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An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ COACH GREG DAVIS

COACH KIRK FERENTZ: We've had a lot going on obviously the last couple months here. The circumstances with Ken's departure was a little different than the other couple openings we've had.

Long story short, a lot of things have gone on over the last four or six weeks, whatever it may be, and it's been very busy. But end of the story is I feel very fortunate that we are able to have Greg Davis join our program. Really excited about that.

If you look at his body of work, 38 years of coaching, he's had success basically at every level. The numbers pretty much speak for themselves: his recent stop at Texas, the yardage, points they scored and most importantly, the wins. He also has a great foundation of high school coaching and has had success at every stop he's made along the way.

And I think one thing that really caught my eye is just what happened at Georgia. He went to Georgia back in the 90s, coached a guy named Eric Zeier that I had the good fortune of being with in Cleveland and Baltimore, tremendous player. And the year after he graduated if you look at the bio, they had to get Hines Ward ready for a Bowl game, and I think he set a Georgia passing record. Pretty exceptional story there.

Greg's resumé is really impressive. But beyond that the most important thing to me is the kind of person he is and the things that I've heard about Greg as a person; that's first and foremost. It always has been when we are adding people to our team. You know, what do they bring to our program; that's question No. 1.

The thing I kept hearing was just the kind of person Greg is; the quality human being that he is; his family, how important that is to him. He's got a son and daughter and a wife back in Texas who is going to be buying a winter coat here pretty soon, that will be interesting. It's very clear to me that Greg is a very team-oriented person and that's extremely critical for anybody in a leadership role, as Greg will be, so that's first and foremost.

Secondly, he's an outstanding teacher. This came across from everybody I visited with. And I think equally a big part of teaching is being flexible in your thinking and to me offensive football, defense football, special team, no matter where you're coaching it's all about doing what's best for the players that you have on your roster; and it's always been true in college, and I think with 85 scholarships, that's extremely important. You see it in the NFL, too, with the rosters changing the way they have been, as opposed to back in the 80s and previous to that.

Then the other thing, as a coordinator, Greg is a proven leader. If you look at his background, talk to people that know Greg through his coaching, he's established himself as great leader, and obviously that's just critical.

So all the numbers, they are important, certainly. The thing I'm most attracted to are the wins, everywhere he's been, they have had success. And beyond that, I'll just interject, resumé tell you so much but when you talk to people like Joe Philbin, Ken O'Keefe who know this program and I think they know Greg extremely well. Joe has a long history with Greg, and Ken O'Keefe has tapped into that.

And then spoke with Jim Caldwell a couple weeks ago, and first name out of his mouth was Greg's name, and then he elaborated on that. Jim and Greg had never worked together but Jim spent a lot of time at Texas and they have done some clinics, seminars together.

All three guys I just mentioned have been

exposed to Greg's teaching abilities, working with players, seen him in a meeting talking about ideas; and to a man all three of those guys all gave me the same report. That got me very, very excited certainly and again we are just really thrilled to have Greg here and feel very fortunate. I'll turn it over to Greg.

COACH GREG DAVIS: Thank you, Coach. First of all I'm extremely excited about joining this family and this program.

When word began to leak out that this was a possible, I can't tell you the amount of coaches and friends that called, they all said the same thing: Have you ever played a game in Kinnick Stadium, which I have not. And they said the game day atmosphere, the fans, would be just outstanding.

So I was excited because I felt like I knew Kirk a little bit, because of the names that he mentioned earlier. But to hear everybody talk about the program here, the way things were done, the way the kids are, it was a no-brainer.

I've been very, very fortunate in my career to work with some outstanding coaches. I tried to take a little bit from all the guys I work for and with, and hopefully after all this time, we kind of come to a certain philosophy.

What we will do here will be driven by what we have here. And I say that with reference to when I first went to Texas in '98, Ricky Williams was there; you're stupid if you don't get in the eye and make sure Ricky is the lead dog.

When he left, Major Applewhite, Chris Simms; we were still basically run-oriented with a good balance of pass. When Vince Young came along, I had never been part of a zone ring. Didn't know anything about it. But we knew once he became our quarterback, we needed to do some things to take advantage of his feet.

