

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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KIRK FERENTZ: Welcome to everybody. Appreciate you all coming. Two things to cover, a little bit about our bowl preparation and then also most importantly, our early signing day.

Before I get to that, I want to congratulate two of our former players, Marshal Yanda, earning his seventh trip to a Pro Bowl. Probably would have been more than that if it weren't for an injury, but that's an unbelievable accomplishment. He's an extremely hard worker, and has had such a distinguished career with the Ravens, and he's hardly finished at this point, so really happy for him. And then George Kittle, as well, being selected at a young age. He had a tremendous season, at least I keep hearing about it. I haven't had a chance to see much of it. I got to see that one catch about a month ago. That was pretty impressive. For him to earn a Pro Bowl trip at this young age is really impressive. Very happy for him and happy for a lot of the guys that are playing well right now, and hopefully they'll end up in playoff contention, most of those guys. It's a good deal, certainly.

A couple words about the bowl. This is always kind of a hectic time for anybody in college coaching. You have the bowl preparation going on. You have players in class and transitioning into finals, and then finally out of finals, mid-semester graduation. We try to get some practices mixed in there during the time, and then obviously the staff, we're all out recruiting, as well. So you have a couple balls in the air and it's always kind of a hectic time.

That's what we've gone through here over the last couple weeks since I've seen you.

The players did finish their finals. We've had a four-day block of practice since that time, and now the guys are off on a little break, and they'll come back in, we'll get another good block of practice and then travel down to Tampa the day after Christmas for our Outback trip. We're thrilled about that and realize we have a big challenge on that one.



Staff-wise our last practice was this morning, so it gives our staff a chance really to work on Mississippi State in earnest. We've kind of been doing a little bit here, a little bit there, and that's what we'll be doing here the next couple days, trying to get a good portion of the game plan done before our players come back on Saturday evening. That's our plan right now.

We will be working on Christmas, which we typically are doing, and this time it'll be here instead of at a bowl site. We will be together. That's always a good thing. It's a little bit unusual, but when you play college football, it's really a bad omen not to be working over the holidays, so we're all happy about that, and it will be good to have a normal game week down in Tampa, and that's how we'll approach it once we get there.

Personnel-wise, a couple things of note. We are fairly healthy, at least at this point with our two-deep, we should be when we start practicing again on Sunday. One guy, Jake Newborg, who is going to graduate, he had a knee scoped yesterday, which required some repair work in there, so he'll not be able to practice or play in the game. He will be out. But outside of that, everybody has a reasonable chance to be ready to go Sunday when we get back at it a little bit and kind of go from there.

A couple position changes we're looking at of note. Tyler Linderbaum has transferred over to the offensive side as has Austin Schulte. Both defensive linemen are working on the offensive side now. And then Levi Duwa and Henry Marchese has moved over to the defensive side. Henry is working at defensive tackle, Levi at the tackle, and Henry is back at the safety position.

Then the other thing, I was happy to read the other night about Nate Stanley staying. That's always good news. I realize there's a lot of talk, speculation on that, and the players are still gathering information. Stuff is starting to trickle back a little bit from the NFL and some other people that we visit with.

What we'll do is like we always do, we'll present that information to our players, let them look it over, we'll have discussion, what have you, and then go from there. If there are any announcements we'll be sure to share those with you. Really appreciate if everybody

stays off that topic once we get down to Tampa. All of us want to have our focus on the game. We have a big assignment and I appreciate everybody staying away from that. We'll let you know if there's anything really newsworthy to report on that.

That being said, the biggest thing today is just the announcement of our 20 signees. Really pleased with the group. I know every year there's an article that kind of pokes fun about how excited coaches are about the guys they sign, and I would just say this: you probably shouldn't offer a scholarship up if you're not excited about that prospect, and it's certainly a big day in every prospect's career, too, to earn and achieve a scholarship to a Big Ten university. It's tough to do. It's very difficult. It takes great effort by the prospect himself but also a lot of help from his family and his coaching staff. Other people are involved quite often, as well. It takes a lot of support for that, but it is a really exciting time for the prospects. It's an exciting time for the coaching staff. Everybody has been working hard. It seems like it's been going on a long time. It has. This process takes quite a while.

