

September 3, 2013



An Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

COACH FERENTZ: It will be a hot day out there on Saturday, so biggest thing is going to be watching the guys from the heat standpoint.

Captains, we have the same four captains, James Morris and Chris Kirksey defensively, and Brett Van Sloten, Mark Weisman offensively will lead the team.

And next up is just, you know, I didn't acknowledge this Saturday, but it was a great crowd on Saturday, just coming out. The stadium was really packed, and just great enthusiasm there, so we certainly appreciate that. Our fans have been great for a long time, appreciate that.

As I said the other day, it was a tough loss. We turned the page on it on Sunday and we are moving on now and getting ready for Missouri State.

Our focus turns to our preparation, hopefully learning from some of the mistakes, miscues that we might have had and seeing what we can do to improve as much as possible this coming week, and, you know, take it from there.

Q. It did seem despite the result, there was pretty good progress on both sides of the ball, so when you go back and look, did you see that? (Luke Meredith, Associated Press)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I think all of us, hopefully our players saw the same thing on the film. I saw an awful lot of good things out there that were being done. I thought we moved around well on defense. Certainly offensively we did some things better than we had done in a while and that was good to see?

You know, just to encapsulate it, it's still tough to win a football game when you have three turnovers. It just makes it tough. And a lot of statistics don't matter, but that one usually shows up pretty good and it certainly hurt us.

Q. Did you have any dealings with Terry Allen in the past, across the sideline, anything like that? (Jared Aarons, KGAN)

COACH FERENTZ: I know Terry casually. Don't know him well but certainly know of Terry from living here as long as I have and the great run that he had at Northern as an assistant and then as a head coach, as well. That program has been good for a long, long time, and Terry is a big part of that.

Q. When you look at the progress you made from last season in the first game, where does the winning part come in; how much does winning help take the next step toward progress? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: The next step is, you have to learn how to win. That's one thing, just looking backwards, there are a couple opportunities Saturday where I thought, felt like we were real close, I felt like we were close to maybe turning the game, but we just couldn't quite get it done.

First thing that jumps to mind is probably first four or five possessions during the second half, you know, a lot of near misses, but those are the things that keep you from moving forward.

And mentioned the turnovers, but the false start penalty, not being set on the sneak. I remember we had one of those a couple years ago, too. Those things come back and hurt you a little bit, too; a near miss on a long pass. So those little things add up and that's kind of the next step that we have to take.

Q. Are you comfortable with the tempo your offense has set, which is so much faster than it has been in the past? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: It will be week-to-week. I thought for the most part we

ASAP sports
...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

Coach Ferentz 9 3 13

operated well on Saturday. Communication for the most part was pretty good. It was fairly effective but we still want more points. And yardage is one thing, but when you get the turnovers and come up short on points, that's tough.

But we did a better job when we got in there. At least we finished with some touchdowns.

Q. There were times where it was 12 to 14 to 19 seconds in between plays where in the past where you may have slowed it down. (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, there were a couple actually where the officials kind of slowed us down a little bit, too. We would have liked to have gone a little quicker.

It's something we started on in the spring, and like I said, what we will choose week-to-week, how much or how little we do of it but it's something our guys are executing a little more proficiently; if we think we can use it to our advantage, we will try to.

Q. What did you see in the secondary? They obviously got some guys open. Having looked at film, did you see a reason or something correctible in that? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, that's another part of the equation, talked about turnovers and then giving up big plays; anything over 20 yards, 15, 20 yards, 20 yards in the passing game, you know it's tough to win consistently doing those things. Yeah, I think all of the things that we saw that hurt us are addressable, and it's just part of the first game. So now the big challenge is what can we do this week to move forward.

Q. Were you kind of nervous or -- not nervous, but kind of wonder how Jake could see the game, not having played in a game for two years, and what exactly are you guys asking him, what he saw? (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Again, I'm not as hung up on how many snaps he got last year as a lot of people are. But any time you start a new player, you're always curious how they are going to react. Boffeli, Walsh only had two or three starts, wasn't sure -- Blythe's never played center. So we have a lot of those kind of stories. But obviously at quarterback that's a whole different deal. They have a lot on their plate.

I think for the most part, Jake really handled things well. His demeanor on the sideline was good; he was calm, confident. The feedback that we got from him was really accurate. You think they know what's going on; you hope they do, and some guys give good feedback, some don't, at all positions, but it was really good.