So that's when that happened. Colt took over after that, one of the most accurate quarterbacks in the history of the game of college football. We kind of put a bunch of eggs in his basket.

What we are going to do here is not the Texas offense, but the Iowa offense. So what we have been doing is meeting from dusk to dark trying to decide what that's going to be. This spring, you'll see a foundation laid. We are not interested -- we don't play somebody the last day of spring. We want a good foundation.

We'll build off that once we identify where exactly the strengths are about this football team. We want to remain physical. We want to continue

to be able to run the football. At the same time, we are going to be in some ballgames where we are going to have to throw the ball and we want to be proficient enough.

Our definition of balance is being able to win the game either way. It's not that you run 35 and you throw 35; it's that you can win the game, and whatever that day dictates, you'll be able to win the game.

So that's kind of where we are headed, and I'm looking forward to spring getting started, getting to know the players better, and seeing where we can go from there.

Q. What type of learning curve is there for you just getting to know what personnel you have?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, the week before I got here, Brian sent me all the game films from last year. So I did get a jump start with some depth charts and was able to put some numbers and names and saw every game from last year.

Obviously James Vandenberg is an outstanding player. I think everybody agrees with that. I'm excited about being able to work with him.

But beyond that, we'll just have to kind of see where we go in the spring.

Q. You said you had your red-shirt year last year. What did you pick up during that time?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, I used it very constructively I think. Last spring, I was invited to go and speak at several places, universities in the spring. In the summer, I wanted to watch people install to see how things were done differently. So I saw some of those kind of things.

And then I was living in an area where high school football is very important and very well done, so I tried to get out once a week and go watch high school teams. And then on the weekends, I kind of went back in the man cave and taped every game that I could and watched the tapes. That's what I tried to do.

Q. Is there a style of quarterback that you look for or traits you look for in a quarterback?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I want a winner to start with. I know that's very simplistic.

You know, everybody has different styles.

So we want somebody that -- obviously accuracy, I mean, is the most important thing, evaluating quarterbacks. You like a guy that's bright because he's going to have a lot of things on his plate to get us in and out of plays. You like a guy that was athletic enough to do things off schedule, because so many times, the play doesn't happen exactly like it does in the meeting room.

So the ability to extend the play; decision making -- we could have an hour just on quarterback. But basically you want somebody that's a winner. You want somebody that's accurate. You want an intelligent guy and you'd like to have a guy that's tough. Being tough at a quarterback position is a little different than being tough at the guard position; but a guy that's willing to stand in and take a lick against a blitz and to handle the pressure that goes with his position.

Q. Big Ten is really the last sort of major conference; well, there's the Pac 10, too, but what about the Big Ten intrigues you and how do you see yourself adapting to it?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, being a college football fan forever, just first of all, the venues that you play in, you hear about all those. The coaches that have coached in this league; Hayden Fry obviously is a Texan. Coach Fry was a coach I looked up to. When I was a head coach, he kind of reached out and pulled me, and, "Come here, young man."

But what I see with Big Ten football is outstanding coaching. It's just outstanding coaching, and that's what I'll look forward to.

Q. How difficult is it going to be to sort of install the running scheme that you would like to put in when the fact is that the guys who made a lot of the carries may not be on campus a lot?

COACH GREG DAVIS: One thing about it, young running backs have an opportunity to play early. If they are that kind of player, and I would mention Cedric Benson played as a true freshman; Jamaal Charles played as a true freshman. You know, the thing -- and it's a valid point, is you worry about protections.

But you can do some things to help them with the learning curve, and that's what we plan to do. We don't ever want a great, talented player sitting over there with Kirk just because of the scheme. That's not good coaching.

So we want to make sure that either our teaching is good enough or our scheme is easy enough that talented guys can play early.

Q. How did the process start? Did you reach out to Coach or did Coach reach out to you?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Joe Philbin who was mentioned -- Joe and I go back a long, long way, and he came to Texas, clinic-ed us a couple times. I went to Harvard and put a clinic on for them.

