

# Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Iowa Hawkeyes

### Coach Kirk Ferentz

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Up next on the stage is the dean of college football coaches. Not only in the Big Ten, but in the country as well. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz enters his 25th season in Iowa City. Just don't hear that very much anymore. There aren't many coaches like that. He welcomes nine All-Conference returnees to a team that concluded the season with a big victory in the TransPerfect Music City Bowl.

For me, kind of a special connection, he's an old offensive line coach just like my dad, and they've been friends for a long time. Please welcome to the stage, Kirk Ferentz.

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, I just want to thank Todd for the introduction. I've had a chance to get to know Todd over the years. Admired him as a player years ago and just does a first-class job, a true professional. I'm thrilled he's going to be working at the Big Ten. That's outstanding news for us.

It's a real honor to be here, glad to be back here. Certainly appreciate all of your interest in college football, and most importantly, the Big Ten. Like everybody, I'm sure, that's going to stand before you today and tomorrow, just really excited to begin the season, most importantly again camp, and that will spill into the season. Excited about our football team on top of this.

I've done this for a few years now, as Todd alluded to, but it seems like every year at this time, there's always an eagerness and anticipation, and that really doesn't ever change just to get started.

We'll begin practice next week. Certainly we'll learn a lot more about our football team at that time, going back to January, our first team meeting, mid-January when the guys got back. Really it boils down to the same way each and every year. It's a new start. It's a new team regardless of how many guys you have back or not, and it's all about building a team.

Certainly whether it's winter program, spring ball, the summer months -- all those segments, all those phases

have real value and importance, and I'm really happy that our guys have put a lot of quality work in. Happy with their focus, their energy, and I think we've given ourselves a chance to we've got a good foundation going.

Hopefully we can do a good job in camp and continue to build our football team. That's what camp is all about, individual improvement, but also getting the team game ready, something we don't focus on a lot until this time of year. And the other obvious thing about preseason, I think it's true with every football team, you're always eager to see what good stories are going to emerge, what's going to develop as you go along.

We'll get started next week. We've got four weeks to learn a great deal about our football team, and looking forward to that.

About our team, every year is unique. This year I think has certainly been unique for us and probably everybody else in college football. We had a large number of newcomers, if you will, in January, nine transfers. That's a first for us certainly. And four more joined us in June. Needless to say, that's reflective of the way college football's gone on, the way it's changing right now. We're learning as we go. Excited about the guys that have joined us.

All that does change, what doesn't change is our goals remain the same, but it's about having our players maximize their abilities and maximize their opportunities. So that hasn't changed an awful lot.

A couple words about our team. Offensively, we're a very veteran at the running back position, tight end position. I think we have two good veteran receivers, very different, but veteran guys that return. Nico Ragaini is practically a senior citizen. I think this is his seventh year with us, eighth year, good receiver. Then we've got Diante Vines, who's probably our most established guy outside of Nico, who's been with us but hasn't been on the field a lot due to injury. Just excited to see him perform healthy this past spring and eager to see him on the field.

Probably the two biggest differences, certainly we've got a new quarterback coming in in Cade McNamara, probably



the most significant change on our team will be the maturity of our offensive line. Looking forward to watching those guys compete.

Defensively in a nutshell, we're fairly veteran up front with our defense with our line, fairly veteran on the back end. Our area of interest mostly is at the linebacker position graduating a couple really good football players and good people there.

Special teams, it's one of those rare years can we have our punter, our kicker, deep snapper, and punt returner back, kick returner back. It's a little bit rare there. Despite all that, really what counts is the work we do here once we begin camp and go from there.

I'll open it up for questions. Just in closing, certainly want to take this opportunity to welcome Commissioner Petitti to the league. Short time on all of us as coaches, that's for sure. Great to have him.

Want to publicly thank Gary Barta for his service at Iowa 17 years. Had the opportunity to work with Gary. He's been a great friend and had a great working relationship. I'm obviously very appreciative of that. Wishing he and Connie all the best moving forward.

Want to welcome Beth Goetz, our interim AD, who's been on campus for almost a year and has already garnered a lot of respect from everybody she's interfaced with. Certainly great to have her with us.

Again, just again appreciate all of your interest in college football, the Big Ten, and all that you do to cover the game. Throw it out to questions.

**Q. Kirk, you have the sports gambling investigation looming. Do you have a sense of how many first team or second team guys could be affected by this? How do you plan when you have that uncertainty, whether it's around Noah Shannon or others who may or may not be available?**

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, it's not a large number of players, period. Long story short, we don't know what the outcome is going to be. I don't think anyone condones gambling, especially on the college game. I do think that being said, I have learned a lot the past two months just about gambling. I never really paid attention to it, other than we signed a form, probably the same form we signed when I was playing.

