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An interview with:

COACH FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: Welcome, everybody. We have the same four captains moving forward here, we got Morris and Kirksey on defense and Van Sloten and Weisman on offense.

COACH FERENTZ: Happy for James Morris, Big Ten Player of the Week, defensively. Happy to see that, and obviously happy to get the win, and we turned the page on Sunday and have a big challenge this week playing a Michigan State team that looks very strong and powerful and it's going to be a tough football game for us. We have a big challenge and we'll get to work on that today.

Q. It seems like the thing that stands out is running the ball, a team Iowa fans have come to know. Is that identity coming back this season? (Luke Meredith, Associated Press)

COACH FERENTZ: I think we're making progress. Every year is different. In a perfect world, if you can run it and stop the run, that's a good thing, just in general terms. It's going to be a big challenge for us this week. Their running attack is starting to kick into gear, I imagine the way they want it. They looked good last time out and they're giving up a ridiculously small number of yards per game rushingwise right now; I think it's under 60. They have a tough football team, it's going to be a challenge for us.

Q. When you look at statistics, Michigan State also has a strong pass defense. Talk about that challenge. (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: It's going to be a big challenge. They're first in the country in total defense and second in pass rush, and you watch

film, they're playing with confidence, they have great senior leadership and veteran leadership and their scheme is -- I wouldn't call it overly complex, but they have enough complexity in there where you can't get comfortable and they always make it a challenge. It seems the subtleties of it, it's hard to get clean plays, it's going to be a challenge for us and that will be a big, big part of the game this Saturday.

Q. What are some of the subtleties? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Comparison I made on the teleconference, we used to play the Steelers in my six years, and they have a handful of things they do on first and second down, so never looked like all that much but it was enough there. They certainly knew what they were doing. It was enough to cause problems with your run game and enough to cause protection problems.

So on paper or on the board, it didn't look like it was all that much, but just the challenge was getting the right play against the right thing because they never telegraphed and Michigan State doesn't either. They're good players that play hard and are well coached, and that's what we're seeing with Michigan State.

Q. They do it just enough? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: You can't get comfortable, and there is no tip there. It's easier if you can anticipate something but you can't.

Q. Given what we saw this past weekend, is the offensive line starting to come together and gel like you were hoping it would at this point? (Brendan Stiles, Hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: We're making progress and the statistics were good Saturday, but you look at the film Sunday and there is an

awful lot of things we need to do better and we're going to have to do better this week or we won't have anywhere near the production we need. So we have a lot of things that we have to work on the next two days, that's for sure.

Q. Is Conor Boffeli doing better now?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that was probably the only down side of the game Saturday. It was a sad ending but he ran on Sunday and he's fine, so we lucked out there.

Q. How do you prepare for their quarterback with limited tape? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: That's what you go with. You go with what you see, and he played earlier in the season. It appears that's who they have settled in with, and that's what we're going to see. And it's not a huge change, I don't think it will be a huge change philosophically for them, so that's the good news, but I think that's what we'll see. Lomax is fine, he's good. He hasn't gone full speed, but hopefully he's okay.

Q. What about the Spartan running backs? (Bob Brooks, KMRY)

COACH FERENTZ: They were back and forth earlier but it looks like they're settling in now and they have two different kinds of backs, one is a little bit quicker, but the starter had a nice game against Notre Dame and it's going to be -- looks like they got it going a little bit now.

Q. Is their offense more complex than it was before? (Brendan Stiles, Hawkeye drive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: I think there is so much of a past history there, to me they don't look dramatically different, there is a little difference every year, subtleties, They have an identity offense and same thing on defense. I think they've won 30 games basically the last three years, not including this year. so I don't expect them to change their attack a whole lot.

Q. How important is staying healthy to your team every year? (Tom Kakert, hawkeyereport.com)

COACH FERENTZ: It's critical every year, you know, just like wind impacts a game, I think injuries impact any team, especially teams like us. Knock on wood, so far, so good, so it sure helps,

not only guys playing but guys being able to practice.

Q. You've been in the red zone a lot and haven't always scored on a lot of those. Is it execution? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, it is, and that's the big thing on our list right now that we have to address. We're doing some things better but that's something that we have to do. We can't expect to continue on at the rate that we're at. We have to do a better job.

