

January 2, 2015

An interview with:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

THE MODERATOR: We have coach Kirk Ferentz in here. After coach, the players will be available in the locker room.

Coach, your thoughts on the game, then open it up for questions.

COACH FERENTZ: Start by congratulating Tennessee. They played an excellent football game. They were ready right from the start. We certainly couldn't match their tempo in that first quarter. Give them credit. They played a really good football game, I'd venture to say the best they played all year.

For us it's disappointing. A lot of things that showed up cost us today. Bottom line is that we got a great group of young guys, 16 seniors that just finished up. So I feel bad for every guy in the locker room obviously, especially our seniors.

It's part of football. We'll get up tomorrow and move forward.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What about the start the first quarter? Were you kind of subdued?

COACH FERENTZ: Yeah, I don't know if they were subdued. We just didn't play in a way that was going to give us a chance to stop them.

They really did a good job of getting out on the perimeter. We didn't do a good job of forcing the ball back inside. That was a major factor. Early on we didn't get much going.

Q. What was the plan with the quarterbacks? How did you evaluate it during the game? What did you think of them?

COACH FERENTZ: Our plan was to play both of them, as we said consistently the last seven days or whatever it would have been.

I think they both did some good things. They both had some down plays, too. That's part of it. The way the game got away early, it's tough to evaluate anything in a real great fashion.

We'll go back and look at it, go from there.

Q. All this talk all week was about quarterbacks, quarterbacks. As it turned out, people should have been concerned about the defensive side of things?

COACH FERENTZ: The way it turned out, for sure. They scored whatever it was, four straight possessions. Even our kicking game didn't help out in that regard. Certainly moving the ball, changing field position, when you get an opportunity...

You know, it was a team loss. It usually is when you lose. We fell down 35, 28 points right away, you dig quite a hole, especially against a good football team.

Q. Where you are in this program, you've been here for 16 years, going into next year, where does the program stand?

COACH FERENTZ: Well, we're 7-6. This is 2014. I know it's '15 now, it's New Year's. We're 7-6. We've been 7-6 before. We've been 4-8. We've been 11-1, 11-2. That's where we're at. Your record is what you say it is, your record says what you are, according to Bill Parcells. We came up short this year in several games.

Q. On the second possession, there was a change of downs, on fourth down. Did you consider asking for a measurement because they never moved the sticks when they went the other way?

COACH FERENTZ: I was standing right there. It was pretty obvious we didn't make it based on the spot that I saw. It wasn't that close. Eight, ten inches, something like that. But it was obvious from the sideline.

Q. You talked about tomorrow you have to move forward. What does this mean this year, this off-season? What do you have to do to have a season that's substantially more satisfying than this?

COACH FERENTZ: You know, what wasn't satisfying, we lost four close games. Clearly today we were behind pretty quickly. We were behind up in Minnesota, as well.

The other four games, if we want to be successful, we have to win close ballgames. First of all, we have to make them close. We've done a good job of that historically. It's usually a fine line. I'll go back to 2003, 2004, most recently 2009, where we were ranked in the top 10. It's usually a

pretty fine line for us. When we win seven or eight games, it's a fine line. The 4-8 not, so much.

It's a year-to-year battle, it's always different. Teams change week-to-week. It's the battle that's in front of you and doing the best you can.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about Canzeri's day today?

COACH FERENTZ: Pretty obvious, that's the best he's performed all season long. Made the statement really hasn't been right pretty much this whole season going back to August. The best he looked is this past month, which is really good. Certainly it was a positive today he ran as well as he did.

We've got to keep him healthy and keep moving him forward.

Big positive to mention is Kevonte Martin-Manley setting the receiver record. When you talk about what he did there, Scherff winning the Outland Trophy, being a unanimous consensus All-American. When you win seven games, those things kind of fall by the wayside a little bit.

You look at the individuals, we've got a lot of good ones. The 16 seniors that we have, really proud of each and every one of those guys. Just so happens those two did something really significant football-wise. Outstanding guys. Tough to say good-bye to those guys in the locker room.

Q. Talk about having to defend Joshua Dobbs. Was he even better in person than what he looked like on tape?

COACH FERENTZ: I don't want to speak for Coach Jones, but to me that was the best execution that we saw from their football team all season long. When you win those last four ballgames, it made a significant difference.

South Carolina game, when they pulled it out down 14, he's right in there with his passing yards, running yards. I'm not saying what he looked like on film, but he certainly played an excellent football game today.

You read about him, you get to see him at the banquet, very impressive young man, great student. Seems like a very humble young guy.

Very impressive. He played an excellent football game today.

Q. Are you aware of the temperature outside of the program and how do you react to that?

COACH FERENTZ: Single digits in Iowa. Do you want to be more specific than that? I'm serious.

Q. People calling for you to be fired, emptying the roster, hating everybody, that kind of temperature.

COACH FERENTZ: We had a coach to the west of us that won a lot of football games that got fired. If you're in this profession, that's part of the deal.

If I'm going to sit around listening to the temperature, reading the temperature on the outside, more what I need to do is take the energy that I can put towards the job and put it on our improvement. That's typically what we've tried to do for 16 years.

Did that answer the question?

Q. How difficult was the environment today?

COACH FERENTZ: It was a home game for Tennessee. That happens a lot of times when Big Ten teams come south. They have a really excited fan base. They got a good football team.

Made it tougher when we play on the road, in tough stadiums. We have to play through that.

It's really about out there on the field, they just outplayed us in every phase.

Q. You said their execution was better than what you've seen. What specifically was better than what you saw on tape?

COACH FERENTZ: I thought you could see things developing when the ball went backwards. Usually you're going to see some good gadgets or gimmicks in a bowl game. Unfortunately we didn't see it.

I thought they blocked well, executed well offensively, threw the ball, caught the ball. The one touchdown in the end zone to my right, far across the field, our guy defended pretty well. I don't think he got fooled by it, but just a great throw and a good play by the receiver.

I wouldn't say a flawless execution, but pretty good from what I could tell.

They played real well on defense. That first half, they played real well on defense.

Q. You talked about the Nebraska game, the opportunities left on the field, the hangover. Do you feel like the team bounced

back from that? Did you sense they were ready to go?

COACH FERENTZ: You would never know it based on what you saw at 3:25. That's about as good a month as we've had since I've been here 16 years. For whatever reason, it did not show today. That was obvious.

I'm also confident that it's going to show in time. But we improved on a lot of different levels, older guys, younger guys.

That's all we can worry about is doing our best each and every day, trying to push forward. This team, like I said, they practiced and prepared as well as any team I've been around. We just weren't good enough today.

I don't believe it's going to go down the drain. That's what I believe and how I live. It's how I look at the world.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH FERENTZ: Thank you.

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