So there are an awful lot of people that have worked hard and been part of this process, and it's just a nice day to bring it all to focus and see the group come together.

I'm always appreciative, we have a staff that works extremely hard at recruiting. We have a support staff that does a great job. There are a lot of people behind the scenes, and then that spills out to a lot of members of people on campus, whether it's other people in the athletic department, members of our faculty, people from admissions. There are an awful lot of people that interface with the prospects of their families when they come here and their coaches and tell them more about the University of Iowa and the program and et cetera, so all those things that are so important to making decisions, and we really benefit greatly from a lot of different people helping us out that way, and then just the community in itself really sells itself, so that's always been a positive. It impacted me my first day here in 1981 when I interviewed, and a lot of our prospects go through the same process. A lot of the family members commented on it, as well. That part is all good.

Again, it's been kind of a challenging time for us because you're balancing recruiting, you're balancing preparation, you're monitoring academic progress of our players, all those kinds of things. So it is kind of nice now to have the finals behind us to be able to settle in as a football team. Now we've got the class signed, and now we can move forward and really get ready for the ballgame. That's kind of where it's at.

We had 20 signees. We also had four walk-ons that have joined us, and everybody realizes what a big part of the program walk-ons have traditionally been with us, and we're excited about these four guys. Overall our staff did a good job in Iowa, and everything starts here for us in state, done a good job of addressing the needs that we feel like we have at this point.

This is the first time we had official visits back in June. I don't want to say it was scary, but it was different, and we were all curious to see how that would work out. To me that worked out to be a beautiful thing. I think we had a good plan that way, and the prospects that were here really enjoyed it, and it made a big impact on them.

That's certainly a good thing. And then it's been interesting to me just to watch the bonds between the players after they commit, after they've been here together, and social media can cause some problems, but that's one of the nice things. They've been able to stay in touch and really communicate with each other, so some good friendships have already begun and they'll continue as we go along here.

Just a couple things about the class. We have 19 captains out of the 20, 17 multi-sport players, 19 guys played in playoffs, 10 participated in state championships and four of them were on state championship teams. I think that's great. Ten of the 20 received academic honors and accolades. That's certainly a positive, too, and collectively, the whole group has a good feel, so that's where we're at right now. We're really pleased with the way things came together.

And now as we move forward, we'll focus on the ballgame strictly, come back from Tampa, and then we'll refocus on recruiting. We still have a couple spots, so we'll take a look at things and just try to be as intelligent as we can as we move forward. There's not a lot of room on the team right now, but we have a couple spots and will shift gears on that when we get back in January and go from there.

Q. What positions might you address in that next period?

KIRK FERENTZ: Right off the top of my head, I'd probably say defense would probably be the first thing that would come to mind. We're about where we want to be on offense, at least going into it, so defensively that's kind of the look.

And then the other thing is just to see what the best players available are. Maybe there's somebody out there that got overlooked.

Q. With Jestin Jacobs, first of all, he's from

southwest Ohio, which I know you've tried to establish some good roots there, but then also he did visit Ohio State while he was committed. I know that's been an issue in the past. Is that one of those case-by-case bases, and then also how excited are you about him?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, we're really excited about him, and I think more excited now that they made a run at him, another school made a run at him, and I think there were some people in the community obviously that would have hoped he would have gone there, but he stood his ground. He was firmly committed to us, and that certainly makes us feel good, and that's not easy when you're 17, 18 years old to make a firm commitment and then stick with it when there's maybe some outside pressure to do something differently. So that gives us a little bit of insight into his makeup, and for a linebacker that's what you're looking for, a guy that's strong minded. Every position, but certainly a linebacker. And then about the whole circumstances, yeah, it's all case by case. I really kind of look at it like discipline. Every case is a little bit different. Bottom line is you want to be fair in how you handle things, and all you can do is act on the information you have.

But everything at least the things I'm aware of, everything was straightforward to us. It was presented. We knew ahead of time what was going to take place, and we were comfortable with what we heard.

Q. As long as they're up front and honest with you, you're flexible, it's not like you're --

KIRK FERENTZ: That's a big part about everything in life, right? When people are straightforward and honest, yeah, it's a lot easier to give it thought and consideration, and you just take everything into consideration with everything, yeah, but if there's some missing clues that pop up later on after the fact, that can be a little disturbing.

