

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Coach Kirk Ferentz

Press Conference



KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon, everybody. Appreciate everybody being here, and welcome to the 2025 Iowa football Media Day. It's just good to get started again, obviously, and begin the 27th year back here.

Really every year it's the same thing, same mix of eagerness, if you will, anxiousness and optimism. Probably the eagerness comes from as much as anything just the work ethic and the attitude of this team has been strong going back to January, and they've continued that, so that part is good.

Anxiousness every year. You have the unknowns, certainly, and that's a fun part of it, but also you're just always curious to see how things are going to materialize, how they're going to come together, and we're in that process now.

And then the optimism I think just comes from the fact, again, we've got a roster, I think, where we've got a good amount of veterans. We've lost some real key veterans over the last couple years, but a good group of veterans right now, strong group of guys in the middle group maybe that haven't played a lot but I think are ready to take that next step, and then you've always got the younger guys as well.

It's a fluid time right now, fluid competition going on during camp, like you'd expect, and it's just kind of fun to watch it and see how it's all going to pull together.

That really is the nature of preseason. That's the beauty of it. That's when you're working through the bumps, working through the ups and downs that come with pretty competitive practices and see how things go.

We're about 40 percent through right now, and like every year, it's demanding on the players physically, demanding on them mentally, and think emotionally as well. We've had good weather up until today. Got a little warm, so that's good. I think it's going to be that way for a while here, so that's good.

Every group out there is kind of a different study, if you will. I'll start with the quarterbacks. I'm just going to highlight that one.

In terms of the newness, we've got three guys that are relatively new to the program, getting all the reps right now, basically, and two of those guys weren't even here in the spring. Mark was here in the spring, but wasn't practicing in the spring, so I'll rephrase that.

It's good to see how they're fitting in. Then some other groups are a little bit more veteran. Interesting to see how they're working.

I think, again, so far, so good with that. Just kind of go there, and to some extent talk about the quarterbacks.

Jimmy Sullivan is in the same boat. He was here last spring, but should have been in high school and it was going 100 miles an hour, 120 miles an hour for him. Fun for him to slow things down as well.

Bottom line is this: Every position right now, we're looking at them all, and just curious to see how they're going to evolve. There's a lot of different stories there, and the bottom line is it's all about how things come together over the next three plus weeks.

With this team, I think it's going to be a fluid process probably even into the season. That's certainly not a bad thing.

We've got several points of emphasis you're always trying to emphasize in camp, and I think the single biggest thing, and I'm sure we're not unique in this, but really doing anything difficult -- to win in this conference, it's not easy. Doing anything difficult, it really requires good focus on things that are important and when they need to be there.

Our guys are in college, they're going to school, they've got social lives, they play football, so they've all got a lot going on. Right now this is a pure time where we've got them pretty much a captive audience.

Them learning how to really focus on what's important, that's important, and then the other contingent -- they've always been college athletes and college students, but the biggest difference now is this new era with free agency,

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salary cap, all that stuff, revenue sharing. It's a little bit different world, and it takes a little different level of maturity for everybody to handle that, so it's one more challenge.

But that's really as much as anything I think the biggest challenge out there, and part of our job as coaches is to try to help those guys filter through stuff that's not important and really be able to focus on what does count. That's kind of an ongoing process as well.

Then last but not least I'll touch on really quickly -- I know you guys probably got releases on this, but a couple staff things that have happened over the last two months or so. Paul Federici has retired, and just wanted to start out by -- I haven't had a chance to publicly acknowledge him and thank him for all the contributions he's made in two plus decades here.

Paul came here as our head trainer 20 some years ago and did an unbelievably great job in that role, and the only bad thing about him moving to operations was you lose a really good guy in the medical department.

Luckily we've had really good people -- you think about Russ (Haynes) and people like that taking over for him, Kammy (Powell), but Paul has made a lot of certainly valuable contributions. Did a great job in a really challenging role, if you will, and certainly want to wish him and Teddi all the best down in Arizona.

Somebody told me yesterday it's hotter there than we'd even dream about it being here, so I hope he likes hot weather.

