

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

## Kirk Ferentz



KIRK FERENTZ: Good afternoon everybody. We're really pleased about as we kick this thing off today. First and foremost I think the quality of this group of players that's joining the University of Iowa football program, we're very, very thrilled about that. All 22 of these guys are someday going to be leaders of our program and leaders of our team. So it's really, I think, important that we try to go out and find players that are going to fit well within our system, understand the way we play football and fit the way we play football. I think secondly it's important that they understand and embrace the values that we think are at the heart of our program as well, things such as having a strong work ethic, being competitive, having toughness and it's mostly mental, being selfless, having a desire to really improve in all areas of their life and a passion for the game. Those are the things that we've seen in our past players and teams that have been successful, so those are the things we really look for when we go out and try to identify prospects that we think would fit in our program. Each of the 22 plus, even the walk-ons that are signed on, they've all made that commitment to our program and our values. So we're excited about that.

Secondly, really pleased about the effort that our staff and coaches have made over the past months, you know, however many months it's been, basically 12 months, particularly the last couple of weeks. It's been a strong push. We had two and a half weeks of live recruiting after the break, post bowl, and everybody has really gone out and given great effort in that regard. One thing about recruiting, it's like a game or like a season. You're going to have highs and you're going to have lows. I think the biggest thing that's changed now with the social media and the interest and speculation about recruiting, it's certainly at an all-time low and I think some of those highs and lows get scrutinized more than they used to and get a little bit more play. But I don't think the process has changed an awful lot other than the pace of it and that comes with the territory.

That's part of the deal. I think our staff has done a great job over the last two plus weeks. I want to compliment, we went to the bullpen and Tyler Barnes and Scott Southmayd went out on the road and did a great job filling in where we were short and certainly want to commend the leadership, Kelvin Bell, Scott and

Tyler all working together to provide leadership with our efforts.

That's how everything came together. We had great support as always. We appreciate the support we get on campus, whether it's the academics, the people in the community being interested and friendly to the prospects and parents that come through, having facilities like this, this was a real team effort to build this facility and all the great things that our players see on campus. A lot of people put effort into that. All of those things are important in recruiting and I would be remiss if I didn't mention our players. It starts there because I think the messages they convey and how they make prospects feel when they come on campus, whether it's last year, April, June, right on through the last couple of weeks, those things are all really important in how a recruiting class turns out and they help us identify prospects that they think will be good fits on the team. That's all important to us.

Finally, I want to thank the prospects themselves, their families, their support networks, the coaches, for all the time and hospitality that they have provided for us. It's an exciting period in their lives and it also can be stressful at times. Every case is a little different, every recruiting process is different and you see some players go through that stress. But I think they fall back on their support networks just like they will do when they're in college and just like they will do in their adult lives and come with the right answer. We appreciate the fact that we're asking parents to turn over the most important thing in their lives, a child to us as a coaching staff and they're entrusting us to take good care of their young people and we take that responsibility very, very seriously. I think our entire staff does a great job of giving them the support you would give any young person that joins the program. We appreciate the faith they have committed to us, certainly very, very happy about that. Last thing, before I take any questions I just want to comment about the Joe Moore Award and more specifically about Aaron Taylor. I've never know Aaron directly until about a year ago, but I felt like I knew Aaron. I evaluated him when I was in the NFL, coming out of college, I saw his film playing in college, going back and I watched him at Notre Dame, watching them in practice, watching Coach Moore coach. But it's interesting, our first extensive conversation was last

winter after this first award had been given and we were talking about how he got involved in this and Coach Moore is a big part of that and what he told me on the phone was that Coach Moore and Bob Ladouceur, his high school coach, had been the most influential men in his life and his mom sent him to De La Salle when he was in high school, and he said Bob Ladouceur had a tremendous impact and Joe Moore extended that when he got to college and it's interesting because I heard Bob Ladouceur speak in a clinic two years ago out at Cal Berkeley. I sat in the back row and listened to Bob Ladouceur and I could have sworn I was listening to Dan Gable talk or Coach Moore, so the parallels between them was uncanny and to talk to Aaron and learn that and learn the impact that people like Coach had on my life, I think there is a commonality there. This initiative is basically Aaron taking it upon himself. He's had support and help from a lot of different people, a lot of good stories that are intertwined in that whole thing.

