

March 23, 2011



An interview with:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome, everybody. First of all, just want to thank the committee that did the research and analysis study for all of their efforts. I know they put a lot of time into it and moved promptly with that whole thing, so just appreciate their efforts on the rhabdo study, appreciate the feedback that they provided for us.

Then along that front, the biggest news I have for you, all 13 players have been cleared medically to proceed forward. They've been monitored during this entire time period as you might well imagine. Concern has always been for their well-being. They've all moved along and have been cleared to proceed from the medical front. We're certainly happy about that, happy about getting to moving forward as a football team.

Second side note. Ed Podolak, obviously that was a real traumatic event that he went through and experienced. He's been through an awful lot. I think that's well-documented. Conversation with Ed a while back was amazingly positive. He's got a great attitude, great spirit. He's got a long road of recovery to get back to normal health in front of him. But his attitude sounds great. We're looking forward to seeing Ed and really happy that he'll be back with us in the fall. Certainly he's moving forward health-wise.

Secondly, I want to congratulate, we had three guys win the Ed Block Award in the NFL, three of our former players, Aaron Kampman, Bradley Fletcher and Robert Gallery were all recognized as Ed Block Awardees. That's a prestigious award. Originated out of Baltimore. Happy to see those three guys represented. Very happy for them certainly and the great work they're doing.

Then the last thing before we proceed about spring practice, just a couple words about our seniors from last year. It's been an exciting time for the guys that are hoping to get in the NFL. They've been training pretty hard. I think we had nine guys at the Combine, which is a pretty high number. Several more guys joined that group on Monday when they tested out. I think they helped themselves, helped their cases a little bit.

It's an anxious time for them. They'll continue to be looked at, evaluated by NFL personnel, people coming through to work guys out, meet with players, that type of thing. It's an anxious time for them. Want to wish them all the best and appreciate all they've done for us over the last four or five years of their careers. Distinguished themselves in a lot of different ways.

Moving forward to spring practice. We're eager to get going. Looking forward to that, anytime we get a chance to get back on the field with our players. Like any spring, we have a lot of positives with this football team, a lot of questions that have to be answered. That's certainly true in the springtime. It will be true in August as well.

Right now we have a lot of questions as anytime in the year. Essentially a lot of work to do. Anytime you lose a group of seniors like we lose, nine guys at the Combine, a lot of holes to fill, not only the production on the field, but the leadership they provided. Got a lot of work. It's a real important phase, needless to say, but a great opportunity phase, too.

You look back at some examples like last year. I think we have some similar circumstances. You look at a guy like Tyler Nielsen, who was really playing at a high level until he got injured this past year. Tyler sat patiently, did a great job behind A.J., an outstanding performer. Then when Tyler got his opportunity, he took it and ran with it, did a fantastic job.

I think if you look at guys like James Vanderberg, Keenan Davis, LeBron Daniel, Joe

Forgy, a name you don't know, guys that have been in the program that have worked hard behind the scenes but haven't had a chance to be on the game field a lot, I think we'll have similar type stories.

Certainly if you look back at last year, we had some younger players, Marcus Coker, James Morris and Mike Meyer that as true freshmen did a great job. We have a lot of guys on that younger end, guys like C.J. Fiedorowicz, a couple of the receivers, Shumpert, Kevonte Martin-Manley and our linebacker group, got a lot of young players that we're eager to see how they do. Hopefully they'll step forward and do a great job as well.

That's what spring practice is all about, just having a chance to better identify where we're at. Certainly we're a different team than we were when we left Arizona. Hopefully every player on our roster is a better player than they were in December. That's hopefully what we'll be seeing here in three and a half weeks.

The last thing just to share with you. We've had several players that have had surgeries during the out-of-season, which is typical. Unfortunate, but typical. They will not be practicing this spring. I'll just start with the list. We have four guys that I mentioned, Marvin McNutt, Jr., Steve Bigach, Shane DiBona and Tanner Miller all had surgery over the last couple months. They will not be practicing, at least they won't have contact during the spring drills.

Then also Austin Vier has developed some serious back issues right now, so he has not really done much of anything for several weeks here. I don't anticipate him doing anything this spring. We're waiting to see how that materializes.