Ben Hansen will take his role. Ben will be our assistant AD, director of ops for us moving forward. Ben has been with us over 10 years. Paul has done a great job mentoring him, and Ben is an outstanding mentee. He's been qualified to probably have that job for years now. Fortunately he's stuck with us. So it's been really kind of a seamless transition. Again, I think Paul for helping facilitate that, and Ben is already doing a great job.

Ireland Hostetler is going to move over from recruiting along with Austin Showalter. He's been a quality control guy, GA quality control guy. They're going to move him to operations and work primarily in that area. Austin will still do special projects for me and football-related work that way, still dabbling in that, but I think that gives us a real strong department there.

Then the other probably noteworthy thing at this point, Jason Manson has transitioned into football full time, so he's one of the analysts on the offensive side. Gives him a chance to really immerse himself in that. Sam Brincks,

who's been his assistant, is going to move up into the director of player development, and then Noah Shannon is back with us. He was going to be a GA or a student assistant, and all the titles are different now because of the new rules.

Long story short, Noah is going to fill Sam's role in player development, so he and Sam will pair up just like Jason and Sam did previously, and then Noah is also going to work in the football realm of things, so it's his first year in this side of the ball instead of being a player, and I'm not sure he knows exactly where he wants to go professionally. This will give him a good opportunity to see both sides and kind of develop an idea of what he wants to do as he moves forward.

I feel really good about that. Then the last thing, just in the next week or two, our recruiting department under Tyler Barnes has been reshaped a little bit and reconfigured and we're filling a void, obviously, with Ireland moving over. We lost a really quality person there.

But I think we're really close to making an announcement there, and I feel really good about the way things have shaped up, so I think we're in good shape.

Briefly, again, about 40 percent into it. It's been a positive start. The guys are doing a good job of working hard, doing a good job in meetings and all those types of things.

We're hardly halfway there, but it will be good for them tomorrow to be out there in the stadium. Not that it's going to be packed or anything like that, but for some of the younger guys especially, that will be a big deal for them.

It's just good to change up things in camp a little bit every now and then, and then beyond that, just the kids' day concept. I think we're in year 11, 12, 13, something like that, and it's a win-win situation. Again, I'm glad I'm not on the judging panel who has to pick out who the 12 captains are. I'd hate that job. I would want to be nameless like NCAA people, the way they make their decisions.

Anyway, so it's just a tough job, but what a great way to celebrate a lot of really good stories and tremendous people. We'll all look forward to that, and the seniors will have a chance to spend time with them in the weight room and swarm with them out on the field. It's all good. It's kind of like the wave; just something everybody can feel good about.

A lot of work to do, obviously, three weeks out, but just happy to be working at it.

I'll throw it out for questions.



Q. Last year kids' day this time of year, quarterback play was looking pretty rough and you kind of said that was pretty indicative of how Cade (McNamara) and others had played. How much further along do you feel like the passing game is? Is Mark (Gronowski) where you want him to be? And the other two guys are Brown and Hecklinski, I assume, that are getting most of the reps?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, so it's those three guys plus Sullivan are one, two, three, four.

Jackson (Stratton) has been fighting an illness, which is kind of unusual. When you think you've seen everything, you never have, 27 years into it. First time he's got -- it's a hernia that's affected his appetite, and I feel really bad for him. He's struggling to eat and struggling to hold his weight. It's going to be a long road, but they're going to get it cleared up and all that type of thing. But it's kind of taken him out of the equation for a little bit.

But it's been good. To me, ever since Spencer (Petrus) got hurt in November of '22, it's been a bumpy road. Nobody's fault; it's just the way it's been. It's not the only spot. It's everything combined, quite frankly.

Like I said last year at this time, my experience is if we have a good offensive line here, good quarterback play, we've got a chance. I think the good news is I think we have a chance to have both those things, and beyond that, I think our supporting cast is a little bit better balanced and more experienced than it's been.

The receivers, good mix of old and young, kind of like our whole team. But they're probably a good illustration of that, and most importantly they've been practicing pretty well.