We ask every recruit to be honest with us, and then obviously we tell them they can expect that from us. Just like when they come here, we ask them to work hard, but they can expect the same thing from us as a staff. We're here to work for them, as well, so it's got to be a two-way street all the time, and to me that's the best way to have any kind of relationship that's meaningful.

Q. With your defensive philosophy maybe shifting a little bit, did that affect this class and the way you looked at players in this class?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not totally yet. Probably it'll have maybe something to do with how we steer the finish here, but it's definitely a conversation we've had, and we'll pick it back up in January. Yeah, a lot of it has to do with what personnel groups are out there on the

field, and we probably need to sit back and look at that a little bit. Amani and Geno gave us -- the combination of those two guys -- the ability to play a little differently maybe than we have in the past. So if we want to go down that road, that might help steer where we go with the next scholarship if we choose to use one on defense.

Q. You had 20 players from 11 different states. Is that kind of what you would expect going in?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think so. In a perfect world if we could get everybody from within five hours, that would be perfect. But it would probably mean we're also in Columbus, Ohio, and we're not. So just population wise that's probably not realistic, but that's certainly where we'd like to be strong and start.

But the reality is that we have to spread out, and I think we have to do a good job in other areas, and I really feel good at this point basically about the job that we did in outlying areas. We did our homework really well. Derrick is a good example with Shadrick Byrd. He had a relationship very indirectly, same barber shop as I understand it. It's amazing how that worked. But I think the biggest thing, the further away you get, if you don't know as much about a prospect, you're rolling the dice.

But we all feel really good about what we learned about those prospects, and several of those guys from outside that five-hour box were the ones where people were knocking on their doors and they stayed true to their word, and that really makes us feel good about their commitments.

Q. Tyler Goodson I think was one of the first players to take the spring official visit. What does he bring to maybe the running back room in addition to what you have, and how do you feel about getting guys on campus now in the spring?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, to your point, I had forgotten about that, but yeah, he really kicked it off. He was here for our spring game, which was a little concerning for us. We would have preferred to steer it a little bit later to that June visit. It just wasn't realistic for his schedule and what was going on in his life.

The fear there, there's no fear of him being there. The fear was that he's here alone, and it's better when you have a group of prospects, there's a little bit more energy and a chance for a better vibe. But he and his mom came up here, and they really enjoyed their visit, and I was in their home probably about two weeks ago, I guess, and just they've got a tremendous family.

We think he's a really talented back. He's one of those guys that played on a state championship team. He's got really good skills, and I think he'll fit what we're

looking for. I like our backs right now. The three backs that we saw play this year -- we didn't get to see a lot of Ivory, but the other two guys have really done a good job, and I think he'll hopefully help supplement that group.

Q. Can you talk about Erza Miller? He set a record for number of visits here, almost like he's already here?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think it was 29, but those guys back there know better than anybody. Yeah, that's easily a record. But I did tell him the visit I'm looking forward to the most is in January when he shows up here for class. We have six guys coming early, and Erza is one of those guys. He's a delightful young guy. He's got a great attitude, very positive. It's hard for him not to stand out a little bit with his size. But he's just got a great attitude. He's worked hard in camp. We saw a real jump. He came back in camp again last year, which tells you a little bit about him, too, but he's got a good attitude. He works hard, and he's just scratching the surface, so we're eager to get him here.

Q. Iowa's offensive lineman camp, is that the safest bet you've had in recruiting? It feels like it is.

KIRK FERENTZ: It's nice when guys come to camp. You see everybody on film certainly, and there are some guys that are just no-brainers, but when they come to camp you really learn about their personalities. I would not describe our camp for linemen as a fun camp, or tight ends because those guys get worn out. So it's no fun in games, but you get to see a guy compete, and Justin Britt is not from Iowa, but that's where he rocketed up on our want list is when he came to camp, he was aggressive and did a nice job blocking. I was more impressed with how he acted outside the drills. He just had a real presence about him, and it was funny, I sat down with him I think it was last Wednesday or Thursday, Thursday I guess it would have been, and I'm impressed with his depth of knowledge and understanding of technique. He was saying some things that I don't think some of our third-year guys could spit at me. That was impressive, and he clearly has been well-coached and thinks about it a little bit, which anything you do you've got to think about and give it thought.