A carryover from this December, Brad Rogers, as you may recall, had to pull out back during the Insight Bowl preparation. He experienced some heart issues, cardiac issues down in Arizona. He's still in the process of doing studies and tests, all that type of thing. So he will not be on the field at all this spring. As you might imagine, we're proceeding cautiously there. He's getting great attention, great care. We'll not have him out there. We'll see how that all pans out.

That being said, I'll throw it out for questions.

Q. Tyler Nielsen, is he good to go now?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he's back. We'll treat him like we would have Fred Russell in his senior year. He won't do any live tackling, but he'll be doing everything else. We have full

scrimmages, which we don't do a lot of, he won't do any of that.

Q. What did Marvin have to be worked on and when do you expect him to be full speed ahead?

COACH FERENTZ: Our injury of choice over the last five, six years, has been shoulder injuries. That's what he experienced.

The good news is, those repairs have been really good. The outcomes have been good. We expect him to be full speed in June.

Q. It's not that you ever want a senior of his caliber out. The fact you have a lot of inexperience behind him, does that help decide who may be number two, three, four?

COACH FERENTZ: It's a really young group right now, needless to say. I think we had four seniors last year. You know, it's a very young group right now. It will give those guys a lot of opportunity to continue to grow. I thought they did a good job in the fall.

Just excited to see how they progress certainly. That makes Keenan the veteran of the group right now, at least when we're practicing. I think he'll do a good job. He'll do a good job in that regard.

It's kind of that way in the back end a little bit, too. We had some graduation losses there, too. So we're pretty young right now at both those positions. I think our numbers aren't great. We're going to have to be careful how we practice so we don't overrun those guys, if you will.

Then the other part that leads into that, I think it's fair to say those are two positions, the back end and receiver position, where younger guys might have a good opportunity coming in. We ended up playing Don Shumpert last year and could have very easily played Kevonte, probably would have, except we had so many seniors, we felt like we could buffer him in there. It will be a good chance for those guys to get some good quality work. Hopefully we have a quarterback out there with them.

First day the practice, Vanderberg has organic chemistry. I remember those days. Organic chemistry exam at 5:30, today, first practice. He'll be there for about half the practice. I used to walk by organic chemistry, classroom 303. Walked right by it, got a cup of coffee.

Q. What's going on with Bigach? Shoulder, too?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. Not a shoulder, but upper body, yeah, so...

Q. Is it an important spring for him; he's slotted for one of those spots?

COACH FERENTZ: It is. It would have been great for him to be out there competing. It's not the same as Tom Nardo. But Tom is in that same category. Tom is a year older.

Every rep is important. But at least the good news is he's had a lot of work. He'll pay attention. He's a sharp guy. He'll be back full speed in June. All the guys I mentioned, we expect them all to be back full speed in June, with the exception of Brad and Austin. I don't want to predict how that will go. The surgery guys, that's how we expect it will go.

Q. (Question regarding Vandenberg.)

COACH FERENTZ: We've seen him do a lot of good things on the game field, but behind the scenes last year, watching him practice. My latest flash point would be going back to December. I thought he did a nice job in December. That's the most recent exposure we really had a chance to watch him extensively. One practice that comes to mind, the day we had graduation, just excused all the seniors that day. So it was our team minus the seniors, basically the spring ball group. He really did a nice job.

He's worked hard. He's going to get good competition. John Wienke has improved a lot, A.J. Derby is set on winning the job, too. That will make all three of the guys better.

Q. Given what you know or suspect about this rhabdo business, what do you think happened?

COACH FERENTZ: I think we're kind of right where we were, whatever day that was, February 2nd, 3rd or 4th, when I threw out what I knew at that point. I still don't think we know exactly what happened. I think obviously the exercise was part of the cause. But I just don't have an explanation why not the other 70 plus guys or to expand that pool why not the other 270 to 300 players from 2000, 2004 and 2007.

I don't know how much further along we are in that regard. We have learned a little bit more about rhabdo. Quite frankly, I don't think anybody in this building knew much about it prior to this occurrence. So we've learned a little bit more

about that. I still think there's a lot to be learned from what I know.

One thing about our sports medicine department, I think they'll take this as an opportunity to learn more. The one thing we have learned, we won't do that exercise again, pretty clear at this point, until we know more.

Q. Has the medical protocol changed because of that? For instance, were there trainers in at the time? Are there more now?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, the trainers are always on the practice field for practicing. The distance from the weight room to the training room, it's pretty minimal. They could have been there. I'm not convinced that would have changed a thing had they been in the room. I don't see that changing at all, so... I don't see any difference.