I think our world's changed dramatically. Anybody who does pay attention to gambling knows that better than I, certainly the last couple of years. We live in a real different

world right now. I think what the NFL's done with their rules makes a lot of sense.

I'm hopeful this is an opportunity with the NCAA to maybe reconsider two things: what the, quote/unquote, punishments or penalties might be that are, I would say, fair and relevant to the world we're living in right now. And then probably the bigger thing is there's an opportunity right now, I think, for better education process, if you will.

I'm kind of naive, and I apologize for not watching "College GameDay," but I've got my middle son telling me the other day they cover lines on "College GameDay" before games. So it's just an illustration of the world we're living in right now. It's not going away. It's going to continue to grow.

Certainly we want to educate our players and kind of compare it to maybe marijuana policies, those types of things. Gambling is going to exist. It always has. I hope eventually the policies will reflect what's best for college athletics. Certainly not betting on college athletics would be a good starting point.

**Q. Your MO with bringing new players in wasn't really based on the transfer portal prior to this year. What changed? Did something trigger you looking more towards the transfer portal this year?**

KIRK FERENTZ: The answer is what's changed it our world. We're living in a very different world as college football coaches than we were three years ago, five years ago, ten years ago. There are examples in the past of transfers having great success and working out for both parties.

Now, the way we're operating now is just going to be part of the terrain moving forward unless we see change. We're just going to try to incorporate our same process, if you will, with it, and there's also some benefit to it. There's some advantages to getting guys that have played and competed already at a high level.

I think the big thing like all of us, whether it was in recruiting or now looking at the portal, we're trying to get players to fit with what your program deems to be important. So that was our process and really feel good about it.

It's a little scary, like bringing new players in is scary, whether they're high school prospects or college football players. Just can't say enough about the way the guys have transitioned into our program.

I want to compliment our guys that have stayed on campus that have helped with that. I think that's a real key

component to it also. Our guys have been real welcoming, and so far it's going very, very well.

**Q. Your punter has a T-shirt that says "Punting is Winning," and in some ways there is a correlation with his performance and your final result. Is there any way to quantify what Tory Taylor means to you, to your defense, and how successful he is in the end result?**

KIRK FERENTZ: That's a two-parter. I really kind of learned the importance of a great punter in 1981, my first year ever at Iowa, and we were fortunate to have Reggie Roby, who I believe was a junior that year, one of the most amazing punters I have ever seen. His leg was a big part of the reason we were Big Ten champions that year and played in the Rose Bowl. Certainly coaching in pro football really developed an appreciation for how punters can affect and impact the game.

We're kind of a defensive-oriented outfit, if you will, and the value of having a great kicking game along with a good, solid defense gives you an opportunity to maybe have a little bit more success that way. When we have a player with Tory's capabilities and talents, we're certainly going to try to utilize that in a smart way.

**Q. To follow up on what you said earlier, with Gary Barta, the athletic director, officially retiring, and Goetz becoming the interim, can you talk about your relationship with Goetz, have you guys become closer, and talk about everything building towards the upcoming season?**

KIRK FERENTZ: One thing I would point out, Gary's retirement starts next week, I guess. We've had three athletic directors since 1970. I believe I'm correct in saying that. I think that's one thing that really makes our program unique, there's been a real stability in leadership.

Beth has been on campus now eight, nine, whatever months. Everybody I've interfaced with that has worked closely with her says nothing but great things about her. People she's worked with in the past, whether it's Brad Stevens, Butler, right on down the line, all have tremendous things to say about her. Our meetings and interactions have been fairly limited compared to myself and Gary. That will change now moving forward.

Really excited to have her. I think she's made a great transition to our place. I don't want to speak for her, but it seems like it's pretty seamless. It seems like Gary made a great selection a year ago when he hired her, and we're excited to have her on campus.

**Q. When you look back on the offense from a year**

**ago, just what else did you learn from that? What might you change in terms of beyond personnel what you guys are going to do offensively this season?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We look to change and modify each and every season. You don't have to go that far back to find us having fairly good success. Again, I would couple that with we try to do a good job on defense. We believe in defense. It's important to us. It has been 20-plus years. So that's the way we're wired and built.

Our numbers have been, I think, pretty good offensively up until the last two years. I can get as grandiose as you want, tell you about the injuries at receiver a year ago, how we looked in spring versus September. I can tell you about the offensive line the last two years. I'm not going to bore you with those details, but there are reasons. That's part of my job is to assess those things in a rational approach, if you will.

I feel like we've made the right steps. Time will tell. Like everything else we do, time will tell.

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