That's a good start. Obviously he's coming off an ACL repair, so he'll be behind a little bit, but it's great that he'll be here working with Kammy and her staff and the strength staff, as well, so that's a positive.

Q. Last time you had three tight ends it turned out all right for you, at least in terms of production on the field, and you have three tight ends now, probably one leaving early, one eventually leaving. What do you like about those three, and is Sam

LaPorta another one of those guys where you kind of found him in a rock in the middle of Illinois that maybe nobody else would have saw?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, and Sam came to camp, so we got a good exposure and liked what we saw there, and that's my only knock on the early signing thing. Again, in a perfect world, scholarships wouldn't get offered until December. That would make a lot more sense for all of us to really evaluate guys throughout their entire careers, and that's what we did with Sam. He had already established some relationships with other coaches and what have you, but we kept watching him, we saw him play basketball I think it was last Tuesday, and that kind of sealed the deal for us, to watch him competing on the basketball court, competing, doing things, especially at that position. You can learn a lot there.

I think with every bit of evidence we had coupled with what we saw in the summertime, we felt really good about him, and Josiah is a guy that we were after him hard and was glad he committed in season, and then Logan is a guy who did a really good job early. Like he jumped on our radar early, and he's a big, aggressive guy who I think can probably help us in a couple different spots, but we're going to start him at tight end because we're losing two really good ones here within the next 14 months if not sooner. Obviously it's a big part of our deal.

Q. You've mentioned six guys coming in early. It used to be just a quarterback thing, now it's just kind of grown everywhere. How do you feel about it?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'm for it under two conditions: First of all, it's got to be their idea and not our idea. We don't push it on guys because we did have a bad outcome, I'm probably going back eight or ten years ago where a guy came out here and pretty much sat in his room and really missed his girlfriend, did poor in school and that was a really bad combination. If a guy is not ready to leave high school, it's a really bad idea and ready for the right reasons.

So I think that's it. And then the other part is you'd like to think they're going to be pretty solid academically, but the university is pretty stringent about who can get in at midterm, so usually it's not an issue, but again, I think we have to do a good job as a staff and our team has to do a good job making sure we remember these guys aren't with their class, and they're starting new just like the freshmen did last June. It's still a different level to be at, so we've really got to make sure we're interactive with them and they don't get left behind or feel like they're left behind.

But again, I go back to that social media thing. These

guys are in constant chatter. They've already decided who's their roommates and all that kind of stuff, and I think they're all excited about getting here and going to work, and it's a good thing.

Q. You mentioned Logan Lee, small-town kid. What really caught your eye about him?

KIRK FERENTZ: He's an impressive player on film. You meet him, he's a really impressive young man with a great mom and dad, and they were over here early and often. The coach came with him, too, and that was neat.

Just everything about it was really positive, and a big part of recruiting is either -- your message -- more importantly, what they're exposed to on campus, it either resonates or it doesn't. In this case I think it really kind of resonated right off the bat, so that's a really good thing. Sometimes it goes the other way, too.

Q. Do you guys feel like -- I know you've had success in the Southeast in the past and you went away from that, and it feels like you're back in there -- is that just the recruiting pattern you have now or do you feel like you've established yourself there?

KIRK FERENTZ: I wouldn't call it established by any stretch, but I think we have some logical reasons to go there, with Seth coaching down there and certainly Derrick's background coaching right there specifically, as well. Yeah, I think that helps certainly, and if you have a trust level with the coaches and they are giving you a good straight shot on guys. And then Florida we've always tried to dabble there. Again, we just really want to make sure we have a good feel of what we're getting. But I think just again because of our population base we're going to have to spot in other areas, and I think it probably makes sense to go where your ties are the strongest. That can rotate or change depending on who you have with you.

Q. Your staff is a little more selective in terms of offering. What goes into that mindset?

KIRK FERENTZ: I guess maybe we're outdated, too, but to us, to make an offer, and I read an article this morning that referenced non-committable offers. I don't get that, but I guess that's a common term now. If we offer somebody then we're serious about it, and obviously things can change. If you offer these guys at one position and one guy commits, that may be it, but we typically try to give guys that heads up that it's one offer, we're offered a couple guys.

