

University of Iowa Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Kirk Ferentz

Tyler Barnes

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach, if you want to give some opening remarks, and then we'll throw it out for a handful of questions.

KIRK FERENTZ: Thanks, appreciate that. Appreciate everybody joining us today to talk a little bit about this recruiting class.

Obviously very excited. Signing day is always a special day. It's a little anti-climatic in this day and age with the way things have changed in recruiting. I'll address that in a second, but I just want to back track one second and go back to Monday's comments.

I'm always interested. I do look at -- there's a site, Football Scoop. I'm always interested how things get filtered as you go to I guess that's a national publication. For the record, I said I made three phone calls. I never said I talked to three candidates. Three phone calls regarding this whole process.

Then the other thing, just for clarification, it sounds like there's some speculation. I was not referencing anybody that has been a head coach in the Big Ten. I was actually referencing a coordinator that's come into our conference sometime in the last decade.

My point was this: At least there was reported to be a quote on Einstein's office. He had an office at Princeton that said, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." That was kind of my point.

The person I'm thinking about specifically had a lot of passing yards on his résumé, pretty well-known nationally, but you dig a little deeper and look at what the win total was where he has been, and I think that is an important statistic. The most important one there is.

That's the reference. I was trying to make. It was not in reference to anybody that's been a sitting head coach in

the Big Ten. Just wanted to clarify that.

Let's get on to business. Just wanted to talk briefly about the recruits. Turn it over to Tyler who knows all the details on each and every one of the guys that we have signed. Right now we have 20 that are signed. One will sign this afternoon when his mom is able to free up from work and get that done.

I am pleased about the class. As I suggested, the process has changed immensely in the last several years. Most notably, when they started the official visits in the springtime through June.

That's really caused a shift. At least for us historically the majority of our class has been pretty well settled by July I would say. Tyler can give the exact details, but typically there's not a lot of drama. The guys that do decide on us, typically stay with us, and we stay with them. Hopefully it's a good mutual fit.

As much as the process has changed, I think what we consider to be important really hasn't changed. Obviously every prospect we're looking for a degree of athleticism at their position. We may not be as picky on heights or body weights as some places, but we're looking for a certain level of athleticism.

Obviously the competitive nature of that player is really important to us, how aggressive do they play, how much do they look like they enjoy it, and really enjoy being out there. How much do they enjoy competing? Those things are important to us.

I've never been around a good player that didn't have a high level of pride, and with that a high level of just a really strong work ethic because it's hard to do anything and be good at anything. It's difficult to do if you don't have those traits.

I think those are things that we also try to uncover, look for, that type of deal.

Then the other thing that's really tough and important for a prospect, any player, certainly the guys in our program and most of the guys that honored, but a couple of weeks ago the guys that were with you on Monday are examples of this.

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You have to have a level of patience, too, and realize if you have a growth mindset, you're going to keep getting better. Your best football is always ahead of you, and sometimes you may be behind another player that's pretty good, too. You just keep working at it. Jay Higgins is a great example. Played behind Jack Campbell last year. When he did have a chance to play, he played extraordinarily well.

I think we were all confident he would play with well this year. None of us probably could have expected the kind of numbers that he's put out, so he certainly exceeded everybody's expectations there, but it's really not a surprise because if you are around Jay day-to-day, you just understand how he operates.

The good things that have come his way are things that he has earned on his own. Hopefully we give him good structure, but the players are the ones that put the work into it.

Those are the things we're trying to look for. We still prefer to build our team and things have changed in the world also this way. Prefer to build on our team through our high school recruiting. Certainly we're going to try to bolster our roster through the transfer portal. I think it only makes sense.

It was really good to us last year and years forward hopefully it will be as well. We may be active a little bit in the new year in that department, but as most of you know, we really haven't had a lot of roster turnover. It's not like we have a lot of room right now, but we'll keep an eye out and be mindful there and do whatever we can moving forward.

So just in rough terms, I know Tyler will go through this, but basically one-third of our signees are from our state. Another one-third from the surrounding states, and then two guys, one from Ohio and one from Indiana. A couple of states over. Then in the outlying areas you have Texas, Arizona, Florida represented, and even Australia. LeVar made the trip over there last week, and we feel really good about that as well.

That hasn't changed a great deal. Every guy is a captain. Every guy is a multi-sport athlete. Some guys more than multi. A couple of guys are three- and two- or four- sport athletes.