Q. Nothing is going to change regarding whether they're there or not there?

COACH FERENTZ: I think the key thing is that we will not repeat that exercise. Although I read in one of the reports today that according to two organizations, other colleges have done that at all levels, not just Division I.

Just like I couldn't a month ago, I can't tell you why it happened. I still can't. Because we've done this exercise. Like I said, it's a sample group of roughly, what would that be, 270 and 280, around 350 participants. Why we had 13 this time and none the others, I can't explain that still. We're not going to do the drill again, that's all I can tell you. I do know that much.

Q. Had you ever done that exercise before right at the start?

COACH FERENTZ: Yes, all four times. One thing that was not in the report this morning I read, I think should be included, this was just someone's analysis of the report, not the report itself. I think a key point, I made this back in February, the one we did in 2004, that was after a three-plus week break also. That was one of the things in my mind back in January perhaps it was the break. The 2004 case would contradict that. I think our players would tell you that was a more strenuous, rigorous test than the one we did this time. Again, a lot of unanswered questions.

Q. Disappointed you didn't find a smoking gun in this whole thing?

COACH FERENTZ: To me it would have been great. It's like anything. If your hand hurts, it's nice to find out what exactly caused it. It would have been really helpful.

Again, the people on the committee are way smarter than I am. The people that have handled that whole situation are a lot smarter than I am. It would be nice to know why this time and not the other three times, so...

But I was glad the committee was clear saying the players were not at fault and the staff was not at fault.

Q. Are you backing off at all on your whole physical regimen?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think we can. Part of this activity is trying to put everybody through challenging periods. But we will not do that drill again. That's one thing we have learned, for sure, until we know that we're not going to have that outcome again. We can't go down that path.

Q. Animosity with the parents, I don't know if that's the right word, but anger or anguish. Has that been smoothed over?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think we're moving along pretty well. I think we are. But that's my perspective. You know, the biggest thing is the players are doing well. They've been monitored real closely each and every week through this period. They're doing well, so...

I think things are moving along.

Q. You mentioned they're clear. Does that mean they're practicing and have they been working out?

COACH FERENTZ: They've been working up to. None of them have gone -- they haven't been on the same level of the guys that weren't affected certainly. They've all been cleared to go now. I'm not going to name names, but I will name one name because it was out there. Shane DiBona. He's not going to go because he's had a shoulder repair. There are examples of that, but basically they'll all be out there.

Q. Will they be monitored differently?

COACH FERENTZ: The first four practices we'll work them up. Won't go full volume. We have other guys in that same category, they're coming off injuries right now. They'll continue to be monitored by Dr. Smoot. I know through this semester, I don't know if it will carry through the summer.

I'll share this with you. I think one thing we'll do moving forward is do some more, I kind of alluded to it with the sports medicine department, do a little bit more research on this. One thing, again I'm not a medical expert, but listening to conferences, it's pretty apparent to me that a person who is training, their CK levels are much different than someone who sits on their duff a lot like me. My level would be a lot different than one of our athlete's.

But there's a lot of unknowns in this whole area, at least from what I've been able to ascertain.

Q. Did you think they were going to find a specific reason for that?

COACH FERENTZ: I was not optimistic, but I was hopeful, if that makes any sense. It would be nice to say, boy, that's what it's going to be, that's what caused it.

Q. How frustrated during this process did you get with the witch-hunt, looking for the bad guy?

COACH FERENTZ: We read some interesting things.

Q. Are you still trying to repair the image of Iowa football nationally?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't think I can answer that. I think a lot of shots that were taken were drive-by shooters, if you will. To throw out the term 'barbaric' or somebody suggested we had 13 transfers, things like that, those are shots from left field.

As I said a month and a half ago, I just encourage them to know the parties involved, know the people on this staff, the players on our team, and talk to past players. Talk to players like Will Lack. He qualified for Harvard Medical School. He's a heck of a lot smarter than anybody that's worked in our football department. Don't want to step on anybody's toes. He thought there was a lot of value in going through the program. I think he'd still tell you that today.

Probably the most ludicrous thing, the shot that was taken at Ned Amendola, who is just an outstanding physician, respected internationally, not only nationally, but internationally. The report I read on him, I mean, that was just totally ludicrous. He's is an orthopaedic surgeon at a convention because he's sought after and people like to hear him talk. Smart people like to hear him talk. He

was in touch all the way through this. Had he been here, his role would have been the same position.