But Aaron has led the charge on this thing. He's an unbelievable human being. He would probably describe himself as close to being a delinquent going into high school and now he's a tremendous professional. He's raising a great family and he's taken this initiative and I think the neatest thing about it quite frankly is it embodies -- it's all about team work. It's the only honor in college football that recognizes great team work and Coach Moore would appreciate that and I think you look at Aaron, that's what he's all about as well. So it was a special thing for our football team today, this morning for the whole team to be there and Aaron present the award and really explain to them what the award is all about, how it all came to being. It was just a really great honor and opportunity for all of us involved in our program so I want to take this opportunity to thank Aaron not only for being here this time period, but just his life-long commitment to something that's very, very important to all of us. With that, I will open it up for questions.

**Q. Kirk, you talked about fit and described the profile of the players that you want which really isn't different than what you've had before. Was there ever kind of an offseason analysis done to kind of streamline some of these players to fit in your system better and reduce the attrition maybe you had over a couple of classes ago?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think the whole key in anything is reminding ourselves of what we are, who we are and what we want to be about. That hasn't changed dramatically, it's changed. You tweak things, you tweak everything in your program, outside our core values (which) haven't changed over the last 18 years, and I don't anticipate them changing in the future. The real trick is how can we find a better way to evaluate that

and any time you talk about evaluating people, there is no -- it's not black and white, it's never that simple, rarely that simple, I shouldn't say never.

So we're always looking for better ways to evaluate and the more information you can get the better things will but it's challenging, certainly, and attrition is our enemy because one thing I know, a guy can't play his best as a senior, that's one of our program goals. He can't graduate if he's not here after year one, year two, year three. So that's what we're looking for, guys that can run the whole race. It's a hard race, college football anywhere is tough, it's a challenge and competing in any sport in the Big Ten is a challenge.

You just try to identify as best you can people that have that capability and also meet the demands that go with being an athlete, graduating from a Big Ten school and doing things socially that are going to be, you know, people that will look at you and respect you for the way you live.

**Q. You had seven players added since Monday, was that going to happen no matter what? Did you need that many?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's been a fluid process and I think you're well aware that we have a couple of guys that are going to graduate transfer, J.P. and Derek are going to graduate. Jay Scheel's medical condition is not optimistic for us. So those things are fluid, but we had a good target in mind with those additions. You are never quite sure how it's going to pan out but coincidentally last Thursday, Friday, 22 was the number we were shooting for, weren't sure we were going to get there. We did. We made it today. It looked like it might be 21, but we were pleased with the way it came out. I won't say the distribution is perfect but it was close. I think we did well on those projections and a lot did take place in the last few weeks, certainly, the two-plus weeks. That's typical for us. We're not going to get an entire class committed in December. I don't think that's realistic if we want the best guys to come in here in our program.

**Q. Has your approach to what you do in January changed?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Obviously it's more fine-tuned, but that's what I was saying, I don't think realistically we're going to have our class committed in December. I don't know how many people do. Years ago there were schools that closed out in December and recruiting in January. I'm not sure that's wise, quite frankly. But it went about the way we wanted it to and projected it to and I've got a strong belief really that there are a lot of good players in the summer and springtime of their junior years that they have a realistic chance to be successful in college. There's another large number of guys that improve over the course of the summer, the

course of their senior seasons and if you're patient and evaluate those guys as they grow through their senior years you might find some really good players, and coincidentally, the Falcons and Packers played in the playoff game here like two weeks ago. Three of the prominent players came from our team, Micah Hyde, Mike Daniels, Josey Jewell, Desmond King off this last football team. They're good players to be found if you are patient and keep looking hard.