Those things remain important to us as well. Just overall feel really good about the class. Appreciate everybody's hard work. Everybody on campus. Not just in the department, but faculty members, everybody that helps make the cause well.

Our fans add a lot to it. Players come to games here. They're extremely impressed being in Kinnick and seeing the fan support that we receive. So that's important for us. It's really just a team effort, quite frankly, so we're really appreciative of that. Most appreciative of the recruits and their families just demonstrating their confidence in us and our program.

So excited to get them here, whenever that time may be. In the meantime we'll just keep pushing forward here. I'll throw it out for questions and see what we can do.

Q. We didn't get all the questions in probably the other day we wanted to, so how is the health of the offensive line look like? Depth chart, which I know you love to talk about. Logan Jones is not there. Is he out for the game? Gennings Dunker, other guys like that?

KIRK FERENTZ: I think I did that depth chart eight weeks ago. Probably two or three. We're back practicing right now, and knock on wood right now everybody is healthy. Everybody is good to go.

Logan is doing well. Dunk is doing good. Reason so far so good.

Q. I know neither of us are math majors, but looking at your scholarship numbers it's pretty tight, and you've got guys that could potentially come back for the COVID year. How are you guys kind of managing and massaging this whole situation right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably like everybody else in the country. That's always an issue. I think we have a fairly healthy projection on what's going to happen both ways, so we feel pretty comfortable about where we're at.

Yeah, that's an issue for everybody. It's much talked about in Division I right now. Roster management has gotten very tricky with the portal, transfers, transfers in, transfers out, all those kinds of things.

Then typically every year you have some attrition from January to August. I can't remember a year where that wasn't true. We probably have a medical or two -- medical case or two that are being reviewed right now on top of that.

It's kind of like tickets during the week. I always tell Rita, it will work out. Don't worry about it. It usually does, but we're still pretty cautious about how we operate that way.

Q. One guy that I know has gotten a lot of positive feedback on social media and stuff like that based on

his film is Gavin Hoffman. I know you were there for his in-home visit. Can you just tell me, what exactly stuck out to you during his recruitment about him and what -- or why you wanted to make him a Hawkeye, I guess?

KIRK FERENTZ: First and foremost is probably his attitude. He is just a very eager, anxious guy. He is a good football player, good athlete, football, basketball.

His attitude. He loves the game. He's got a personality, and not that that's everything certainly because every player is different. Josey Jewell would just look at you and then look through you ^ Check. There weren't a lot of smiles with Josey, that's for sure. Not one size fits all, but I think Gavin has a real enthusiasm for the game. He has a good skill set. We think great growth potential.

He has a lot of the characteristics of guys that have come here pretty much unheralded. I'm not saying he is unheralded. That's not the case, but the guys that have really grown and developed in our system. We think he checks a lot of those boxes. He's a little bit more heavily recruited than some of the guys maybe that I'm referencing that way, but we just liked everything about him.

Q. Two questions: First one with the offensive guys. What was kind of your message these last few months to them with not having an OC yet in place? Then totally unrelated, what kind of stood out to you about these three linebackers, three in-state guys that didn't seem to have the highest ratings but looked pretty talented?

KIRK FERENTZ: The football question, I'll handle that first. Brian has been here throughout this entire period. Shows up every day totally committed to the program. He's a former player. He's got a lot of years associated with the program.

So there's no question I don't ask him daily what's his motivation, but I don't want to speak for other people, but I'm pretty sure he's doing it because he is part of this program and cares deeply about the people involved and particularly our players.

It's a nonissue. We're just proceeding on a daily basis. The encouragement we give him right now is the same as it was in August. Let's just focus on getting better every day, getting a little healthier where that's possible, and seeing a lot of improvement from a lot of players, and that's encouraging. That's one of the great things about December.

Then the three linebackers, it feels like we've been

recruiting them for four years. Basically I don't think anybody is further than 60 miles from here. Can't tell you how many times they've been on campus for practices, spring practice. This past weekend they were all here. I felt like a year ago they could have just slid right into our room and fit in beautifully with the guys that we have.

I just like their attitudes. They all have different skill sets, and they all have different permits. I think they're all committed to being good football players.

I think them being here on the field a couple of years ago and watching guys like Campbell, watching guys like Benson work, now they get to see Higgins and Nick Jackson. I just think they felt like the mesh was perfect. We certainly felt that way.