Kyle Smoot handled the whole operation, and appropriately so. That's his area of expertise. If there's one thing I would single out, that would be the one I thought was damaging. I thought it was a real cheap shot. You know, again, I go back to my point, know the people involved. Ned Amendola, he's outstanding, he's stellar. I mean, he's top shelf.

So maybe we don't want people of that caliber working here, I don't know. But I think I do. I know that. I'm very appreciative that he's part of our program. He's as good as they come.

Q. Do you think other schools will try to use this against you?

COACH FERENTZ: I would imagine that's probably the case, yeah, sure. But, you know, it's the same thing. I think it's a matter of when prospects come on campus, it's something we're going to talk about openly. We'll communicate what happened, what we know.

I think the findings of the report, at least what I've read thus far, support there was no ill intent. We're not the only people doing this exercise. The question remains why did it happen here. Certainly we're going to be very cautious moving forward.

Q. Have you made any decisions on what changes you ought to make before you read the report?

COACH FERENTZ: What changes in terms of?

Q. The workouts.

COACH FERENTZ: It was pretty clear once that happened, until we knew otherwise, we were not going to go down that path. That's not something we do on a monthly basis. I think that was well documented. It's been four times in 12 plus years. Certainly we were not going to repeat that until we knew more information. Certainly right now we can't say that was a cause. It was certainly a factor.

I'll throw out another interesting part about it. We had two players of very similar stature in terms of size, years in the program. One guy finished in under nine minutes, another guy took over 50. The guy that did it in nine walked away sore. I mean, they're all sore, we understand that. But walked away perfectly fine. The other player

was affected. How do you explain those things? I'm not smart enough to know that.

Again, we're just going to stay away from the exercise.

Q. May be old ground, but what was the value and what was gained from that exercise in the past?

COACH FERENTZ: Like a lot of things that we do, we put players in tough situations, difficult circumstances. We do the same thing on the practice field. We did that in December on the practice field. That's part of what we do because when we play on Saturdays, in Bowl games, it's pretty challenging out there. The competition we play is tough. It's going to be tougher with Nebraska coming into our conference.

It's just the nature of what we do. It's been that way 13 years. As I said earlier, we work hard. We'll continue to work hard. Our drills, not all drills, but a lot of things we do are competitive and difficult, challenging by design. But they're also safe by design. I think, again, the report verified that.

All that being said, we're not going down that road again. We're not going to do it.

Q. One of the things that the report kind of chided you for, but the communication maybe with athletes and coaches, what have you, regarding players pushing themselves to limits in all sports, but whether I'm really sore, I'm hurt, my legs hurt from squatting like anybody else in the world would, versus something like that. How do you bridge that gap in the communication?

COACH FERENTZ: Certainly tricky and tough. Again, I can tell you right now, the other three times we've done it, the players were sore then, too. I've read reports about somebody researched the Eagles back 10 years ago, and they were convinced, whoever did the research were convinced those players were experiencing rhabdo and didn't report it.

Going back to your question, all the players have been sore. We've gotten through the exercise safely before. I know other schools are doing the same thing without incident. So why it happened this time I still can't answer.

I think everybody in this medical community and the coaching community has learned a lot more about rhabdo. Not many of us

knew much about it up until this instance. It hasn't been talked about, probably more with the military than athletics, outside of the South Carolina swimming incident. I know there's a high school report written also.

At the end of the day, we'll be prudent. Our medical staff I think does a fantastic job. Our trainers are on the frontline, if you will. They're very vigilant. I thought once there was a concern, boy, they addressed it right away. Everybody was contacted on the team and encouraged to report any instances or anything that might even be close to a symptom.

Q. Any hesitancy from the players involved?

COACH FERENTZ: I can't speak for them. But watching them, everything I've seen, it's been positive. It's like a player that gets injured. The hardest thing for a player, at least in our sport, is when they're on the side watching. They've been held back or at least their tempo has been held back and restricted. So they're all anxious to get back. I think as a group, that's a fair statement to make.

Q. Jordan Cotton broke his leg?

COACH FERENTZ: He's fine. He's ready to go. He's okay.