Q. The game Saturday, third quarter you had some third down conversions and then Jake threw it away but you can clearly see Martin-Manley getting tackled. On a play like that do you send those into the office? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Every week we do send in the things that we want interpretations on. I thought the crew did a great job overall, and I think that's going to happen. All season long we have had good officiating and there is going to be a couple of plays every year. It's a hard job those guys have, but I think Bill has done a great job. They've done a great job with the league, they're hustling, working hard out there. You think you think you get a bad break or something here and there, you just gotta keep movin'. That's just what you have to do.

Q. When you hired Brian and moved Reese, who faced more pressure? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: It's probably not great to be a line coach here. Joe Philbin went through it, Reese went through it and now Brian is number three on that list. It's kinda like there are experts everywhere and I probably think I know something about that, so it's probably not a great job.

The thing that allowed us to do it was just what I had seen of Reese, not only coaching in high school in this state, but the jobs he did at Benton and West High School and working with our staff, the great job he's done as tight end coach, as offensive line coach and now he's doing the same thing.

He's an excellent teacher and communicator and if you talked to any of his players, past, present, going back to high school,

they would say the same thing about him. We tease him you can't find anybody around the state who didn't work with him, play for him, was on the PTA. We go down the list, we kinda tease him about that.

Q. Can you talk about the defensive line and the use of the hands? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: We philosophically have not changed a lot in the way we teach technique through the years. He's picked up right where we've been, and it's like the second time around doing anything you're better at it, and Reese is a better line coach this second year. And the other part it, we're a lot more veteran up front. We were really young last year. We had two seniors, but neither one of those guys had played prior to that. Not that we're an old group; we have only one senior, but we're a little bit more confident now and that comes from experience.

Then just that whole combination has been a positive.

Q. Seems like Reese has a humble nature that allows him to take the move and try to learn from it. (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: He's a pure teacher and he's an ultimate team player, and he was that way at West High. You can't get him to talk about himself; he doesn't do it. I'll talk about him. He was an excellent teacher at Benton and West High and nothing has changed. He has no agenda other than teaching and coaching kids, and that's usually what makes a good coach.

Q. Because Powell gives you a speed and burst, what is the emphasis to get him on the field for more snaps? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Probably haven't given him enough based on the statistics, but it's a process. We all knew he was fast, that's one thing we all feel good about. I think he's gaining confidence with every week and learning. He's doing a good job at practice and that's the most important thing. You start climbing the ladder by what you do during the week.

Q. Last week you left him off the list of 'playmakers.' Is there a reason? (Cody Goodwin, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I can't remember yesterday. Review me on that one.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH FERENTZ: [In here or --](#)

COACH FERENTZ: He's a young guy trying to learn how to play. Thing about him, again, he's fast, we all know that, but the thing I'll harp on with him is his positive energy. He loves playing football. I think one of the upsides of getting a guy who has gone to a JC is he appreciates the opportunity, appreciates being somewhere where they have training table meals, we ride on nice buses and planes and things like that. It's like coaching at Maine. You coach at Maine, you appreciate things more, when you get in the Big Ten, and I think he's going through that, too. Everything about him is really positive, other than he hasn't played a lot.

Q. How do you grow the rapport, when every time he steps on the field, the defense is yelling his number? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: It's up to us to get him where he can be free. Once he gets in the open, he knows how to finish a play. If we can get him started he can finish.

Q. How do you rate your receiving core? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: We're making progress and that's the positive. Making some tough plays on third down, or runs after catches are positives that we have struggled with recently. We're gaining ground and I will preface it by saying we're going to face coverage like we haven't seen. They play good coverages good run defense. They pressure the passer, it's going to be tough yards on Saturday.

Q. Has Rudock surpassed your expectations as a runner? (Pat Harty, Iowa City Press Citizen)

COACH FERENTZ: We don't let our guys get hit, so we see them run in practice but they're not running for their lives necessarily. We felt like he and Jake have an upside and Cody is not a slow foot, but you never know until they get in a game and he's done a good job. Sometimes guys

that run the ball as quarterbacks, they get a little too happy doing it or looking to do it too fast. He's not doing that, he's playing quarterback and running when it's appropriate so that's helpful for us.