Just very high on all three of them. Liked their attitude. Like their seriousness. I think they're all tough, competitive guys.

Then the irony is, and good luck this happening again, but like I said, you have three guys in a 60-mile radius. That certainly helps. I wish we had about 50 prospects within a 60-mile radius. That would be really good.

Q. You mentioned that this is a changing recruiting landscape, but you look at this class and with the exception of the punter that you got a couple of days ago, it was essentially complete by the middle of summer. Is that something you expected to have happen once you've started to get the recruits and then once they were pretty much on board? Did you think it was going to be as drama-free getting to here as it has been?

KIRK FERENTZ: Good question. That's kind of funny because my exposure to the outside world when I come to work or leave. It's either the college station or the NFL station.

This morning I had the college station on. I heard about all the drama and stuff going on and guys waffling. I guess we just don't really live in that world. We haven't had much of that for quite some time.

Typically, it doesn't make it right or wrong, but it seems like the way we recruit, we end up uncovering guys that we feel good about and then typically if they commit and we ask them don't commit if you really don't mean it. And again, there's exceptions to every rule, but for the most part when guys do commit and the parents are involved and everybody is on board, you don't have to ride that roller coaster. We really haven't done much of that.

I'm not saying that's foreshadowing of a bad college career, but I don't mind telling you, it would be a concern for me. Not a deal breaker, but a concern if any of our coaches come in and start talking about a guy that's been in three high schools in three years. Those kinds of things are just things you really need to get answers for I think because the best way to predict the future still is to understand the past a little bit.

Sometimes there are very valid reasons why things happen. I can think of an example a couple of years back, but if there's not a good reason and you are seeing some things that maybe alert you, chances are they're not going to work well here because our goal is to get our guys here. Our No. 1 program goal is for our guys to graduate. Had a bunch of guys do it last Saturday. A bunch of guys did it last May. We'll have a bunch more here in the May term.

The guys that end up in the program, they typically graduate, and that's our No. 1 program goal. I'm not the smartest guy in the world, but I know this. If you don't stay at Iowa, you can't graduate from Iowa. So it is important to us that we try to be very transparent, make sure they have a good picture of what it's going to be like when they get here, so there are no surprises. Then hopefully they get the work ethic that it takes to stay in the program and become a really good football player.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Cody Fox, and also kind of alongside those three other linebackers, they've all committed a year and a half ago. How did you do it, and then also with Cody Fox, are you surprised? Three years it seems like he's been committed to you and not one waiver.

KIRK FERENTZ: That's scary when you offer guys that young, and they commit to you, it's like, oh, boy, hope we're right. Everything that we've learned about Cody and seen him do since that time is what we had hoped we were going to see.

The rest of that story too is we've known his family for quite some time. His older brother was here. Just graduated. A year ago graduated. Did a great job in our program.

So we knew the family. We think we knew what we were getting there. Cody has been to camp a couple of times and impressed the heck out of us. Really a tough guy, competitive guy. We have also had some luck in that high school. It has been really good to us too historically.

We were, again, confident that we had a pretty good idea what we were getting. A little bit like Aaron Graves prior to that, who committed at a really young age. Aaron is such an exceptional young guy.

Same for the linebackers. I don't want to speak for any of them. I don't think they ever gave it a thought about a different school or any of that kind of stuff. It was pretty good mesh right from the start.

Again, we don't encourage guys to commit unless they really mean it and they're sure, and the parents have to be sure, too. All four of those young guys have been steady, as have their families. I appreciate that.

That's how you try to build a program. You have to have some really good cornerstones and build a foundation with guys, and it was that way in the '80s too. You build a foundation I think with in-state players that really understand the program. They have a great appreciation for the history of the program, and then they help educate guys that maybe aren't quite as familiar as they come in. It's worked out pretty well for us over time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time.

KIRK FERENTZ: We'll let Tyler take it from here. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Floor is yours, Tyler.

TYLER BARNES: I don't want to echo too much of what coach said before I open it up for questions, but just like every year it's always two and a half, three years in the making with our coaching staff on the road digging up these guys, recruiting these guys, developing relationships.

Going back to the cornerstone of the core four, as I saw Scott tweet about earlier, with Cody Fox it's two and a half years ago that he committed to us, which seems kind of crazy when you think about. Given the history, it's nothing too wild.