**Q. You got four guys within a 25 mile radius of Iowa City. That's got to please you?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It does, but that wasn't necessarily by design. We want to get the best guys in the state that's always by design, sometimes they're going to be close, sometimes they may be in the far west. We have a lot of guys from the northwest corner of our state that's just one of the things that happened this year.

**Q. Talk about A.J. and landing him, a player of his caliber.**

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, you know, the fact that he's a legacy probably helped us a little bit, his mom and dad from day one have been great, and A.J. has been great from day one. I remember coming out of a basketball game during the spring of his sophomore year, he's an impressive young man, and he happened to walk with Mary and I back here from the arena and Mary met him, visited with him. She didn't know who he was and on the car ride home I told her he was a sophomore in high school and she couldn't believe it. She thought he was in college. He's a poised young man, never got -- he is a good football player. My sister could tell you that. That's one that my sister could identify, pretty good athlete, too. But a poised guy, very humble. He's been raised the right way. He's got a -- member of a tremendous family, great support network at home, at school. So he's never been, at least from my vantage point, never been impressed with the whole thing, the process, just taking it day-by-day and has been unwavering in terms of his commitment, which we appreciated and it says a lot about him and his family.

**Q. When you look at a guy like A.J. what stands out on film and a reason why he's so highly touted? Why there is so much praise for him?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I say it jokingly but I mean it seriously, too, there are certain players that my sister could look at and say that guy is pretty good. I always look at my Jonathan Ogden moment thinking why am I looking at this guy? He's a no-brainer, and some players are really talented. The thing I'm impressed more with is the way he thinks and the way he's made up mentally. He approaches things the right way. He's hungry. He's team oriented. It's all about his team and what's going on at his high school. He played in the Army all-star game and the Polynesian Bowl, done a lot of things

outside that brings recognition which a lot of guys would die for, certainly. But it doesn't affect him. He's not been affected by it. It reminds me of, you bump into Marshal Yanda, I ran into him 10 days ago, whatever Pro Bowl he was named to, you would never know it in talking to him. He's a humble guy and focused on being good at what he wants to do.

**Q. That said, usually guys that are more on the perimeter have the chance to play right away, does he have that chance?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Time will tell on that, we could decide on the field but I think it's realistic to think he will have an opportunity. Some guys just have unusual maturity and physical maturity as well as mental maturity and Bryan Bulaga comes to mind right now a guy who played on the offensive line as a true freshman and a little closer to the ball for a guy out of high school. James Daniels was able to do it. Those guys don't come along real often but I think it's realistic to think that he can certainly compete for some playing time and if he's good enough to start that's great. That means he's playing pretty well, but we'll give them that opportunity like everybody in the class.

**Q. Receiver was an obvious need for you guys, talk about the group and how you think you did?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Pleased with the way it came together and Ihmir was a big part of that, getting him to sign this afternoon was really big for us, but like the group as a whole, I think we've got two big receivers with Brandon Smith and Henry Marchese, happy about that and that was important to us to help our size a little bit. Max Cooper is an extremely productive, successful player, played on a state championship team and I don't want to call him nifty, the guy looks like a football player. I'm not saying he's VandeBerg, but looks like a football player so excited about that. Ihmir caught our attention back in December. Frank Verducci, Sr. recommended Akrum to us five years ago and he put a seal on this one, too. Coach Logan, the high school coach there, is a tremendous guy and we have a great deal of respect for him. They're a state championship team as well and he's a dynamic, exciting player, can play either side of the ball. Thinking about Manny Rugamba in my mind would have been playing offense, but our plan was for him to be in the position of a starting job this spring and he got a little bit of a jump on that through injury. But they're similar guys, guys that can help on either side of ball. Our plan is for him to play offense.