But to offer multi, multi, multi players at one position, it's kind of a scam because all you're doing is you're getting that guy to -- hey, they really liked me, so it's a better hook than, hey, we'll let you know in a couple weeks. But it's a false offer. It's not real. I don't know,

we try to be very straightforward with our dialect, I guess. I don't think that's a new policy.

Q. You've never had a problem with using running backs early. Do you think either one of these two have a chance to impact that room, especially with three guys that have played a lot?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I think it's realistic, and that was one of the -- that was really the impetus behind offering Mekhi when Toks took the medical, and if you look at us last year, I've said consistently -- we had three backs that we feel pretty good about putting in the game, but the reality is we typically went into a game with two healthy, even when Ivory was dressed out. I'm not sure he could have gone in and played effectively. It's been a while other than practice recently, but it's been a while since we've really seen him go. So that's a tough deal for a back if he's not ready, and I guess I'm just kind of leaning that direction where we can't have too many backs, and I think both guys that we signed are really capable guys. They're going to come in and compete hard, and if they can enter into the mix, that would be a great thing for us.

But you know, it's a tough position.

Q. How did the Linderbaum position change come about? Obviously he's got some skill. What have you liked about him on the offense?

KIRK FERENTZ: First point I'll make is he was really doing well on defense. But part of my job is to look down the road, and I've been doing that for a while. Just really over the past two and a half months, just kind of thinking about different scenarios about what it's going to look like next year, and what I kept coming back to was I think that we really had a little bit of a void at the center position. Cole has been working at that position, he and Keegan have been the one, two guys and then Fergie. So Fergie and Keegan aren't going to be here certainly in January, and then we line up in the spring. That leaves us one guy that really looks like he could handle it, so that was kind of the driving force behind it. He's really done a nice job. He started that a couple weeks back, and he really doesn't know everything yet, obviously, and there's a lot you learn, but he's off to a really good start, and I think the toughest part about it is now we're taking a good player off our defense, but just kind of felt like that was something we had to address going in before we got to January.

Q. Going back to when Tyler was recruited, could he have -- you could have recruited him as a D-tackle or really a center?

KIRK FERENTZ: We could have got three -- if they were triplets it would have been perfect because we'd have two at defensive tackles and one at center. I

wouldn't mind having one at guard, too, at each spot, so five, quintuple would be okay. But yeah, he's just a really good football player, and the tenacity he shows on the wrestling mat, he showed it in football last year, too. He brought it with him. I mean, that's who he is. He's really serious, and he's got a lot of pride.

He's going to do just fine. We're really happy about that. But yeah, if we had more of them, that would be great.

Q. You've changed that spot on defensive tackle. I know you wanted to get four guys --

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it kind of remains to be seen. Right now if we were starting, Latimore and Reiff would be the two starters and then just let everybody kind of fight it out from there. But we've got a lot of those kinds of questions to get answered here all over our roster certainly.

Q. Regarding the NFL, what would you tell Hooker and Hockenson in particular and maybe Anthony Nelson?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think really the most important thing is them getting accurate information. Agents are selling one thing: Leave now, because that's the only way they're going to make money this year is for guys to leave now, so that's pretty simple. There's a real economic swing on that one.

And I think what's important is a guy really has a good, knowledgeable grasp of what it might look like when the draft does come around. I wouldn't even want to handicap what percentage of underclassmen to pick, but I would be willing to bet that most of them think they're going to go first, second, third round. I would be one to say that. Obviously the statistics don't back that up.

There's some people on the outside that really sell that, because they've got nothing to lose. It's a game for them. But we're talking about young people's lives, and to me there's a real responsibility there, so we try to get good, accurate information, and I think the NFL has stepped up their game from the panel, the committee, based on what I've seen. It's a lot more specific than it used to be, which is helpful, and then we also procure some information from people that have done this for a long time, just so the guys can kind of get a feel where they might go in the draft. And then the other variable is how many more juniors are going to come out, so that could change. So it's kind of a constant thing.

