather raised five or six kids – I can't remember how many kids. He was a beat cop in Camden and just saw what was going on and that motivated him to go to law school in his 40s. He got his law degree while working as a beat cop and that sold me right away on the whole family. So anyway, Mike came out and for Mike, the switch flipped, I think that would

have been the spring in 2010. That's where it just kind of hit. Like, all of sudden, swoosh. This guy was good. So that's when he became a starter for us. Mike is kind of lively. He's not boisterous, but he's pretty vocal. But it's healthy, it's positive and it's genuine. He's not a phony guy. I loved coaching... I mean, we all loved having him on the team. He was a great guy.

Q: He came up this year because they weren't tough enough.

KF: I read that.

Q: He said if they weren't tough, he was going to kick their ass. Does anything about that surprise you?

KF: He probably doesn't need to be saying it to the media, but you know, that's just how Mike is. That's how he lives. He shoots from the hips a little bit with his comments, but he backs it up. He's a hard worker. He's tougher than nails and I give the Packers credit because lately, they've done a good job of really nailing our guys. They have Micah, they have Mike and then obviously going back to Kampman, I mean, you talk about a steal in the fifth round, and then Bulaga. They've drafted really good players. The Colts were doing the same thing. They got Dallas, they got Bob Sanders. The Colts are always kind of wired in to our guys, too.

Q: By the way, Bulaga looks great. He lost some weight.

KF: Great guy. Please give him my best, will ya? Tremendous kid and a tremendous player.

Q: Quick note: Jon Wisnieski, is he available this year?

KF: He'll be in camp, but he's coming off an ACL. You know, we're not counting on him because we're going to be smart. But the sooner we get him back healthier, the faster he's learning. I really can't count on him playing.

Q: So when does camp start?

KF: Our first practice is Monday night.

Q: Brandon Scherff says he can throw a football 50 yards and told one of the ESPN guys he wants a trick play where he passes the ball.

KF: Ha ha ha. We might consider it. We might consider it with him. We had John Alt in '83 and he could probably throw a ball probably about 70 yards. I mean, he was, John had a pretty good career too. He was a good athlete.

Q: Would that be something you used down near the goal line if you actually did it?

KF: Yeah, I'll take that one back to the staff and see what they could come up with.