**Q. Is Trey Creamer one that you have decided a position for?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We haven't. He's another player that does a nice job on both sides of the ball and you can never have too many guys that are good athletes and

dynamic, another championship team, speaking of championships. So we were pleased to get him here and that's one we will let it play out when he gets here and he'll have a vote on that one.

**Q. What's it mean to get somebody from Georgia? I know you guys are working down there trying to get inroads?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We were pleased with the way it panned out. It happened late, pretty quickly and it was great getting him on campus, Trey came up and that Monday morning had a chance to meet with his mom and visit with her at school and meet with the coaches. We were impressed with him. Think he's a great football player and comes out of a championship-level program and happy about that, happy to get good players from anywhere, but certainly one out of Atlanta is a plus.

**Q. I know you said with A.J. time will tell but is it safe to say with transfers, and Jay Scheel's situation, is it safe to say that one or two of these guys could see some playing time?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We're certainly open to anything and not to disclose personal property, but I sent Fran a note after the Purdue victory a couple of weeks ago and I told him our receiver group may resemble his basketball team, at that time it was one senior and four freshmen. We are going to keep an open mind. I think they're showing right now young people can go out there and compete and play well, so that's certainly an example, an illustration that I will share with our group when we get going in August.

But in the meantime when we get back to our team we're going to really focus on getting the guys that we have on campus moving forward. That's been the success of our teams over the past is getting our guys to keep stepping forward, and I think we have several on our football team that are capable of playing better. Hopefully we can start moving in that direction in March and April.

**Q. What can you speak to about why Coach White and Bobby Kennedy weren't retained and what are your plans going through those spots?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Those are just decisions I made that I think had to be made. They're never easy. I've got the utmost respect for both Chris and Bobby. They're both tremendous people but I felt like for this program at this time this is and we needed to do at this point, and that being said our focus now turns to making sure we get the right people in the right seats over the next couple of weeks and I've been working on that as you might imagine.

It wasn't realistic with the recruiting demands that we

had and the thing that's most important at this point it's about doing it the right way not the fast way, and you see other people hire people quickly. They may have past relationships, that type of thing but just like our football team we're going to keep an open mind right now and do our best to get the best people seated in the best seats that will help us move forward as a football team.

**Q. Do you feel like you're going to hire offensive coaches or could someone on your staff move?**

KIRK FERENTZ: On that point, I try to keep an open mind there as well, you only get the three best guys and go through the equations and I have had three plus weeks to do that, but see what might be of interest, that type of thing. I think we're starting to get focused on what we want to do right now and have a pretty good idea about how one is going to go and now we're focused on candidates for the second position and then the third thing we will get to. So there is still a little bit of wiggle room in there, but I think the plan is starting to come into focus.

**Q. How much is Brian involved in that since they're probably going to be all offensive guys?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Absolutely, and if it were the other way around Phil would be involved and that's part of the process. But to that point, too, as we start bringing candidates to campus, which will start in earnest here we will have everybody in the program exposed to them because I think it's important. Certainly their professional expertise is important, but how they get along with everybody, how they work with everybody is critical. So that's all part of the evaluation. That's all part of the puzzle and I've got an open mind whether it's experience, age, all those kinds of things, you have certain parameters you might be working in, certain balances you like to keep. But the ultimate goal is to get the three guys that can help us move forward the best and that's what we're setting out to do.

**Q. Do you have a date in mind when you want to have this thing all set?**

KIRK FERENTZ: In a perfect world, over the next two weeks. Hopefully we can be pretty much in place and really start working forward, although I think it's realistic to think, you know, in less time than that we can really start making progress in terms of evaluating and thinking about some things and then finish things out. But certainly in the next two or three weeks I would like to get everybody in their seats. It's important that the coaches get here and start learning, most importantly getting to know the players they're going to work with. That's the most important thing, of all this my biggest certain is that the players on campus that have been here a couple weeks now. They haven't had somebody to directly work with outside of the strength and

conditioning staff and fortunately we got a great staff there. Chris is helping to bridge that. Brian and LeVar the two offensive coaches are doing a great job bridging all positions, so we will keep working that way. But you want to make sure everybody has a chance to get to know each other and have really good conversation before we start spring practice.