Like this year, there's 8 million defensive linemen that are going to go high this year, so if you're a defensive lineman thinking about coming out, you'd better handicap the field a little bit. So the big thing is getting that information to the prospects and their families, and

then they've got to make the decision. You know, that's the one thing I said about when Noah decided, everybody has got the right to make a decision, and they need to make the decision that's best for them and one they're fully convicted to because it doesn't do any good to be half into anything, so the biggest thing is really take your time, use the time you've got, be methodical, get good accurate information or as accurate as you possibly can get before you make a decision because it's a huge decision, and you don't want to be thinking you're going to be here and ended up over there. It's just not a good deal. Although some guys don't mind. Some guys are just ready to get out of college, and that's fine, too. If they want to get out, it's probably the best thing for them.

Q. What was the conversation like with Nate?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, the NFL sent a packet out that was very informational and specific about the difference in guaranteed money for draft picks, all that kind of thing, round by round, and again, the agents are selling to guys get out so you can get to that second contract faster. You know, the people don't understand how hard it is to make a team, and then secondly, to make a second contract. Yanda is on his third, but he may go to the Hall of Fame, too. He's been to seven Pro Bowls, but for every one of those there's a bunch of guys that get cut. There's James Ferentz who thought he was the 53rd guy on the roster, turns out he's only the 52nd, but he's living in that world of day-to-day he might be gone tomorrow.

You know, selling a dream is one thing, but then looking at the hard, cold facts -- my analogy is you get one chance to be a college football player. That's a pretty good deal. Pretty good deal, get your education, leave debt free and hopefully have a great career, and if you play pro football it's gravy. And I've told some of our guys in the past, you've already won the game. If you're going to be a first rounder now or a year from now, you've won the game, and it's not a bad deal. Those guys typically will get to their second contract, the first-round guys.

Q. With Levi going back to the defensive side, what was kind of the tipping point for him to get back on that side of the ball?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think just watching him. I don't know if natural is the right word but (some guys) are more instinctive or play faster at certain positions. Playing defense was a little different than offense. You've got to think on both sides of the ball, but it just seems like he's a little bit more aggressive and natural in his play, if you will, on the defensive side.

Q. So is Linderbaum definitely a center, or could it be guard, as well?

KIRK FERENTZ: Right now our thought is center, yeah. That's what he's training at right now, and if we end up having a problem, quote-unquote, problem, where he would be as good as Cole, that gives us a chance to put Cole right back. But we know at least we have two centers that we can put in the game and hopefully have success with, and then we've got to figure out who No. 3 is. That's the next challenge.

Q. With him having the smarts, he was a good student, four-sport player, so on, doing double duty in the summer, sometimes getting back at midnight from baseball and making it for 6:00 a.m. workouts here, how much of that impacted you because I know center is more of a cerebral position than just about any other position?

KIRK FERENTZ: To me, centers, quarterbacks, middle linebacker, safeties kind of have to have that makeup, and yeah, what you just referenced to me is really as impressive as anything, him playing baseball and then being here at 6:00 in the morning. Not many guys would do that. Most guys would have said, okay, I'm not playing baseball this year. But just like Josey Jewell, he felt a real commitment to his team, he wasn't going to miss that senior season, and to me that's really commendable and admirable. That's why you want a guy like Josey on your team and a guy like Tyler. Everything we've seen about him has just been all business. He really tries to do things well. He's very, very detail oriented, and I said the only downside of this whole thing is I think we're losing a good player on defense, but we'll have to figure that out as we go.

Q. You had guys committed really early in the process. Are you wary about taking guys that early and what does that say about them, not even wavering?

KIRK FERENTZ: We had those guys in camp, so I think we all felt after seeing them in camp, even though they were very young, we saw a lot of really good things about them. And I say it all the time, when we go recruiting, we judge prospects off of guys that have played in our program that we think have been successful. Those are the traits we're looking for. We don't look at magazines or experts' rankings and all that kind of stuff. We try to see a player and find if there's something similar to this guy that played eight years ago or 10 years ago, that type of thing.

Yeah, so I think it is scary, but with those three guys, they were all really quality guys, and we just really liked what we saw, and we thought they had the right kind of upside because of the way they worked.

Q. In the instant gratification era, how has that kind of shaped what you do about recruiting prospects? Does it change at all based on acceptance results?