We're not there yet, but you're starting to see some signs. Two nights ago we saw some things that were really encouraging. It was Wednesday night. Then this morning a couple plays where, hey, maybe we can make some tough plays on 3rd down, those kinds of things. It's just things that keep drives going. That's how you score points, all those types of things.

We're not there yet, but at least I think we're moving in the right direction.

Q. Kirk, how has Brian Allen been progressing over the course of summer, and where would you assess where the defensive line is right now and the depth that you see them having?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, Brian is doing well. Like Mark, he

couldn't do anything in the spring. He's working through that.

It's one thing, we were talking about this, at all levels, a pro player who's played 10 years successfully, that type of thing, they can miss some time typically and come back and go, but even the best players, if they don't practice, it's just not the same. You can imagine anybody in college, and that's Mark and Brian, their challenge is not being out there in the spring, it does make a difference just in terms of working at it.

His attitude has been great. He's been out there every day fully healthy. So he's getting there. He's getting there. I like the competition we're seeing on the defensive line. Unfortunately Pittman is not working, Jeremiah, still out. He's probably a couple weeks away from being back. It's given other guys an opportunity to work. Both Pace and Hawthorne are doing a good job in there, and Will (Hubert) has done a good job.

Those guys are competing. They're improving. I think we'll be okay there. But we're not there yet.

Q. I know you were already asked about Mark, but a lot of the conversation over the last few months has been that you've seen who he is as a person but haven't been able to see him take live reps yet. What are your impressions so far of him specifically?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, you can ask him about his first day. He was 6th out of 9. That's the good news. I won't say how that six got broken down. I'll let him do that. But he made some throws, like, oh, really? Again, that was his first day. He hadn't thrown with the team. And the improvement from day one to day nine, not surprising, but it's just -- I think we're starting to see him in a comfort zone operating the way you'd like to and pulling the ball down.

One thing I can tell you, I've seen him pull the ball down and run, which is not unusual for quarterbacks. Some can't do it, but he can run and keep his eyes down the field. That's a good trait, and he's demonstrated he can do that.

Yeah, he looks more comfortable with each day, and everybody around him is more comfortable. He acts like a veteran guy, and that's something you can't hand to anybody is that experience. Doing a good job there, and I think I mentioned at the Big Ten media deal, one thing we did get to see this summer because he really couldn't do anything competitive in the spring, we did get to see him -- a lot of times some stuff that we do, certain timings and certain moving things, 10 yards, jumping, shuttles, things like that, he's a sneaky good athlete. Like he really tested out very well in all the groups, of all of guys in his group,

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his classification, if you will. So that's a good thing to have if you're a quarterback.

The most important thing is can you pull the team together, lead them, and get up there and get the ball snapped and do something productively, and he's coming along really well.

Hank is doing the same thing. You can tell Hank has been out there in the spring, so he's been moving along pretty good, as well, and Jeremy is bringing up the rear there of that group.

Q. Kirk, your offensive line was one of the sneakier good offensive lines in the country last year. You averaged almost 200 yards a game rushing, only cut down your sacks to 16 last year, but you lost a couple guys to the draft. Right now how do you feel about your offensive line, and where does the left tackle competition stand because you brought in a Division II All-American?

KIRK FERENTZ: I'll go backwards in order. Just wide open, the tackle spot and the guard spot. We're hoping to see good competition in August. You never know how it's going to go.

But compared to April, to me, it's a much healthier competition, seeing the guys grow.

That's one of the great things about college football is just the changes -- and I'll give you a quick -- deviate for one second. This revenue share stuff, Scott Pioli was in here this past week, you guys knew that, but one big difference between the NFL and here, like in the NFL you evaluate your team whenever your season ends, either in January or February, and that's pretty much how it is until you start the new season.

In college, our guys change every period, in my opinion at least, in the winter program, spring ball. There's two evaluations, and then you go through the summer. It's not overly telling, but that tells you something.

Then ultimately is it going to carry over to the field in August when you're actually playing football, not training.