**Q. Brian is sticking with the offensive line as the offensive coordinator and then hire a separate quarterback coach?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think that would present challenge, but I've got an open mind it will get down to the three best candidates the guys that we have all come to agree on and feel good about and keep all possibilities open, but that would certainly present some challenges.

**Q. Did it make it more difficult recruiting without two position coaches? Did it come up a lot?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It would have been easier to have more bodies but I commend Tyler and Scott. They did a great job of getting out on the road. They were deep into the process and helpful. I think the biggest leap of faith was players might quite naturally asked to go out there, it is not a lot in 18 years but we've gone through it at times, when Norm retired, who is go going to be the coordinator, and I didn't jump into that one but you tell prospects, we've got 18 years of a resume.

So I think what you're getting there and the thing I can assure you is we're going to do our dead level best to get good, quality people here and similar to the people that have coached here and are coaching here now, so I don't think that's been a big issue, I really don't. Peyton Mansell is a great example. He was tremendous through this whole process and spoke to him this morning about that and I said he will be one of the first people -- he won't be the first one but he will be one of the first people to know who is coaching him once we move forward and get that decided.

**Q. Why do you think the no-visit policy was such a big deal? Early in this class you had it in place, you've said that. Why is it such a big deal?**

KIRK FERENTZ: The topic itself as it pertains to the players in discussion, to me, I guess it has to be a lack of communication, maybe it wasn't communicated properly, although I was involved in one conversation. I thought was pretty clear. To me that's what it really gets down to. It's as simple as that. On a national scope everybody has their definitions, but I think the key point and, we have visited as a staff, we will go back to it one more time on it I'm sure after this is all settled, but I think we all feel the same way we did a year ago or six months ago. The word commitment to us means commitment. It means your decision has

been made and you're straight ahead.

I know there are new terms, "soft commitments" commitments you can't accept. There is all this lingo and stuff, I don't understand all that. It's like commitment is commitment. With that being said, what we try to encourage all of our prospects to do, if you're thinking of committing, that's great. We're thrilled about that, but don't commitment until you really mean it. If you do then we're going to take you at your word on that one. That's kind of where it is. If you choose to look somewhere else there is nothing we can do about that, that's not an issue but then you have to understand that maybe we have to redefine your definition of commitment. Simple as that.

**Q. But there are logistics that go along with that, if a running back commits do you contact the other running backs and let them know you have someone on board?**

KIRK FERENTZ: That's why it's nice to know if that word means what it means to me at least, make sure we're on the same page. But those things are going to happen in recruiting and we had more than ample time to recover. That's one of the smaller challenges we have encountered in the last 12 months I can assure you. It probably got more play outside this building than it did in. It's part of recruiting, it happens all the time. It just gets blown up a lot more than it used to but this is not the first time we have had a prospect change his not mind, that's not a big deal to us.

**Q. The other part to that is you guys continue to recruit other guys who have committed to other schools. How do you reconcile that?**

KIRK FERENTZ: To me it's easy if you talk to a player and he's not sure, same thing, he may have said he's committed to the school. But if he's not sure, he's not sure. We're going to keep recruiting him, just like people recruit our players as well so you test those commitments.

That's how it goes. If they say, hey, Coach, I'm committed to school B, great. Just thought we would ask.

**Q. Did you encounter negative feedback while you were on the road or heard it through the grapevine from other schools recruiting against you because of that policy or the discussion of the policy?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Not really. I don't really go on websites. I don't read much about recruiting unless somebody puts it on my desk, so there may be such out there that I'm not aware of. But it doesn't come to my intention at all.