Q. Talk about the play of your line backers and how this unit stacks up to some of the other good ones you've coached? (Kyle Hughes, KCJJ)

COACH FERENTZ: One thing I would comment, seem like every week you look at the lists, there are a lot of line backers, there are a lot of good line backers in our league and we're seeing a couple of 'em this week, a good crew. They're really good players. So who is better, I don't know that stuff, but our three guys have all played a lot. I've said it before, I'll say it again, they practiced well last spring. You would see them improve, and the same thing in camp. Having experience and a good work ethic, that's a good combination, so all three guys are doing a great job right now and just happy they're on our team. They're great guys, good role models and good leaders for our team.

Q. With the way the series has gone, Mike Meyer could be a valuable contributor of Saturday. (Bob Brooks, KGYM)

COACH FERENTZ: Absolutely, and he had a tough one last week, he hit the post, but when we needed him there at the end he had it. That was not a routine field goal. He's doing a nice job and that's one thing about having a senior. Offensively we have a lot of confidence in him and just the way he operates. I'm glad he's on our team.

Q. How concerned are you about kickoff coverage? (Tyler Tjelmeland, KGYM)

COACH FERENTZ: Not happy about that, certainly, but I think the good news from my vantage point it's not like we were earlier, or over the last couple of years, especially early in the season when we looked anemic out there.

The things that happened Saturday, we are not that far away and when we are covering we are covering pretty good, so I feel like we're on the right path. We've got the right guys right now and they're still learning a little bit about how to do a couple of things on the coverage. I feel like what we have now we can work with and continue to improve, whereas we have had times over the last four or five years where it's like, 'what the heck is

going on out there and what do we have to do here,' but it's not that situation right now.

Q. And in the 80s, you had to coach against him well compare and contrast, how good is Max Bullough? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: They seem to have somebody playing that middle linebacker spot, going back to the 80s, they had some good players. Max played really well three years ago as a first-year guy and that's hard to do. He plays at a high level and continues to, and my guess is he will finish this year the same way. He's just a really good player.

Q. He seems a little bigger than James Morris but both command the same presence. (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I think they're underselling his size, he looks bigger than that, I think they're trying to pull one on us there. He looks bigger than that, couple of their guys do, but he's a good football player and they're different players in their own way. Our systems are different and they're equally as important to their respective teams. That's the common denominator.

Q. When Carl and Louie arrived here, did you see them intersecting? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I guess Karl Klug ran one back the other day and not that Louie is Klug, but Louie is a project and we thought he had the potential to be a good defensive lineman, only in that he was a tough, competitive guy, really liked him as a person. We didn't think he was fast enough to be a linebacker, that's kinda what he was, and then Carl is more like Scherff, coming out of high school. I think they're a lot like, only Carl is further behind in this stage because of the injuries he has gone through and the practice time he's missed.

This is the first time he's played and he's doing a good job and seems like he's gaining confidence. Louie, I think that year of experience has given him the confidence to be able to play and compete and he's a tough-minded guy.

Q. They're different guys, different players, but seem to be the same in their

mentality and approach. (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I think both sides of the ball, if you're a lineman typically you're pretty unselfish in our defensive system. The main job our guys have is to keep our linebackers clean. It takes a special type of guy to do that and we have been fortunate, we have had a lot of good guys play up front for us and I think both those guys are on the path right now to becoming, and it would be remiss if I didn't talk about Dominic Alvis. He's our only senior up there and he's doing a good job there as well.

Q. Has Desmond King won that spot or is he keeping it warm for Lomax? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: You know, we'll probably play this week as it goes. We will have a little time afterwards. Jordan has only played part of the game and King really is the veteran right now, which seems funny to talk about a guy who was in high school six months ago, but he's been able to practice and able to play, and that's where we're at right now. And then you got Draper and Fleming who are healthy now and practicing, so hopefully we will have a healthy combination when all is said and done.

Q. Did you see that ability when you recruited King? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: Yes and no. I'm really astute, I thought he would be a safety, so here we go. Filled in, but that's what I thought he would end up playing. Never know.

Q. Your secondary, they got hit a few times this year. Was most of that just shift to go a different kind of coverage that maybe they're not used to playing or was it execution or a little of both? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: It's probably more execution. We have two veteran players back there with B.J. and Tanner, and we have had three newcomers, so you go through growing pains like you do at every position and the big thing, again, is about improving and getting better. The other thing is they're going to make plays sometimes, that's part of football. They're going to have guys make play on us at all positions but it's more prominent if it a long pass, but you have to come back and keep playing.