And Joe called me right before he got the job and said, "Just want you to know, you're on my short list. But you also understand there's people I've worked with years and years and years."

I said, "Coach, I totally understand."

He called me back a couple of days later and said, "I hired Ken O'Keefe."

I said, "That's great. Since you've done that, how about calling Kirk for me."

About that same time, I sent Kirk a text and I said, "Hey, if this rumor is true, I would love to have the opportunity to visit with you." So that's kind of how it started.

Q. Are you a press box guy or do you like to coach from the sidelines?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I'm a press box guy, especially in Iowa, I'm a press box guy. (Laughter).

Q. What's the reasoning behind that?

COACH GREG DAVIS: It allows me to set above all of the emotion. I've worked from the boundary before, and you're just removed. It's almost is like a video game in that you're not hearing all the collisions and all that. And you can lay out all your charts and your information and that kind of stuff. That's the reason I like working from up there.

Q. Texas is obviously an intense football fan environment. You were a little bit of a lightning rod down there. How much of that is your job? Ken was here, we have all heard that. How much is it the offensive coordinator's job to weather the storm?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, I'll just tell you a story.

We were starting in August, and Governor Perry came out to practice, and he walked over

and said, "Man, I'm so happy you guys are practicing again."

I said, "Really? Why?"

He said, "Takes all the pressure off me."

That goes with the territory.

I was fortunate enough to play quarterback in college, so my wife will tell you, I've been jumped on as a player and as a coach, so that's just part of it. I will say this. Staying at a local hotel, I got just a little taste of the Iowa fans the other day. I walked in and there was five or six guys, mid 20s to 30s, and they said they recognized I guess the picture, and they came over and started talking. And I was immediately invited to go to a bachelor party, so (laughter). I thought, hey, football is pretty important here, too. I didn't go, by the way. (Laughter).

Q. You mentioned you got all of last year's game film. Can you just give us some of your impression on the players that are coming back and what you saw from those tapes?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, starting with James, I was very impressed. I was impressed for a lot of reasons. There are certain things you can see on tape, throws from one hashmark to the sideline, that's kind of a benchmark if they can do that.

The other thing I was very excited about is the number of plays he made off-schedule. I didn't realize that he ran the ball or was able to give you -- defensive coaches will all tell you: When a quarterback -- when you can cover everybody, and the quarterback runs and make a first down, that's heartbreaking for a defense.

So watching him, I thought his decision making, I don't know exactly the numbers, but it was way more touchdowns to interceptions. I thought he played very well. I was very impressed, not because he's sitting here, but I think the center is a heck of a player, great hat speed, great body control, the ability to get over and cut off shades and things like that.

I was also understanding at that point, watching and looking at a depth chart, that a lot of those really good offensive linemen, they were running at the Combine when I had that TV on. So there's some spots that have to be replaced.

Maybe the next thing was the number of tight ends that I saw that go in the game and played well: You know, blocked at the line of scrimmage; the ability to move down the field and catch the ball. Those were kind of some early thoughts that I had.

Q. First time here with the players. Do you wear your National Championship ring?

COACH GREG DAVIS: No. That thing's -- you probably won't ever see it. I'm not a big ring guy, anyway. But we are interested in starting -- getting a ring for here.

Q. The Big Ten versus Texas, is there a difference in your mind?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I think the average fan would say that the Big 12 was probably a more wide open, no-huddle, tempo-oriented, spread-the-field. And again, the average fan would say that the Big Ten, you would think of downhill, physical.

. Hopefully we'll be able to find of merge. From the very first time Kirk and I started talking, it was about blending philosophy, about blending the way we call things, and creating something that was 2012. That's what we are trying to do.

Q. How will your connections down in Texas help you recruiting-wise?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Well, I talked to one of the Texas coaches yesterday, and he said if y'all do decide to come down in this area, their recruiting is so early -- I don't know how many commitments they have at this point.

But not only about identifying players, but high school coaches, I probably had 20 high school coaches that have called and said, hey, if y'all do come this way, you know, make sure you come by and see us; and if I don't have one, I can tell you where one's at.

Recruiting is a lot about relationships; is about building relationships, so that won't change.