Shortly after Cam Buffington joined the crew, and about six months post we had Preston and Derek join the crew, and it's been rolling from there all the way through.

I know everybody thinks that Rhys Dakin committed just a few days ago, but we've known about Rhys now for about four months. We'll let you guys think it was a few days ago.

Just a couple of things I want to hit. Obviously we signed 20 guys today. We'll sign our 21st here probably in a couple of hours. Then we've also had added 10 walk-ons onto our roster, and at that point we're pretty much done.

As Coach said, we'll kind of keep an eye open in the portal here in the coming months. We're also waiting on

decisions from six different players on our current roster.

It's always fluid. I think history would tell you in the past from January through August we always lose a handful of guys. The roster management piece has certainly become a little bit different in this day and age, especially with the COVID guys, which we've got one more year of COVID guys next year.

As much as I love all these guys and want them back, I can't wait for the COVID stuff to go away. It makes my job a little bit easier. It's fluid anyway. It's extremely fluid when you throw in that little factor.

Just talking about our class, one thing I think is really unique. I think it was two years ago in June we had a horrendous June official visit month. I think it was well-documented by some people on here, and rightfully so.

One thing that I think is pretty impressive, we brought in 22 official visitors this June, and 21 committed to us. We've really been done since the end of June. A few guys put out their commitments a little later in July, but basically the Monday following our big weekend we had secured commitments from 20 of those guys from that big weekend, which I think is pretty impressive. More impressive than that is none of these guys have wavered the entire time since they've committed to us.

We had some guys that were picking up offers, and I'm always the first to tell guys, hey, if schools are offering you, great, celebrate, put it out on Twitter. But I want to be very honest with them, what's your conversation like? Is there something we need to worry about? At no point this entire fall did we have any worries or concerns with any of our guys.

I think that shows a little bit of just who we're trying to recruit, the guys we're going after, the families we're trying to be associated with just for guys to be locked in for that long because I think it's pretty well-documented when we offer guys and we get in on some guys a little bit earlier than other schools, it's kind of a target for schools to come after some of those guys. They kind of let us do the evaluation, and they start recruiting the guys.

I think that's something we're celebrating for sure. I'm proud of these guys and this class. It's something you just don't see a whole lot of. This is probably realistically the most uneventful signing day I've had in my 15 years in college football. I slept extremely well last night. I have the last few weeks.

There's nobody I've been worried about or concerned

about. No hat games, any of that. Like Coach said, there's nothing wrong with that. We just prefer not to deal with that if we don't have to.

Really at the end of the day our goal is still always going to be the same. We're going to try to build the roster through the high school ranks. We're going to try to develop kids. If we have some pressing or glaring needs, we're certainly going to look in the portal for those and try and address those.

At the end of the day call us old-school, call us different, whatever you want to call us. It's something we believe in. It's worked pretty well here. We're going to continue to do it that way and just keep working through those high school ranks.

So with that, I'll open it up to any questions anybody may have about specific guys or anything from there.

Q. I think everybody wants to know about is the quarterback in the 2024 class, James Resar. I know he was another early commit. Not quite the core four, but a guy that committed pretty early. What did you like about him? What stood out about his game?

TYLER BARNES: The fabulous fifth if we're going to keep naming guys in this class. James lives in Jacksonville, but his parents are both from Wisconsin. He still has a bunch of family in Wisconsin. While they are Floridians, they're Midwesterners at heart.

James is a guy that he had been to some other schools in the Big Ten and kind of reached out to us really prior to us recruiting him. It was that Midwest connection.

Once him and his dad came on campus for the first time and just getting around James and finding out a little bit more about him, obviously a phenomenal track athlete. 10.67 last year in the 100.

We fully expect him to go sub 10.5 this spring. When you do that at 6'3.5" 205 pounds, that's impressive.

James has a role as a passer, but you can't deny the athletic ability that he has, and that's something that intrigued us. Something maybe a little bit different than we have in the room currently and in the past few years. James is another kid -- I think it was the third time he was up here is when he committed to us. They were fully locked in.

He had plenty of other suitors, and he had picked up some offers, but never wavered from day one committing to us. They've been up here I think all total now five times in the

recruiting process, which that's not an easy trip from Jacksonville.

A kid that you really like. Very focused. Really mature kid, but you see athletics traits alone in some of the stuff he does, especially running, is what makes us excited about him.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the defensive line. Four guys and in particular Anderson and Kennedy, who are sons of NFL players, and just doing the projections with both those guys because they're not fully formed yet, just what you guys saw recruiting those guys?