KIRK FERENTZ: There's a period of reality when players get here, they look around the room and find out that we've recruited other guys the last five years or four years, too. It's always competitive. But really good players don't worry about that. Most of them are just going to go to work and go from there. Sometimes it's harder on the adults, I think, that geez, what, my kid is not starting, he's not first team right now.

But you know, once I think they get around and see things, they realize that there's a progression to all this, and very few guys run to the top of the hill right off the bat. Most of them have to work their way up, and that's the deal.

Q. What about quarterback? Alex Padilla, what did you like in him? He's enrolling early.

KIRK FERENTZ: First thing is he can take a snap under center. We don't have to teach him that, which that sounds pretty elementary, but not many guys can take snaps anymore. Not many centers can snap to a guy under center. So it's kind of interesting.

He's just a really good player. He played on a really good football team. Outstanding coaching staff there, really impressive. I think he's got a real presence to him, plus his dad was a center. I'm partial to centers; you guys know that. So that was one more point in his favor. But I just think the guy, he's a winner. He's what a quarterback should be. He's pretty smooth with what he does. I think he's pretty nifty. There's a guy in the Big Ten he kind of reminds me of that we played against this year that I think is a really good player. So time will tell, but I think everything that we're hoping for we saw in him, and we're thrilled he's with us.

Q. What about Jack Campbell? It seemed like when you would watch Cedar Falls play, you would see his number all over the field.

KIRK FERENTZ: He's just kind of unbridled enthusiasm. It's just natural. It exudes. When you talk to him, he's that way. I had a chance to watch him practice last Wednesday night, practice basketball. It's the same way. He fouls less, at least he did Wednesday night, than he did on some of the other reports I've gotten. But he's turned into a pretty good basketball player. They alley-ooped him, and it's impressive. He's just a really raw-boned guy. I think he's still going to continue to grow and develop. But the first thing I think about with him is his attitude. It just kind of jumps right out at you, and talk about players that make you feel good, he's one of those guys.

Q. Are 6'7" defensive linemen becoming something that gets you guys' attention?

KIRK FERENTZ: Not intentional, but we've obviously had success with those guys, and every time I get on

an elevator with those guys I'm reminded how tall they are. It's not a deal breaker if you're 6'1". Sometimes that can work for you, too, but I think either way if you've got the right guy, it can be helpful.

Q. You went to Florida and got a couple of guys who have experience there. Yahweh Jeudy, what did you like about him?

KIRK FERENTZ: He was committed to a school, and circumstances changed, so we dug a little deeper there, and we felt like that would be a position we might be interested in. He's a really unbelievably impressive young man. His mom is super impressive, and they were up here this weekend.

It's a pretty good story, and I think he's really appreciative. He's in a really good environment at his high school. They won a state championship. They've got a good community there, and he's really excelled there. And I think he realizes that was a really good thing for him, and I think he's really appreciative of the opportunity to go to college right now, having an opportunity to get an education and hopefully be a really good football player.

I was really impressed with him. I think he's a tremendous young man. He's got size 15 and a half shoes. It's kind of like Ronnie Harmon sized shoes for a running back. I don't know if I've ever seen a linebacker his height with those kind of shoes, but he plays good football, too. He really stands out as an individual.

Q. How about defensive back, you got one today from Detroit. There's a lot of comparisons to the guy on the wall over there, and also Sebastian Castro committed to you a long time ago.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, thoughts on both those guys. So McKinney, Phil always has one a year that he thinks he's slick and all that. He kept dropping his name, so I figured, okay, that's his guy this year, and it was. So just you've got to let it run its course, and then finally the player surfaces. But we think he's a really good player, like his ball skills, his return ability, all those kinds of things. He's a neat young man, too. He was here this weekend. Really happy about him.

And then Castro, to me, I'm not saying he's Hooker, but it's kind of similar in that Hooker seemed to do everything in high school, scored a million touchdowns, played good defense, was a quarterback, all that, and Sebastian's team really played well this year. They got knocked out whatever round it was in the playoffs, but really had a great season, and he was kind of hub of it all. You know, I think just those things to me are -- production means a lot, and I think he's a good player, too, but just to have that production is really impressive.