But we're seeing these guys really grow. That's kind of the way it's been in the past. Like our guys get better as they stay in the program and work, if they're doing the right things, and I think we're seeing that with both of the two main contestants, Trevor (Lauck) and Jack (Dotzler). Both those guys are way better than they were in December and way better than they were, in my opinion, in April. They're not there yet, but they're there. Then Bryce (Hawthorne) is

a newcomer, and we talked about the two quarterbacks getting out there.

Especially Jeremy not being here in the spring, Bryce wasn't either. He's a little slow off the ball, a little -- because he's thinking right now, but he's trying his ass off, and he's got some good tools. It's going to be a good healthy competition, I think.

Seeing some good things in the interior, as well, watching some guys grow there. We're not there yet, but I think we have the opportunity to fill two big holes with Connor (Colby) and Mason (Richman) leaving. Those are big losses for us. But right now I'm semi-optimistic, but we're not there yet.

Q. I think a natural segue from offensive line would be receiver. At Big Ten Media Days you kind of compared that group to where the offensive line was a year ago with progression. Has that continued into fall camp? What's the pecking order at the top, and is Jarriett Buie healthy right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, he actually coincidentally just got really cleared. He's been practicing, but limited in what he could do. He had a fracture in his arm, but officially got cleared, I guess, two days ago. So he's progressing.

I think we've got four seniors right now. It's kind of snuck up on us. Although Wetjen is debating this. I think he's going to play until he's 30. He's trying to be a junior. But I'd be okay with that.

But yeah, they're a good group right now. The older guys are doing a good job, and then we've got younger guys coming up the ladder. It's kind of too close to call right now, but they're all doing some good things, and we'll see what it looks like over three weeks.

We're really not going to make too many big judgments at least until you start game prepping a little bit, then you've got to kind of start squeezing it down. But it's good healthy competition, and that's encouraging.

Q. You've got a really good field goal kicker coming back and that's real important, Drew Stevens, he's up for the Groza Award. Have you talked to him about that, or has he talked to you about that? What's your feelings on that, and who is your No. 1 running back going to be, do you think, right now?

KIRK FERENTZ: No idea on that last one. That's a good thing. I think the group is all working well and they're doing a good job.



Yeah, and then regarding all these awards, and Matt puts releases out and they end up on my desk and I look at them and throw them in the recycle thing as fast as I can, because with all due respect, it's like preseason rankings; really nothing matters right now, other than acknowledging where it is pertinent acknowledging somebody who does have a resume who's done something, and I think Drew is a great story.

All you've got to do is look back the last two Novembers, and two years ago he kicks two balls out-of-bounds on kickoffs in our last game, and then we kick a Charlie Brown field goal that barely got over the goal post from like 10 yards out to win the game, and then last year -- I had no doubt in my mind he's going to drill that ball in the last game a year later.

I think that's kind of represented the growth of Drew. I really do. Just as a person -- this stuff all goes together in my opinion. He was so young when he showed up here. I mean, really young. Physically and kind of emotionally. He was just a high school guy.

Where he is now compared to there is just night and day. He's confident, but it's not a false bravado. It's because he's earned it. He works hard. He's just immaculate with his preparation. That's how typically guys perform well is because they do all that hard work when they're supposed to, and he's done that.

Again, representative of what you'd hope a guy is going to be as a college football player. He's done a great job. And it is nice having an experienced kicker. That is nice. Really nice.

Q. It's the first time in a while you haven't had an All-Big Ten linebacker returning so if I'm just Monday morning quarterbacking, I see Harrell, Rexroth and Sharar, those seniors. Do you see those three seniors as the potential starters in week one, and if so, what have they done to encouraging as they're helping into some brand new roles with some really big shoes to fill?

KIRK FERENTZ: Just like Higgins had big shoes and Nick (Jackson) did when he got here, that's part of football if you've had good players.

I do see -- I'm assuming tomorrow when the ones go out there, those three guys will be in their respective positions. But that competition is wide open right now, and the challenge is a little different for everybody. Sharar has flashed at times. He's played great on special teams, but he's had some durability issues and dependability issues injury-wise, which nobody can do anything about that, but

it's hard to be a great player at any position, especially linebacker, if you can't stay on the field.