TYLER BARNES: Really all four guys are completely different stories. I'll start off with just Drew Campbell. Obviously, we knew a lot about Drew.

I remember when Drew was in seventh grade I think when Jack did his first camp here. There's a lot of mannerisms that are exactly the same about Drew and Jack, but at the same time they're completely different people.

Personality-wise they couldn't be more polar opposite. Jack is quiet and stoic. Drew has a little bit personality to him.

Drew has camped here a bunch. His dad obviously was a college football player. We know about Jack. For us it was a no-brainer. We wanted to take Drew as a football player.

The kid is tough. He is relentless. He is a hard charger. That was a pretty easy one for us. He tried to make it kind of tough for us in the recruiting process. Probably didn't commit as early as we thought he would or would have liked him to, but eventually he did it on his own terms, and we're excited about that.

Before I get to Joseph and Devan, Chima, he's from Dallas. That was a LeVar Woods find. Really raw. Humongous human being. He is going to be massive once he gets here and gets in our weight room and really works with Coach Braithwaite and his staff.

Had a big year for us this year, but that was one that LeVar dug up and got K.B. down there in the spring to see him in the spring, and both of those guys really liked him.

Great kid. Really good family. Extremely smart kid. Very respectful. You like when you are around him, but when you turn on the football film and when you see the kid -- when he shook my hands, I'm pretty sure he was touching my elbow. He is just a massive human being, and I think he is just going to grow and get bigger.

LeVar has been a little more out in Phoenix the last couple of years recruiting, and Jimmy Kennedy, his dad, who played for Penn State, first round draft pick. Had a good career in the NFL and great career in college. LeVar had known Jimmy for a while, so that was one that popped up.

Devan is a basketball player. It's his second year as a football player. Still raw, but what he did on his first year on the football field -- and we worry sometimes when you're a basketball player and you are playing football. Are you going to look like a football player or are you going to play like a basketball player? Not saying basketball players are soft, but they're very different sports. Devan didn't look anything like that.

When K.B. had a chance to go down there and see him, and he came up here in camp this June too. He came up and earned his offer. We were down to him and another guy that we felt good about, and we were going to offer one of them, and Devan was the guy, and he hopped on it pretty quick.

His dad is great. He's been through this process and played at a high level. He knows how to help prepare Devan, and it's been cool to see.

Devan, talk about another impressive kid. I feel like I'm talking to a 40-year-old when I'm talking to Devan. He does not seem like he's 18 at all. He's a guy that's going to fit in really well into that D-line room.

Then Joseph, he is a really soft-spoken kid. Dad obviously played in the NFL. Two brothers have played Division I football. Talk about a freak athlete.

What caught my attention is his track stuff. His long jump and his triple jump numbers were unbelievable for a kid that's 6'5" and 210 pounds. They don't make sense.

Then as I started to dig further and watching the film, I'm texting Abdul Hodge, who recruited Joseph and K.B., and I said, hey, guys, you need to check this kid out. This kid is a little bit different.

Still underdeveloped, and he is going to compete in track this winter and spring and probably do really well. Once he gets here and just has a chance to put on the weight -- his dad is a big human being, a very scary-looking guy. Wouldn't want to many mess with Benny, but he is also soft-spoken a little bit like Joseph. It's kind of funny seeing that.

Both of his brothers are big, stout guys. We have no doubt once Joseph gets here and gets in the weight room, he's going to put on weight. I'm pretty sure he is going to keep

that athletic ability he has. Some of the stuff he can do at that size, it's really intriguing and fun to see.

Q. I was curious with obviously an offensive coordinator change coming, what the line of communication has been like with the guys on the offensive side of the ball, and then also just the fact that you are kind of speaking to their character that they all remain committed even though there is some uncertainty.

TYLER BARNES: Yeah. As soon as that news came out, I got with Coach Ferentz and said, we need to touch base with every offensive commit and explain the situation.

The biggest thing is we were honest with them. We don't know who it's going to be. Brian is going to finish the year, and we're going to focus on the season. That's our main goal is the players in the building and trying to win more football games.

But at the end of the day you have to trust and have faith in Coach Ferentz and this program and this culture that we're going to replace it with somebody that fits who we are and the values of Coach Ferentz and what he is looking for.