**Q. Is it fair to say you have no clue about the other**

**Big Ten teams? Do you have any idea what they have done?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I get that iPad from the inside bull, so every now and then I scan that thing. I did look the other night, not in depth, but I looked. We were like 60 or 50 something. I figured we were going to go up because we were going to get another 5 or 6 guys, at least we were confident we were employing to, seems like a lot of stuff they tally the points up and -- it's so arbitrary and subjective. So I really don't look at it but I look and see general stuff. I'm just guessing Ohio State is up there. I'm going to take a wild guess, Alabama is pretty high, I'm guessing. So things don't change and that hasn't changed a lot since '81, either. But the challenge is can we run the race and get the guys ready by fall and for players individually can we get 'em playing better each and every year, at every turn of their career if we do that we got a chance to win on the field and luckily that's why it gets decided is out there on the field of competition. So you have to try to maximize every opportunity that way.

**Q. Position flexibility seems like a big deal with last year's class and this year's class. How does that sit with recruits? Are they open to that?**

KIRK FERENTZ: I think so. In most cases we try to -- I think Ihmir is a good example. I think he could have played -- I really feel the same way about Manny. They could play either side of the football, but in the recruiting process we showed Manny a year ago, you know, King and Mabin are graduating and Gair is graduating at safety. So here is where we see you, you've got to do your part, but we hope you can be in that mix a year from now and if we could beat Desmond out last year, that would be a great thing for us, not for Desmond, but we didn't think it was going to happen and now it's almost a flip with Ihmir, but a long story short we try to tell the guys are we project them.

But in the case of Trey it may go either way because he's open to that and he's a good football player so wherever he fits but we want to do a semi decent job of addressing the needs.

**Q. How do you find a 6-5, 290 DL from Wisconsin so late in the process?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It wasn't that late. We've been on him a long time. Seth has been -- I don't know when it surfaced but we've been working him hard and there are circumstances and all that kind of stuff but I got up there I think last Wednesday or Thursday, something like that and had a chance to meet him and his family and that pushed it over the top for us.

**Q. With recruits like Daviyon, not letting know people you're going to offer, is that harder with social media?**

KIRK FERENTZ: Not necessarily. We talk honestly to the prospects. We really do. We try to let them know what we're thinking all along and what our process will be and they make the choice to stay with us or get off the train, that type of deal. We have always tried to be direct and straightforward with people and I think that's the best way to deal. It's up to them to decide what they want to do with the decision.

**Q. Along those lines your late submits, 7 of 22 came last couple of days. First of all you're back in western Pennsylvania. But then you had success in the past, Micah Hyde is a quarterback, two-star. Anthony Hitchins was a running back and ended being a linebacker. Do you anticipate any kind of Nate Wieland or Geno Stone, somebody, maybe one gets a little bigger they're a linebacker?**

KIRK FERENTZ: In that case I wouldn't be surprised if Nate Wieland ends up being a linebacker. That's what I envision him being if he's not we got a good safety, too. But that's what we project in there. I see him in that Anthony Hitchens mold or Chad Greenway. I don't want to say Chad, he's played 20 years in the NFL. That's not fair to compare a guy there.

But that kind of projection where in Geno we see more of a DB type guy, but like the fact that he's a versatile player, played really well on offense, was a team leader and all those kinds of things, and the thing about a guy like Marcus. Marcus was skinny in high school and Geno is not, but a lot of intangible things on his resume that intrigued us.

**Q. You have some walk-ons this semester. Talk about that and those moments and what this means to those kids.**

KIRK FERENTZ: That's always going to be a big part of our program, and I mentioned we have 11 guys who are committed to us which we're excited about. They're taking pictures in front of the trophy this morning, two of the guys in the pictures, Cole and Boone Meyers both came here as a walk-on so that's been in our fabric forever.