It's like the relief pitcher that gives up the home run, you can't pack it in, you have to take the ball the next day.

Q. What is the health check on Weisman every week? When a guy gets done with a game, what is the health check? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: If our players have injuries they check in, happens during the course of the game and then the evening and then the next day, you never know how guys are going to wake up. Guys like Shonn Green, Albert Young, Fred Russell, if they're running the ball as much as they run it, you try to be smart about what you do during the week and we try to do that with all our players. There is wear and tear and we try to track all that as closely as we possibly can, so we practice smart with them because the most important thing is to get guys to the game Saturday where they're able to play. That's tough because you have to practice to get better, but guys only have so much gas in the tank.

There is no science to it other than just trying to be smart and in tune to what's going on.

Q. What do you attribute to the resurgence of this year's offensive line? (Ben Ross, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: I think the big difference is experience. Louie was playing his first football last year, and it's one thing to not have played but the anxiety of not having played. That's where experience fits in.

Alvis has played now, and we started this year with two guys who were veterans. Carl hadn't played but he's a fourth year guy and he has the capabilities of being a good player, and it was a matter of getting him to see that he could be good. Then Drew Ott has quietly done a nice job. We're getting help from Coop and Mike Hardy and having six guys that can go in there and compete. It's working out so far and we keep trying to bring guys along.

Q. Do you see Dominic Alvis' role changing at all? (Ben Ross, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: He's one of the leaders up there. Louie missed spring, so that was tough. It took him a while to come off the injury, and those two are our most experienced guys. The guys who have played are doing a good job of

keeping the guys who haven't played, showing them what we need to be doing every day.

Q. Every year you talk about unknown guys to emerge. There has been a lot of that this year. (Jared Aarons, KGAN)

COACH FERENTZ: It's helped and our older guys have done that, Morris with a couple of picks, Kirksey that first game and guys like Powell. We need all those guys, it's a collective thing, and it requires guys practicing and getting better and doing their part. We have a lot of guys trying to do that right now.

Q. I know you can't take recruiting for granted, but somebody like James Morris who is in our own backyard, what was that recruiting process like? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: That ended up fairly early, but I still got grilled by his mom, she wanted to sit down and I got 30 questions. I got them and they were pointed and all that kind of stuff but that's part of recruiting, too. It's like being a consumer you have the right to ask anything and I think it's smart that people do that, to her credit, she did. It wasn't totally painless but it wasn't too bad.

Q. How much has Rudock progressed from that first week? (KCCI)

COACH FERENTZ: I think just the fact that hopefully he's a more confident player than he was a month ago. Not that he lacked confidence going in, but until you get in there and start playing and things start happening you're never quite sure.

Certainly I think he's further down the road now. I said on the teleconference I think probably the biggest attribute I would cite on him, if he has a play he wishes hadn't taken place he puts it over there and keeps on going. He doesn't blow it off but it doesn't affect him moving forward and that's important at every position, certainly at that position. You're playing a position where everybody has an opinion about what you do. You're out there.

Q. Hamilton started but where does the light come on for him??

COACH FERENTZ: Last spring he did some good things and it's been a continual thing for him. We like all our tight ends. They all bring something positive to the team.

Q. Michigan State got flagged for five pass interferences, in that Notre Dame game. Is that something that you can go after?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if we can go after them, it's a bi-product of their play and whenever you do that you're going to have penalties. The down side is they got flagged but if you look at how many yards they give up a week in a pass, it's kinda like anything, if you're a hard man cover team, not that they are, but when they lock down on you, they're in your face, it's not a lot of breathing room there. So it's a risk/reward thing, but you look at their pass statistics, they're probably comfortable with the style of play they have. It's an active pass rush, and if a guy is good at getting a jump on it, most coaches will give guys a hall pass if they can get a couple of sacks during a game.

Q. Eleven penalties in the Missouri State game, but not much since. (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: In general terms, again, penalties are usually a lack of ability or lack of concentration or technique. The ability ones you can't do anything about and usually concentration and technique are tied together.

I would say that one game just equated to where we were as a team at that point and the score kind of tied in with everything else about the game. That's about where we were that day, it was our second week of the year Thank you.

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