Q. Do you have former walk-ons, Eric Guthrie, are they still walk-ons or...

COACH FERENTZ: Right now they are. I'm trying to think. We've rewarded some guys in the past, there are some carryovers. But, yeah, we'll do that after we move through spring practice. I go back to Rob Bruggeman. He had earned his, in our mind. Gave it to him in the spring because he got injured, just to try to encourage him a little bit. But our mind was made up on that one.

Q. Collin, I think he had some injury issues, and now...

COACH FERENTZ: Sleeper. He's got the right name. Sleeper is the right name. He's kind of been lurking in the background. It's a little bit like the Nielsen, A.J. Edds stories, other positions, where we've had two starters at the safety positions that have been there for a long time. He's been laboring in anonymity. But he's done a good job.

Just flashback to the Michigan game. He imitated one of their players. It was a prominent part of our game plan, did a good job all week. I

guess I'd equate that to Joe Forgy a little bit. We've seen Joe do some good things that have caught our eye this year, once he has a chance to compete for a job.

Q. Eric Guthrie, a walk-on, he really wants this job.

COACH FERENTZ: If you would have told me he was a candidate four years ago, I would have told you he's a nice young man, extremely intelligent, I think he's a presidential candidate, but candidate for this job, I probably would have said probably not. That's the neat thing about college football. Last year he really did a good job. I think he'll do a real nice job. He's extremely conscientious. Kind of like Casey Kreiter, not quite the same age. He worked on it, and when he got called on at Minnesota, he did a great job.

Q. What was your reaction to the Sports Illustrated article a few weeks ago?

COACH FERENTZ: An honest answer, a coach's answer: It is what it is. I'd elaborate on that. 18 players were cited. 15 of them were alcohol offenses, which those of us in Iowa City, that's an issue. I'll predict it's going to be an issue from now, 20 years now, just like it was 20 years ago. They were all misdemeanor accounts, which I'm not condoning any of these things. But 15 on alcohol, all being misdemeanors.

I think more importantly, I've said this pretty consistently, we typically have more problems with younger players, more issues with younger players, if you will. 11 of those violations took place when players were freshmen, and five more when they were sophomores. That's 16 out of 18 in those first two years on campus.

I'm not condoning it. I'm just saying college kids and alcohol, it's been an issue. We know it's an issue in this town. That's the impetus behind the 21 rule, which I'm in support of. The other side of the equation, too, of those 25 teams, we were fourth in graduation success rates. We're proud of that.

Again, I would encourage people to know our players. If you know our players, it's not like we've got -- in fact, I I've got one that lives in our house, one of the 18 that lives in our house. He's a pretty good kid. I think his mom is a little tough to get along with, but he's a pretty good kid, so...

Q. Is it difficult knowing that unless



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you have the context of following Iowa, knowing those facts, that it looks bad?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. And there's nothing I can do about it. Leave it to Norm Parker. Norm says it best. Nobody knows anything about the plane that lands safely. That's not news. I'm not going to sit here tonight, we've got 18 guys, they're right on the money.

Q. Is it fair to say that the environment in Iowa City has changed more than Iowa football players have since you got here in the early '80s?

COACH FERENTZ: Night and day. Night and day.

Q. Any way to explain that in that type of study? Do you have to kind of know what's going on here?

COACH FERENTZ: It's night and day. Things are much different than they used to be. Talk to any of our players that played in the '80s. It's night and day, yeah. It's just night and day.

Q. How? Most of us don't live here, so we don't know.

COACH FERENTZ: An analogy I would give you, it's probably this way for adults. 25 years ago, I'm talking in general terms, if people had too much to drink and they were driving, number one, that wasn't nearly, at least I don't recall it being something people were aware of on a national basis. Now we are. We are a lot smarter now.

In the old days, people will get in the car, I'll take you home, leave your car here. It doesn't happen here. It shouldn't. I'm not advocating for people to drink and drive. That's not a good thing.

I think law enforcement is different. I don't have any problem with that. That's just the way it is.

Q. Adam Robinson called a high-profile press conference in the middle of the state talking about how he wants to return to the program.

COACH FERENTZ: I spoke with him when we got back from Arizona. I can't give you the exact date. I haven't spoken with him since that time. We're supporting him academically right now. My goal is for him to get his degree.

Q. Any opportunity to rejoin the program in the future?

COACH FERENTZ: I really haven't given that much thought. I've been kind of focused on the guys that were with us in Arizona.