So, his awareness was good, and you know, so it was I thought a real positive first step for them. And we like our other two quarterbacks, too, C.J. and Cody. But all three of those guys have practiced well. You're never sure how it's going to go until the lights go on and you get out there and play.

I thought it was a positive first step. We wanted to win the football game obviously, but there's some good things that happened, certainly in his neighborhood, as well.

Q. Defensively, you were using Quenton Alston on the pass rush, much like you were with Nate Meier earlier back in fall camp, how did you feel he did with, that and is that something you're looking to get more out of during the course of the season or is that just specific – (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Well, we'll fool around with that on the passing, obvious passing downs, and just hoping to get a little bit more change of tempo out there a little bit.

He's done some good things in practice that was good. I thought Nate Meier for the first time, he's really played -- certainly he's never played with his hand on the ground. That was a good positive start for him. I think he got 10, 12 snaps, something like that.

Some of the older guys did a nice job getting some of the younger guys in new roles, that helped him.

Q. Do you subscribe to the theory that a team makes the most improvement, game one to game two? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: I think there's a lot of truth in that but it's not just going to happen. You have to make it happen.

I thought overall, our guys really handled a challenging week last week pretty well: First week of class, bad weather, hot weather, and I thought they handled that pretty well.

Now the challenge is what can we do this week; can we push forward and do the same thing. If we do that, we should see improvement, but we have to go out and do it now, and it starts in practice.

Q. Are you still looking to get LeShun in there? (Tom Kakert, hawkeyereport.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, our plan was to play him all the way. Just didn't open up the other day. He's definitely on the straight-ahead list right now.

Q. FCS opponent this week, do you have to mention to your guys that eight schools that are FCS beat FBS schools last week? (Jared Aarons, KGAN)

COACH FERENTZ: I don't know if that was a record or not, but, boy, it sure -- it's pretty awakening for everybody, if you're not paying attention, that's a good thing to be mindful of.

We have played FCS teams before and there's nothing easy about winning at any level. I think, you know, eight teams found that out last week.

Q. Do you feel like some of your guys saw the fake punt coming -- looked like they identified, was it more of an execution thing than being faked? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: As I mentioned Saturday, it's something we had seen on film the last couple of years in all regards to the kicking game. So it's something we are certainly aware of, we have the right people out and we have the miscommunication on one thing that took place and that opened the door, and just makes it tough.

Q. Is this team faster than the one you had last year? (Ben Ross, Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: You know, Jordan has always been fast and Damond can run, so he's a fast guy, too. But I thought we played faster maybe than we had a year ago and that was a good thing, our defense ran around pretty well. We still have some things we have to get cleaned up here fast.

Q. Are you trying to define maybe the role for tight ends in this offense? I think they only had three or four targets Saturday. (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, just where the ball goes is dictated by the defense. But we like our tight ends. We think we have a good group. The play C.J. made was a really good play, and Rudock caught one on that one, too, so it was a good extra benefit to see him standing or deliver the ball.

Yeah, those guys will get their share of balls. It's a group we plan to include and I think they will get their share of the balls over the course of the year.

Q. You held Lynch to 56 yards rushing, contained him pretty well. Did that take away from the pass rush, or did you see what you wanted out of the front four as far as getting pressure on the quarterback? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: I thought our guys up front -- we played a lot of guys. Hardy played a lot, Cooper played a lot with the four starters and then Meier got in there a little bit. I thought those guys, we made progress and did some good things.

First thing's first: You've got to stop the run, and we did a pretty good job of that, if you take the fake punt out of there. And so, yeah, it's a challenge, but then, you know, I don't think it affects the pass rush that much, other than playaction is always a factor.

But I thought we saw some positives up front.

Q. Is Damond Powell's role minimized right now because of the familiarity with the offense and will it expand as the season goes on? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Certainly we will try to grow him, grow his role a little bit. He wasn't here in the spring so it's a disadvantage.

So it's how fast can you learn things, how fast can he pick things up, and also can we make it fit with what the other guys do. He's a high-energy guy, likes playing football. So we are going to try to keep him involved.

Q. What have you seen from Missouri State? (Steve Batterson, Quad-City Times)

COACH FERENTZ: Their game is interesting, the other night they weren't in a pretty good situation, trying to bring it out of their own end zone, actually completed a pass and got it out of there, turned it over and next thing you know, tie

game and had a near-miss for a bomb and just couldn't quite complete that, and then they give up another touchdown.