Q. You played against Iowa in the Alamo Bowl in 2006. What do you remember from that game? Can you share that with us?

COACH GREG DAVIS: First thing I remember is the Iowa fans. The Iowa fans on the Riverwalk, the Iowa fans around town. I was blown away. I'm very much impressed.

Typically when we went to a place to play, especially in that bowl game, I thought we had a tremendous home-field advantage and that was not the case. That was my first thing.

Then the actual game itself, Coach Parker I have unbelievable respect for what he has done in his career, and how well the guys played. There

were a couple things where the staffs were together. Just the class that Kirk and his staff -- it all starts at the top.

So I came away thinking, wow what a class program. The game itself was a great game; the wrong team won. But it was a great game and we were fortunate. I think we got Jamaal Charles tied up on a backer who had great coverage. Colt threw a great ball and kind of gave us a spurt to get things going offensively.

There was a tight end delay that might not have been called if the game would have been up here. But, hey, that's the way it is. (Laughter) I do remember that play.

Q. You talked about blending philosophies. Does this mean the Iowa offensive players are going to have a brand new playbook and brand new terminology when they come in this year?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I think it means it's going to be blended. Based on where we are going with the playbook, there will be a lot of change. There will be a lot of different things that you will see.

At the same time, I don't want to imply, I don't want the fans to come out and think we are going to be four or five wides. That's not going to happen. So we are just trying to take the best of both worlds, put it together and come up with something that is ours.

Q. Is that the zone blocking, the way that they run the ball here for about 13 years now and combining with your passing game; is that how it's going to work?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I think that will certainly be part of it. I think that will certainly be part of it in trying, again to, do some things at the line of scrimmage that we have done. We talked about all kind of things: Some no-huddle, where does that fit; some tempo, where does that fit.

And again, the object of the spring is to come away with some better -- if this group meets again in May, I think I can answer better as to where will all that will go from this spring.

Q. Are you a script guy?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Are you talking about opening script? I've been both. We have had some openers for about the last couple of years at Carolina, the first couple years at Texas, we started with a script and we had phenomenal success scoring on the opening drive.

One year, we went through about three ballgames and we had been three-and-out, and Mack came in and said, "It's all because of that script." I haven't scripted since.

You know, you have some ideas how you want to open. I think it's important that your staff and your players understand those ideas how you're going to open. But even the big-time script guys will tell you that there's -- third down falls into its own category; off-schedule falls into its own category; falling in, falling out falls into its own category. I am a big-time game planning guy as to what works that week.

Q. Do you have any previous relationships with the position coaches on offense here, or are you just getting to know them all for the first time?

COACH GREG DAVIS: No, sir, I don't have any preexisting -- I'm getting to know them. They are getting to know me.

I can tell you, and of course I've spent a whole lot more time with the offensive coaches than the defensive coaches, and I can tell you, I'm extremely impressed. I mean, the guys have been exposed to a lot of different things. They were very open to change. But yet they were very sold on some thoughts, too. So we have got a great give-and-take since we started on Tuesday.

Q. Iowa has not had many dual-threat quarterbacks. What's your view on the perfect quarterback?

COACH GREG DAVIS: Really the only one we had at Texas was Vince. He was the ultimate dual threat. Now, Colt could do some things with his feet.

You would like out of that position that he can do some things off-schedule. I mean, if he is not going to move at all, he needs to be really special in the pocket. I mean, really special. I mean, you're talking about -- because it's hard to block them all every time. It's hard to -- it's just hard if that guy can't move some.

And Major Applewhite, probably most of y'all could outrun him in a 40. But he could manipulate the pocket. He was really good at manipulating the pocket, and he was extremely smart at knowing where to go when things broke down.

So I don't know that that's a good answer, but it is an honest answer.

Q. Since Hayden came up here, with a bunch of stories from Texas -- how many would you have; do you have a story or two?

COACH GREG DAVIS: I will have a story or two that will hit as we have more press conferences, I'm sure. Not as many in any way. Coach Fry stands alone. He stands alone by himself. Do not think in any way that I'll go out and be able to barnstorm like he did.

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