He's been out there, basically stubbed his toe a little bit early in the spring for a day or two, but he's been on the field ever since and doing really well. He's practicing at a high level.

I think Harrell has done a same thing. He's really done a good job. Jaxon (Rexroth) is doing a great job. But we've got some guys behind them that are really pressing and pushing. Again, somewhere I referenced that '08 where Pat (Angerer) ended up starting in October. Maybe it was late September, and Ricky Stanzi the same way. That's always in the back of your mind, you just never know who's going to emerge.

I think several positions along the board as we start -- obviously August is going to help us determine things, but what really matters is what we do when the games start playing and how guys are playing there. We'll keep an open mind, just keep playing guys.

What they do on special teams is important because we've seen too many pictures of guys playing good special teams and then shifting into their respective positions and that carrying over.

But yeah, all those guys have come down that same path, and they've done a good job on special teams. Anxious to see how it plays out. That's probably one of the biggest positions of intrigue, if you will.

Q. Speaking of special teams, Kaden Wetjen obviously showed what he could do last year. Do you see your offense utilizing him more on offense, or is that a situation where you want to protect him?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, we're not trying to protect anybody -- well, the quarterbacks. The description of him was like a couple years ago he went hard. We didn't know where he was going, mainly because he didn't know where he was going. Then evolved into a really good special teams performer.

At the start of last year, I don't mind telling you, I was a little curious and anxious and whatever, and boy, he just played great as a return guy. Our goal for him is to take that now and carry that over to offense. I think he's on that road. We'll see how it progresses, but he's doing good things in camp already, some good things in spring, but he's better now than he was in the spring.

The things that make him really good as a return guy, obviously, would tie into being a good receiver. He's fast.

He's fearless. It's just getting all the details down. I think he's really working hard to do that.

We're hopeful that he'll be contributing a lot offensively.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Logan Jones. He's now a sixth-year guy, but when you brought him in, you brought him in as a defensive tackle, put him on the Tyler Linderbaum plan, was up and down early in his career but always seemed to have that skill set that was capable of doing that. At what point did it click for him to where his immense physical gifts that he's been able to channel and he can actually turn it into being one of the best if not the best center coming into the country this year?

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably a month or two later than he should have, and I take ownership of that. It is like Linderbaum except I didn't screw Tyler's deal up. We did it in December, got him over there, and he started practicing, so he basically got an extra spring practice at that position, and I think that helped make him more game ready the next fall.

Unfortunately we didn't make the move with Logan until spring. I think it was in January when he got back. But just looked like we needed a little bit more help at that position, and he was the logical guy.

That probably slowed his progress and growth, I don't know how many weeks, but it didn't take him long to get the feel for it, and he's really playing at a high level and practicing at a high level now, and we've got a couple guys that are older. Some of the fifth-, sixth-year guys that came back, and they're all really practicing well, and that's encouraging. The guys up front are really setting the tempo for us.

Q. We have a young fellow from the Carroll area, DJ Vonnahme and he had some good news last month.

KIRK FERENTZ: He actually got good news previous to that last month, but it leaked out last month. We don't like -- I don't want to have somebody jump out of a cake or something and say here's your scholarship. My flair for the dramatic is not so good. I think you guys know that.

It's just like anything; guys that work hard and are doing good things, hopefully we can reward them in some way. DJ, we really were so pleased that he chose to come here because we really liked what we saw in high school. As you know, he won the tight end there a bit. We thought he had a lot of the attributes of guys -- in fact I read an article that was kind of entertaining somewhere, whatever you call those little boxes on your iPad, you go to Google or

something that's always little articles in there. There was one that caught my eye about tight ends. The guy that wrote it, with all due respect, had no clue -- he was talking about a guy we didn't recruit.

Anyway -- I'm going down a rabbit hole here, but he cited, he didn't recruit the guy, and the kid is a hell of a good kid and he's a good player, but we just didn't feel like he was a fit for us. But the ironic part was he was part of the tight end news stuff. Some of the guys he cited were Kittle, LaPorta, Hockenson maybe, but Hockenson had a couple Big Ten offers, but Kittle and LaPorta. Kittle is going to Weber State and LaPorta is going to Bowling Green. But the point is recruiting is individual for everybody. It's not judging anybody else's judgment, but we thought we saw some traits in DJ that maybe were -- he's done nothing but just improve.