Honestly I don't think any of the conversations were tough conversations. We were just being open and honest before anything became public with the commits. We wanted to let them know.

Obviously started with James, being at that quarterback position. Telling him, hey, stick with us, we're going to have a plan in place. Told him fully, nothing is going to happen until postseason.

Really the whole way through these guys understood they're committing to the University of Iowa and committing to Coach Ferentz, too. That's a big part of who they're committing to and just the tradition we have here and the players in the building. A lot of these guys have been here multiple times and have been around the players, so we lean on those guys as well.

You try and get in front of it and try to be honest. Don't sugarcoat anything and certainly don't lie though them about anything. You hope that they stick with you, and thankfully all those guys did.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the scholarship kind of squeeze that you have right now with that 85 number. Some places go really far above that. Are you comfortable going above 85? How far comfortable are you going above? What's kind of your philosophy on that?

TYLER BARNES: We keep all these numbers, and I have a whole spreadsheet based on the attrition we've had from fall all the way through the next fall, and history would tell you we typically lose four to five guys in the spring, so we're probably going to operate with those numbers.

Again, just the COVID guys, that's been a little bit of a struggle in terms of maintaining the numbers that we want to maintain. I think it's much, much easier when we don't have to worry about that.

We'll take a look at everything. We'll take a look at everything post-bowl game. There's always two waves in the portal this time of year. There's the early wave and then there's a wave after the bowl game.

We don't want to lose anybody off our roster currently, but I would be shocked if there's not one or two that may pop in the portal post-bowl game. It's the world we live in. That's kind of how things work. It is what it is.

But I'm in constant communication with Coach Ferentz and our coordinators, especially this time of year almost every single day, especially when we're waiting for decisions from those six guys on our roster currently. I may panic a little bit more than Coach Ferentz, but when he says it's going to work out, I have to trust him. He's got way more experience in this sport than I do.

It is something you're looking at. There's no hard answer or hard number. It's hard to say. We're going to continue to monitor things, and it will be fluid, and we'll kind of see where the chips fall.

Q. I wanted to ask you about that backfield duo of Xavier Williams and Brevin Doll. Just sort of what stuck out about both of them, and how did that process sort of shake out with them?

TYLER BARNES: With Brevin, we've known a lot about Brevin for a long time. He's been on campus quite a bit. His mom went to school here. Hawkeye family. Obviously, the track numbers. He didn't get to compete in track last year because of an injury, but the year before. You definitely take though notice of those track numbers.

When he was up here the very first time when we looked at Brevin, we were worried about his size. Was he going to be big enough? His dad is a big guy. Dad is really tall.

The more he got up here, the more we started seeing him fill out a little bit, and we felt a little bit better about where his body was going.

It got to the point and we've kind of done this a little bit more in the last few years is in-state, Iowa is our priority. If there are guys in-state that have those traits we're looking for and we're familiar with the guys and we're comfortable with them and the more they're up here, the better we like them and their families, we're not going to waste any time anymore. We're going to go on those guys. Brevin is a good example of that.

It just so happened to work out that Brevin was our second running back commit. Xavier ended up committing a day before him. We had three offers out. I think that was pretty well-documented at the running back spot.

With Xavier, he came on campus either in the spring. None of us had seen him except for Coach Bell. He had seen him one time in his school, but when he came on campus, I think LeShun Daniels. He is built like LeShun. His lowers, he looks like an NFL running back in his lowers. He is a thick kid. He's built well up top too, but you can tell he is going to fill out up top, and he has some room to grow.

Our running game, the way we run the football inside-outside zone, he fits who we are. He may not be a sub-11, 100-meter guy like Brevin is, but when you are running third and fourth quarter with a guy that's 235 pounds, that wears on linebackers and safeties. That's what we're hoping that Xavier can be.

Extremely impressive family and really extremely impressive kid. He had called to commit, and so we let the two other guys know that night that, hey, we are taking two running backs. We had one just commit to us. There's one spot left, and Brevin hopped on it pretty quickly.

Q. I know you can't talk about '25 specifically, but you did get a commit in that class at quarterback at least publicly. He can move. James Resar seems like he can move pretty well. Marco Lainez, same thing. Is there anything to that? Is that just happenstance? Are you going more in that direction like a dual-threat type thing? Can you kind of explain your philosophy at quarterback right now?