Back in the 80s through the 2000s and on through we have had a lot of great walk-ons, probably no one more famous than Dallas, but so many that mean so much to our football team. Let's go back to the '04 season, Sean Considine, Pete McMahon and Tyler Blum. All three of those guys had chances in the NFL. Sean had a longer career, but we wouldn't have won a championship without those three guys. But it's a way for us to let guys know we appreciate their commitment and their work ethic and it's contributed to us being successful.

**Q. What did you like about the Iowa linemen?**

KIRK FERENTZ: They both fit the profile we were looking for. We've had them in camps and had a chance to work with them. Which is a nice thing, that's a luxury for us to be able to coach guys kind of like they just had the senior bowl and those two staffs, got to see the players in a different light than you do just standing there watching.

So we liked that and liked everything about their profiles and we think those guys have a really good chance to be good offensive players for us and project poet of them to play tackle for us, so really happy about that. Probably the most amazing thing, Tristan told me in November he was thinking about wrestling. I think he got recruited by his teammate and his coach and I thought sort of an amputation that was going to be impossible. It's amazing. He's lost that weight. He's wrestling at 285, 287 now, but that's pretty amazing. So for a guy to have that discipline, big guy like that, that's impressive.

**Q. Do you feel like you guys did everything you could with Oliver Martin and did you feel like you were in there to the end? You know it's hard to lose a kid out of your backyard.**

KIRK FERENTZ: You never know what a prospect is thinking. I've read we were right there till the end and I think we were, we were legitimately right there. It would be wonderful if we got every guy we wanted to get. We don't. We played against a guy on that team from this year from our state. Some how we have to find a way to win, even though they get good players from our state. We don't want that to happen. Certainly I think we worked as hard as we possibly could to recruit him and there are no regrets there.

The thing about the recruiting it's up to the individual and I tell every prospect accident first of all scholarships aren't given, they are earned. And with that comes the right for the prospect to -- he's earned the right to make the decision that's best for him.

So for me to tell a prospect to act like I know what's best for them, I think that's probably off center on that up with. That would really be presumptuous on my part. We don't do that, but we try to present our school and the program as well as we can and players have to make that choice from there.

**Q. What's it like to see a guy like Jonathan play his first Super Bowl? We talked about it's tough to be in the league 12 years especially an offensive lineman and especially with the same team?**

KIRK FERENTZ: It's unbelievable and I talked about Aaron and his past and the things that he's done. Jonathan -- that's the neat thing about coaching, every player has a story. Jonathan lost his dad in a tragic

accident. I think he was in middle school, and I can't remember there's four kids or five kids in that family. His mom calls not every week every Friday, but at least once a month during the season to wish us well. You have that kinds of ties and links and Jonathan was want a highly rewarded guy. He could have been an all-Big Ten full back and tight end and he was an all-Big Ten defensive lineman and there are a lot of things I can tell you about him, endured injuries like most guys do, hung tough, kept working. But when I think about a defensive lineman, he was inside at that time, 265, 280, "undersized" and there is one time I remember him getting blocked against Arizona State. We all got blocked down there. It was one of the worst games ever and there was one time in that game where they got underneath him and moved him off the ball. Otherwise I can't remember a play in his career. He was a master technician, a truly competitive guy and did it in a quiet and intense way. So for him to go to the Super Bowl there are so many guys in the NFL that never get the chance so happy for him and his entire family he's a tremendous young man.

**Q. What about Kyshaun Bryant, getting him late, when did you discover him and how were you able to -- especially coming from warm, sunny weather?**

KIRK FERENTZ: We started getting on to him in December and evaluating him and the next component was we did a lot of evaluation in that dead period. A lot of it down in Tampa.

The next step was to get in front of him and try to learn more about him and the kind of person he was. He's got an unbelievable mom and dad, tremendous people. He's an impressive young man and we think he's going to fit really well, his running style fits well with what we do and Aubrey is a different type running back, but I think that's good, diversity with the way they approach things and we were impressed and got a chance to get in front of him a week ago Monday, got to meet his mom and dad, come out of a championship level program, too. I think it's going to be a great fit for us. Excited about that.