I don't know how ready he is to be a starter right now, but I could see him being a starter in the future here. He's worked hard. He's put weight on, good weight. He works extremely hard, is competitive, tries to block, which some guys will or won't. That was the question on TJ when TJ got here. We actually brought him to camp and made him try to block somebody and he was terrible, but at least he tried. It was like, okay, this guy, he'll learn it, and he did.

I'm not saying DJ is going to end up like TJ, but anyway, he's a really positive guy and a good guy in our room, and that's a good room of guys right now. Happy he's here, and we try to be fair with anybody that comes here in terms of rewarding them if they're moving up the charts. So that's always a good thing. That's a fun thing.

Q. You talked a couple weeks ago about the cornerback competition, the guys that are in the mix there. Can you just describe as a unit and as individuals since the start of camp what you've seen from that group?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, they're all -- you said cornerback, right, outside guys? They're all doing well. Jaylen (Watson) has been limited a little bit with a soft tissue issue. Like every camp, you've got some guys with football-type injuries. I skipped over the running back thing earlier. Kind of the same discussion. I think we have a good pool of guys in both groups, and we'll certainly know more in about three weeks.

But TJ (Hall), unfortunately, he had an injury and we're lucky based on the way it looked, but it ended up being a bone-on-bone thing, so he's got a bone bruise right now, which those are painful. It's probably going to be a week or two before he's back, but he was really doing well. Deshaun (Lee) is doing a really nice job, and then Jaylen is

the next guy up. It's giving these younger guys, Godfrey and Mota, a chance to work, and Shahid joined us, Barros, but just gives us a good chance to evaluate. But that's one that'll be on going I'm sure.

But the two older guys, TJ until he got hurt two days ago was doing really good, and same thing with Deshaun is playing well, too.

I think as long as we keep improving, we'll end up okay there.

Q. We hear about the 24-hour rule with your players a lot. In a year where there's some big stuff out there for you personally, what's your 24-hour rule look like and how do you spend those 24 hours after a game?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it's pretty simple really. First thing, when I was in the NFL -- this is probably why I never went back to the NFL. The head coach, at least where I worked, had to go see the owner after the game. All I really wanted to do was get in my car and go home. And it was that way as long as I've coached.

When I was here in the '80s if I was in a good mood I would walk home through the parking lot. A friend of mine was always somewhere over in that corner and I'd stop and have a beer with him and then I'd walk right to our house. Took 10 minutes, nine minutes, and I'd be on my couch. Life was good.

If we lost, just kept going, no stopping at go for 200 bucks. That's kind of the model.

I worked for one guy that I used to stop in his office on the way out of the stadium and he was putting on his tie and he had to go upstairs and the owner was either -- he had typically been having a few during the game, so it was either the end of the world or the best thing in the world, and exactly what you don't want your players to do, that type of deal.

I was thinking to myself, man, I don't know if I could do that because I got in my car and went home. So that's what I do, I go home as fast as possible. It's a little tough when you're on the West Coast flying back through the night. That means you're home at 5:30 or whatever. I like to go home and try to get your mind off it. That's impossible. But you process it, and just like we tell the players, we come in, watch the tape, and you either feel really good or you feel bad.

But the biggest thing is learning from it on Sunday, and then you move on. One good thing about practicing Monday morning, we don't have time to mourn things too

long and we don't have time to celebrate. We've got to get moving on to the next time, and if you don't do that, you really give up a lot of opportunity to have an edge.

Q. I wanted to ask about Gennings Dunker because you talked about the O-line a little bit. What have you seen from him from his first year to now that's led into the growth? He was named preseason All-American. How do you see him leading this O-line throughout the next season?