Kind of lost their traction a little bit in the second half but it looked like they were in pretty good control. So I'm sure they are going to come in here ready to go and we need to be ready.

Q. After Jake's interception, after the game the talk was how the guys jumped the route and everything, but as you looked at that, did he maybe throw to the wrong shoulder? Is it a technical thing? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: For sure you want to throw the ball away from the defender. If your guy can't get it, you want to make sure their guy can't get it. That's what you hope happens.

That didn't happen. Might have been a better place to go with the ball, too, but you know, in any case, any time you throw a ball, you're trying to make it so your guy can get it and their guy can't, and it just didn't happen.

Q. Were you okay with Jordan Cotton's decision-making on the kick return? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: Things can always be better, and I think some of those are pretty obvious.

Q. Is there a rule there? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we give them a rule, as far as line of demarkation, but that's assuming, too, that you're catching a ball and running forward. And if you're making a Willie Mays catch to field the ball, then that might not be the best thing to try, especially going across the field a little bit.

That happens. That happens in first games. He will bounce back. He's a really good football player.

Q. Looks like Meyer has added strength to his leg; how nice is it to get those touch backs? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: We had a couple guys, obviously Kirksey. I thought all three of our linebackers in watching the tape, they all played well. That's the best I've seen Hitchens play ever, so that was really encouraging.

And Mike Meyer, he was just wired the other day. He kicked the ball well in kickoffs and pretty much everything he did was right the way you want it. There were some good things going on there, and I've said that, our older guys have done a nice job of leading, and you back it up with good play, that sure helps.

Q. You said that's the best you've ever seen Hitchens play, what have you seen that's different from a year ago? (Brendan Stiles, hawkeyedrive.com)

COACH FERENTZ: Just he's more decisive. That's experience. The biggest thing is experience, just reacting quickly, seeing things faster and getting there in a bad attitude. But that's experience.

And I think I might have mentioned it last week, but I mentioned it a couple times, wherever I've been -- our veteran guys really practiced well in the spring and I thought they did the same thing in camp. When you have guys that are working to get better all three of the linebackers come to mind: All three of our backs, Bullock, Weisman, Van Sloten is always doing that. But when you have guys doing that, Scherff, it's good to see, and they set an example for the other guys.

Q. How good can Hitchens be? (Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: Well, time will tell. We have 11 games to find out. Just it's good when guys are playing decisively and more confident. That comes from experience.

Q. You talked about the learning curve of players in a new offensive and up-tempo, trying to get a little quicker -- what is it like for you in trying to manage a game with a little faster-pace offense? (Jared Aarons, KGAN)

COACH FERENTZ: Games unfold a lot of different ways in the course of time, so you just play it on out. And the bottom line, it's still about execution, it's still about scoring points, and you know, that's what it gets down to.

Q. When you play a team like Northern Illinois, really up-tempo -- how much does that impact your ability for defensive substitutions? (John Patchett, hawkeyemic.com)

COACH FERENTZ: It's tough. And I know Phil was commenting -- I didn't get to see a

lot of games, but there were some substitution issues apparently Friday night, whatever the game was on TV. That's one of the factors about it that makes it a little tougher to get guys on and off the field and if you're not careful, you'll get caught with 12 or 13 guys out there.

Somebody's going in, they have got to get in, and that communication has to happen quickly. You have to anticipate it and then, you know, it may be a situation where you have a nickel group or dime group get ready and you just have to pull them back, because that situation doesn't develop, but you'd better be ahead of the curve on that.

Q. Did that stun you guys? I don't think you guys ran much nickel or dime. (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, we ran some, but not a lot. We were pretty much where we wanted to be in terms of personnel.

Q. Using Weisman and Bullock and what you got out of them, almost five yards a carry, is that sort of the blueprint you want? (Luke Meredith, Associated Press)

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I'd be okay if it went up to six or seven a carry, that would be okay with me. We'll see how that goes.

That's by feel, too, and just game-to-game, it will change.

Q. How much can Weisman grow his game? He breaks through the line, and he's still kind probably a little taller than you want and his legs are a little vulnerable. (Marc Morehouse, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I think he's a better runner now than he was a year ago. He's got this year and next, so he'll keep improving. I mentioned guys improving, and I think he's worked hard. He'll be good.