Q. How do you look at the situation at defensive line. Lost a lot of good ones there.

COACH FERENTZ: It's similar to what we did I think we went through last year with the offensive line. We had a good group. If you look at the guys that graduated between 2008, 2009 up front for us offensively, include guys like Bruggeman, Olson, then next year Bulaga. I am probably leaving somebody out. Who else am I leaving out? Raf Eubanks. We lost two pretty good classes there.

I think it's kind of similar here. We have two outstanding leaders with Mike Daniels and Broderick Binns coming back. They've both played well for us. They'll certainly be the guys that we start with. I think we've got a lot of interesting players.

I can envision us probably playing six to eight guys as opposed to we were pretty locked in with five this past year. We're looking forward to the competition, see how the guys do.

Q. At the weak outside linebacker position, seems you have players of different types than you have had in the past. Is it more about the players you have or are you trying to evolve a little differently on defense?

COACH FERENTZ: You're thinking about like where Shane DiBona is and Hitchens and Kirksey?

Q. Yes.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah. The way we're built, the Leo position, the one where Edds played, LeVar. All that has changed a little bit with offenses right now. It's really kind of like both outside guys have to be able to play out in space because of what we see for the most part, not every week, but for the most part. That position has evolved a little bit.

But I think if you look at our roster right now, Tyler, Kirksey and Dakota Getz are best suited for the Leo position, whereas the other position is a little bit more of a mixed bag, if you will. I think James Morris probably could handle any one of those three positions, whereas Bruce Davis is more of an inside player, more of a middle linebacker type guy.

Long story short, we're going to look at the guys in different positions, combinations, just see how things materialize as we go along.

Q. Does that come out of the Insight Bowl, the defense you ran? You got creative with personnel.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, you know, we were grabbing and reaching in this game. They threw for about 600 yards. Holy smokes, geez. I mean, we were using what we had. We had some guys injured, too. Losing Tarp affected us last year. Then when we lost Tyler, there's two guys we were counting on to be pretty good players. So that really kind of stretched us to do a lot of things.

But I think at the end of the day, we're eager to see these guys after 15 practices. I think we'll be okay. We're keeping an open mind right now.

Q. Is there anything roster-wise now you look at trying to fill defensive end spots.

COACH FERENTZ: One end. Binns will be out there on the outside.

Q. Is there anything you guys would creep away from a 4-3 or is that instilled?

COACH FERENTZ: No, we're not planning on that. To play a 3-4, it's one thing to do it in passing down. If you're going to do it every down, I guess you could say Carl Davis fits that mold. Usually you have one of the guys that's bigger than a door. We're just not built that way. That's a whole change of philosophy. That would be a big change for us.

Q. How has Carl Davis progressed?

COACH FERENTZ: I think well. I think well. He's one of the kids, too, that we probably could have inched him along last year and thrown him in there a little bit. We talked a little bit about it in August. He and another guy on the offense were in some categories. We decided to hold them back. I think that will be a good thing. We're expecting him to be in the mix.

Q. Is another guy Scherff.

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, he's a candidate. So we'll see.

Q. Just the way that Micah Hyde looks with the football in his hands, is there any idea of having him return?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, no question. When he's running it back against Michigan State, I was thinking about offense even then. But we need him on defense obviously. He's really done a good job there.

That was something he showed in high school. He did a nice job with ball skills in high school, quarterback. I think a big 33 game, he ran back a punt or a kick, I can't remember which it was. Quite frankly, the two fastest times I've seen him are the Michigan State and the Missouri game. He's a good, young player. We're really excited about him.

Q. Shaun Prater had the opportunity to go pro if he wanted. He elected to come back for the senior year. What does that give you in terms of the leadership he can provide?

COACH FERENTZ: We're counting on Shaun to play well, which I know he will. He loves to compete, loves to practice. We're counting on him to be one of our leaders back there. Right now he and Mike are the only ones that have played extensively. I don't want to say that's the only reason he came back, but not only in the secondary but our entire team. He has the attitude you're looking for. He's an energetic, positive, upbeat guy on the field. That's how he is. He certainly will help us be a better football team.

Q. Have you ever had any thoughts or have any fears that he would go pro or were you pretty confident for the most part in your conversations?

COACH FERENTZ: I was never confident. The thing I told you before, things change, they continue to change. Certainly recruiting in general has changed a great deal from when I left here in '89 to when I got back in '99. Now over the last 12 years it just continues to change every day almost. So it's really changed our lives as football coaches. It's basically a 12-month-a-year job now, where it used to be more compartmentalized. The next one I'm seeing right now is recruiting juniors. It's us against the agents. It's a tough battle. I mean, our scholarship checks only go so far. It's a tough one.