TYLER BARNES: It's not something we sit down and say we're going to go out and find a dual-threat quarterback. Honestly there is a difference between dual-threat and a guy that's athletic enough and has good enough feet to extend the plays and provide some stuff in the run game if you need to. It's not something we sit down and say we have to find a dual-threat quarterback.

There were a few guys on our on board that we were getting ready to offer in the '25 class that were different

than that athlete you're talking about. For us the first thing with quarterback, first and foremost, as much as you can get around them and get them in the room and see how they learn and see how they retain things.

Quarterback, it's the hardest position to play on the field. Sorry if I offend anybody on here that played a different position, but it's true. There's a lot of things going on there.

You're going through a lot of things every single play, pre-snap, post-snap. The biggest thing is just the mental side of things. That's absolutely 100% the biggest thing.

Then anything from there, there are certain traits and characteristics we look for. Ideally you would like a kid who can extend the play a little bit if the pocket breaks down and can maybe provide some stuff on his feet, but that's not at all the first thing we're looking for. It kind of happened to work out like that.

I think you're starting to see more and more kids these days that are just better athletes, honestly. Even at the quarterback position. We're not going to recruit only dual-threat gets from here on out, but if we can find a guy that is smart and can sling it and move around a little bit, obviously that's a net positive for everybody.

Q. Jaylen Watson, a guy that had some offers at wide receiver. I think all of his offers were at wide receiver other than at Iowa. Did you like the fact that he also played wide receiver? How did that work out just seeing the wide receiver tape, flipping him to DB? Obviously there's the Fred Russell connection too. How did that work out with Jaylen?

TYLER BARNES: I think Phil would tell you if all his DBs played receiver, that would be good. For our guys this year was a little bit different obviously, but when they get their hands on the ball, we want them to catch it. Hands are extremely important in the secondary and what we prefer with those guys.

We had a connection with Jaylen prior to him moving to Toledo. He was at Belleville, which we've had some guys from Belleville. The coaches were talking about him. I think they actually saw him as a better corner than a receiver, and he ended up transferring down to Central Catholic in Toledo and had a huge year. He was kind of unguardable. I think he was actually a problem for every team they faced. He came here in June, and he was super smooth.

We told him, we're going to recruit you. We had another receiver similar body type, similar skill set that we felt was going to commit to us pretty shortly thereafter, and he

ended up doing that.

We told Jaylen, we see you as a DB. We think you have a corner skill set. We want to see what you can do in a camp setting. He was awesome. For a kid that didn't play a whole lot of DB, just what he was able to do in that skill set, extremely smooth and fluid. Awesome attitude. Great demeanor. The ball skills, obviously that's a plus and something we look for.

We told him, you know, at no point once you committed, we're not going to flip you over. Things can change when guys get on campus. Who knows what will happen? I think Phil is pretty excited about him. I know I'm excited about him.

He is a good player. Just how he plays, when you watch him, he is a dynamic kid with a ball in his hands that works in the return game awesome, but just his fluidity, his length is something that corners don't grow on trees that move like that. So if we can find guys like that, and we'll take them all day long.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Reece Vander Zee. I know he played a lot of positions out in Northwest Iowa. What did you think of him as a wide receiver? Is he going to be that ideal X that you are looking for?

TYLER BARNES: Reece, one, is from a long line of Hawkeye fans and graduates in his family. Four-sport athlete. You know us. We love three- and four-sport athletes. Most of our Iowa guys are all in that three- or four-sport athlete category.

He's great on the basketball court. He's a good pitcher in baseball. He's a phenomenal track athlete. This year he played a lot of quarterback for his team out of necessity, but he's a big kid.

Again, he needs the weight room, but when he gets here, I think he's going to fill out, and he's going to be a physical presence on the outside. You can't teach length. You can't teach the explosiveness he has. You see that on the basketball film. He runs well. Obviously good track athlete. If we could have four or five of those in-state every year, that would be awesome.

Reece is probably a little bit of an anomaly in state just given his size, stature, and his overall athletic profile, but we're excited about Reece.

He's a really good kid. We had to fend off the other school in-state. I know they were extremely high on him. It probably helped that he comes from a Hawkeye family, but he comes from a really good family. He's the oldest of six

in his family. Their family is awesome when they're around here with all of their little siblings.

Ideally, yeah, if we could find an X guy that's 6'5", 200 pounds and is probably going to get bigger and is a phenomenal four-sport athlete, sign us up any day for that.