KIRK FERENTZ: First of all, Gennings, if you meet him personally, it's a good exposure. Just a really interesting guy. He could be on that beer commercial from 10 years ago. In fact, he'd be more eye-grabbing because of his red-headed mullet. He's a highly intelligent guy and he hides it well sometimes, so it's interesting that way. He'll play games with you, but man, I'll tell you, this guy works.

Talking about some of the other positions and certainly the offensive line, the group that he came in with, it was during the COVID period, just some really unusual stories, and there was a bunch of them. You wonder about scoring points, it's hard to score points when you can't block. So that was part of it.

But anyway, to his credit, he had some lower leg injuries that were impeding his progress and development, and offensive line is all about development, so he was playing catch-up that way, and the last -- he's just done a really nice job the last two years. Works like crazy, is very coachable. He's got tremendous pride.

Obviously he's big and strong and plays with good effort, but guys that play with effort and have pride and mental toughness, they have a chance to really become as good as they can become, and I think Gennings isn't there yet. He's got things he's working on right now and he's gotten better in eight practices. He's improved immensely, I think, in certain parts. That's what you want to see with your older guys. They're working just as hard as any young guy trying to figure out what they're doing.

He's a joy to coach. He's a lot of fun. Most of our guys are; they're just good guys to coach.

Q. When it comes to scoring points and it comes to the total offense, the improvement from '23 to '24 was drastic, really high. Could we see another big jump offensively in '25 for your guys?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't mean to -- I don't want to get off on too big of a tangent, but first off, the objective is to win. That's really all we care about. But the best way to win is points, points scored and points against. That's where



your focus is.

But every year is an adventure. Every team is an adventure. Things happen during the course of a season too here sometimes, so you just deal with reality and try to find a way to get to the finish line.

I think we've done a pretty good job of that over the years, and we've -- 26 years here, you're going to have ups and downs. You're going to have challenges.

We're not -- I'll say this: We're not Ohio State. We never have been, we never will be. It might make fans upset, but history shows that. So we've got to be comfortable with who we are and how we're going to be successful. If we have injuries in a certain area, we'll have to figure out a way to compensate or get it done.

Our most explosive offensive team in 26 years was '02, and we weren't exactly knocking it out defensively early, but the defense caught up. Defense is what we built this thing on, and then we'll go off of that.

I'll say this thing, this program 26 years ago, I learned that from my predecessor and other great coaches that I've had a chance to work with or watch, so it starts there. I just think defense travels well, and if you want to be a consistent winner, you'd better emphasize it.

But we're trying to score points, too, and whatever. You do the best with what you can, and as I said, a year ago, again, 26 years here, plus nine, when our O-line plays good and our quarterback plays good, that's a good start; we've got a chance.

Last year we had the line play. We had all kinds of ups and downs at quarterback, but we had a running back who nobody was talking about exactly at this time last year, and boom, blew up and just played great.

That's kind of the history of our program, too. Somebody has got to step up and get things done because you're always going to lose good players. But the bottom line is finding a way to the finish line. We've done a pretty good job of that the last five years, last 10 years, if you look at us relative to the other 17 teams in our conference. We're proud of where we're at. Yeah, we'd love to improve it, but we're just going to try to find a way.

A little bit of luck, I think things are coming together offensively a little bit, but who knows. Tidal wave hits or whatever, and all of a sudden you just never know what it's going to be, so you've got to be prepared to do what's best each and every week with the guys that can get to the game and play.

Yeah, it's exciting right now just because I think we have a chance to have a little bit more balanced offensive football team than we've had over the last several years, really, probably going back to '20.

It's always kind of funny, the '21 season, I think we won 10 games there, and I think our points per game there was exactly the same as '09. Pretty darned close if it wasn't. We were good guys back in '09, right? In '21 we were all bums. It's funny, I guess, but I study that stuff.

But winning the bowl game helps, too, and we didn't do that in '21, and we had a chance. We had a chance, but we weren't quite good enough. You've got to get only that help. And the '09 team did that. Relatively the same statistics.

The bottom line is we've got to figure out a way to win each and every week, and that's going to be our goal, our puzzle, and yeah, let the games begin. But luckily we've got three weeks here to still figure some things out.

Appreciate it. We'll see you guys over there. Thank you.

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