I'm not suggesting -- but a scholarship check versus an NFL contract, that's what they're selling. They're selling the dream. It's a seductive process to go through.

Q. Without any focus on a particular

situation, just in general, do you have any sense of how much the sort of rampant oversigning that occurs particularly in the SEC might impact Iowa recruiting?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, you know, I mentioned earlier, I'm not the smartest guy. I've never been able to figure out that math. I've been watching that for 10 or 12 years. It's not a new phenomena, people oversigning. We always had a policy in the Big Ten, whatever year it was we expanded, three oversigns, we're allowed to do that.

I'm not comfortable doing that. We as a program aren't comfortable doing that. Again, we try to recruit guys that we think are going to be eligible. We'll take a chance here or there, but not an out-of-the-park type thing typically. I don't know what you tell somebody if you tell them, Hey, we want you to come, then, Boy, we don't have a spot for you. I'd be uncomfortable having that conversation. Apparently other people can do it.

I don't know what happens at other places. I haven't figured that out. But it's a different world certainly in other spots. Doesn't make it right or wrong.

Q. Jordan Bernstine had that broken foot. Is he healthy?

COACH FERENTZ: Two things. He is healthy. Secondly, we're probably more eager this year to see what happens with him. Probably the biggest debate is he going to work inside or outside. His single best play was what he did at the Insight Bowl. He made a play right in front of our bench. If he has a few more of those in his pocket, that would be great. I'm hopeful he does.

The injury he went through two years ago was very extensive. I thought he came back amazingly well and amazingly fast from that from the way it was described to me. It was a non-contact injury. I'll just elaborate a little bit. It was a non-contact injury. The medical staff said they'd never seen anything like that in a non-contact injury. A guy on a motorcycle, that's a different deal. For him to come back the way he did, that was really something.

Then, secondly, he's going into his senior year right now. When that window gets tight, I think it usually brings the best out of players. He's coming off an injury, I think he's eager to get back on the field. We're real eager to see him compete.

Q. Jason White has bounced back and forth between offense and defense.



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COACH FERENTZ: He's on offense. I'm glad you brought him up. He's just a tremendous young guy. Kind of works quietly, but he works hard. Everything he does is full speed. He does a lot of good things away from here, is very active with youth groups, things like that. He's a great citizen on our team. He's been a really positive contributor.

I think it's realistic to think that we could see him out there. It would really help him to see him out there, not only as a ball carrier, but also on special teams. I think right now he's fully onboard to stay on offense.

Q. Might A.J. Derby change positions if he isn't first quarterback?

COACH FERENTZ: We've had conversations. We recruited him under the premise that he would be a quarterback. Part of it was, too, we wanted to see him on the field, see how he'd progress and improve. He's done a nice job. We've had that conversation. He fully wants to compete for the job. We're onboard with that 'cause, you know, he's got I think a lot of upside.

Probably the question down the road is if he's not the first-team quarterback, will he play on special teams. That's a conversation we'll have to have. But I think he can help us, could have helped us last year. I don't think it would have been wise to burn his year last year to put him out there as much as he probably or maybe could have helped us. Speculating a little bit.

Q. What about other position changes?

COACH FERENTZ: Jonathan Gimm moved back to fullback in December. I think the only one is Cole Heissel, who you'll probably say, Who the hell is Cole Heissel? But Cole is an interesting guy. Freshman last year. We're going to fool around, look at him on defense. Probably the thing that got us thinking about it is, as simple as it may sound, No. 57 from Missouri last year, he had 15 or 14 sacks, I can't remember, played over our left tackle, their right end. They had moved him. We were fooling around down at the bowl practice. I told him, Cole, jump over there and rush the passer a little bit.

We'll see what he can do. Stay tuned. That's probably two years down the road. We'll see what happens. Great young guy. Great story.

Q. Did you have a transfer from Air

Force?

COACH FERENTZ: He can't play. He'll be ineligible. Good young guy.

Q. Any true freshmen on campus yet participating in spring practice?

COACH FERENTZ: Louis Trinca-Pasat. That is another area, we don't go down that path too often. I'm still not convinced that's going to make or break a player's career or a team.

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