Q. As far as the transfer portal this offseason, I know there's some things that still have to get figured out with guys staying and going to the NFL, but are there any priorities that you feel like are needs that you could potentially look in the transfer portal to get?

TYLER BARNES: I mean, the priorities are the six guys we're recruiting on our own roster right now, and I'll be fully transparent. This was last December it was a little wild with the portal and the needs we had and the guys we were trying to go after because it's pretty rapid.

I have done nothing this December but recruit the six guys on our roster to come back. They're probably tired of hearing from me. It's probably why they block my phone number at this point.

Those are the priorities. It's hard to have a true priorities until we know what some of these guys are going to do because if a couple of them decide to go move on and go to the NFL, then we may have to fill a hole or two at their spots, but in terms of outside of our current roster and the guys coming back, there's nothing specific we've talked about just yet.

We'll see how this shakes out numbers-wise. He know that's a long-winded, bad answer for you. It's so fluid with the guys we're waiting to hear from to come back that we'll see kind of what happens.

A lot of it's dependent upon them. We could have sat down and told them we need a decision by X date so we can go to the portal, but we want all these kids back. They're fourth, fifth, sixth year guys on our team. It's well worth investing the time to recruit these guys back before we even think about going to the portal.

Q. With your linebackers, specifically just Preston and Derek, they're two guys that play at small schools. They play both sides of the ball. Had some success on the offensive side much the ball, but it's never uncommon for Iowa to take some guys on the offensive side much the ball, put them over on the defensive side. What is it that you look for in guys specifically turning them into linebackers that makes you think that Preston and Derek are going to be pretty good fits?

TYLER BARNES: It's funny. I wouldn't leave out Cam Buffington because he does the same thing in eight-man. Plays both ways.

I actually had to talk to the Monday morning quarterback club I think after a bye week. I was getting hammered by a few older gentlemen there that Preston Reis, he's now the all-time yardage leader in Iowa football history offensively and why he couldn't play quarterback or receiver or running back. I had to tell them to trust our evaluations, this is kind of how we evaluate linebackers.

That goes back to Seth, and I'm a strong believer in Seth that we want all of our linebackers better play multiple sports. Ideally three. We want to see you do different things.

We love seeing linebackers that are running backs in high school. There's something to be said for just your vision and the ability and the agility that those guys have.

Cam was a quarterback, but he was a running back essentially. Derek had to play some quarterback this year. Phenomenal receiver. Preston does anything the team needs to happen for them at Monticello. All three guys are overall profiles. They hit us perfectly.

We knew about Cam a little bit before we did about Derek and Preston. Cam was a phenomenal basketball player. I think he was dunking in seventh grade. For an eight-man football you just don't see the freakiness that he has.

In this camp this past summer Cam is 6'3", 225 pounds and ran 4.48 and 4.49. To us that is freakish. If he went and did that at a Rivals Camp or Under Armour camp, he would be a four and a half star, and guys would be frothing at the mouth over him. Instead he lives in Winfield, Iowa, and he doesn't go to those camps. He goes to AAU basketball tournaments, and he comes to Iowa and that's probably the extent of what he does when he is not hunting.

I think that's a gem that a lot of people aren't talking about that I think you'll probably hear his name a lot in the future here.

Derek is a long-rangy kid who, again, has freakish numbers. High jump, shot put. Those are two things for a 210-pound kid that you don't -- that's not a combination you see very often or almost ever, which is intriguing to us.

Preston is probably -- him and Cam are both pretty quiet. I think Cam is probably the quieter of the three. Preston does everything. Another four-sport athlete in our class. He is good at everything he does.

All three kids are tough as shit. They've all camped here I think 10 to 12 times combined since they've been committed to us, which you have to be crazy to come up here. You are already committed. We are not going to drop you. What are you coming up here for? To get yelled at by Coach Wallace for three and a half hours. They love it and thrive on it.

All three of those guys, they get along well. Preston just spent the whole weekend in Winfield this past weekend with Cam hunting. We were giving him crap because apparently he got a smaller deer than Cam did and almost a baby deer, so we'll work on his hunting skills.

Just the whole character makeup of all three of those guys. Awesome families. Great people. Blue-collar people that when he this need to roll up their sleeves and go to work, that's what they're going to do. I think that embodies our linebacker room. You can look through history, and I think that's pretty much the same.

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