Q. Going against the 3-4 this week, a couple of teams in the Big Ten have changed, Wisconsin and Ohio State; what kind of challenge does that present? Is it good to see a team like that now, so that you have some experience against them later on in the season? (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I think so. The team we played last week is very different than what we are defensively, their defense, as opposed to ours. So that was a transition.

We'll see a lot of that look during the course of the season. It's kind of like what we do is really almost very different than what everybody else does, so it's good to get a change, and I think the same thing here.

You know, blocking is still blocking, but the communication is different against the 3-4 team and it causes a few adjustments and what-have-you. I think there is some benefit and we'll keep getting more of that as we go along, I'm sure.

Q. You were talking about the crowd and the enthusiasm and emotion. They left with a lot of long faces after that game. What would you tell them to quantify the progress this team has made? (Rick Brown, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: You know, our fans have been good for as long as I can remember. They are good football fans, too. They know when to get loud and all that kind of stuff.

But you know, I think -- I don't know what I need to say to our fans other than we appreciate their support and we look forward to it six more times at home and a bunch on the road, too. They have been great there.

Q. Maurice Fleming didn't play, I don't think he played the scrimmage --

COACH FERENTZ: I can't remember if he played one scrimmage -- I'm trying to remember if he was hurt then -- he's working through a leg issue right now. He might be ready, he might not be this week. We're I think close.

Q. Is Michael Malloy in the same situation? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: He's working through a medical situation, too. Probably be a couple weeks with him at least.

Q. What about Faith? (Don Lund, North Liberty Leader)

COACH FERENTZ: He's healthy. We just didn't put him in there, but he's healthy, yeah.

Q. Where are you at in terms of true freshman? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: LaShun, he didn't play, but for sure he'll play. King obviously did play. There are probably a couple other guys

we're looking at and just see what happens here the next couple weeks. I would think somewhere, unless something happens, I think we'll probably make up our mind in the next three, four weeks of the season where we are at.

Q. How do you think King did? (Rob Howe, Hawkeye Insider)

COACH FERENTZ: He competed well. Some technique things that he can improve on, but the big thing was he wasn't overwhelmed. He had a good demeanor on the sideline and he was eager to compete and all that type of thing. Hopefully we can move him forward a little bit this week, too. He's in the water swimming now.

Q. Five seniors on that defensive two; what kind of emphasis or toward building and toward getting younger guys in there as much as you can, to give them that chance? (Andrew Logue, Des Moines Register)

COACH FERENTZ: I'm doing the math real quick -- six seniors, right? One up front, three backers and two DBs, those guys are all playing at a pretty high level. That's good, and right now, they are helping lead and that's the biggest thing.

So we have just got to make sure the guys on the field are doing a good job and see if we can tighten things up a little bit.

Q. Obviously depends on how the game plays out but would you like to see a situation where you can get Cody or C.J. into a game on Saturday? (Jared Aarons, KGAN0)

COACH FERENTZ: If it meant we are winning, that's a great thing, yeah, it would be great. So I would be okay with that on a couple fronts, yeah.

Q. What did you think of your pass rush? No sacks, but six tackles. (Scott Dochterman, Cedar Rapids Gazette)

COACH FERENTZ: I thought they were active. I thought they were active and pushing the pocket.

You know, when you play a guy like him, it's watch what you wish for and that was one of the things going in. If you get out of whack a little bit up front, and he was as effective pulling it down and running as he was throwing, so I thought for the most part, we did a pretty good job that way for the most part.

Q. You mentioned the big play on defense, what have you guys seen, and what can you do specifically with personnel you have to ensure that you don't give up a handful of big plays? (Daily Iowan)

COACH FERENTZ: We just have to play smarter. You know, we are going to play this season with the guys we have, and we like the guys we have. It's not that we don't. But you know, we are just going to have to play a little bit smarter, and you know, to their credit, they did a thing or two that we had not seen a lot of, you know, they had not shown us, and that's a credit to them.

And then just playing some things a little bit better and that comes with time and experience, and probably every coach in America is saying that right now. But that's what it gets down to and that's what practice is all about; that's what Sunday was about, seeing those things on film, going on the field and going through them, correcting them and then hopefully carrying that over the rest of the way now for the next 11 games.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...