

9/13/2010: Mike Stoops teleconference transcript (premium)

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Before meeting with the Arizona media for his weekly press conference on Monday, Arizona head coach Mike Stoops answered questions from the Iowa media via teleconference, discussing the Sept. 18 showdown between his 24th-ranked Wildcats and the ninth-ranked Hawkeyes in Tucson, Ariz.

Below is a transcript from the portion where he spoke with Iowa media:

Stoops' opening statement:

"... [Iowa] is a tremendous team in virtually every facet you look at. They're a very physically mature team, and play very maturely throughout the entirety of their team. Their offensive and defensive line is a great place to start. That gives you a chance to do a lot of different things on both sides of the ball. That's where they certainly excel and present some challenges for us in a lot of different areas. It should be a tremendous game.

"I thought we had some scoring opportunities a year ago and just weren't quite good enough to get that done. They played more consistently throughout that game. I think we had First-and-Goal on the 1, and couldn't score. We tried a fake field goal, that didn't work. And we had a couple of sluggo routes that were open we couldn't get. We just weren't good enough to protect. So we had some opportunities to convert. We have to be able to convert and find some ways to move the football.

“Defensively, this will be far and away the best offensive line we’ve seen all year. [Ricky] Stanzi is a tremendous player. He runs their offense very efficiently and they do a great job in run-run-play action boot. They try to hit big plays on a lot of open routes. We’re going to have to be sharp really all the way around.”

On the things his team learned from playing the Hawkeyes last season in Iowa City:

“Well, hopefully, we’ll stop a draw on 3rd-and-[23] for a first down, that’s one of them. You can’t make mistakes like that when you play a team like Iowa because they’ll convert. As soon as they converted that, I think they scored about two or three plays later. Getting the ball inside the 1, you got to be able to score. Things like that. We had a couple of open routes. Those are the little things you have to do, and they certainly did a lot better than we did.

“We know from playing them what kind of strength, what kind of physical nature they play. I think that helps us, playing them a year ago. We need to be certain to understand the characteristics, how they try to make big plays and all that. Hopefully, we have a little better understanding of playing that two years in a row.”

On what he looks for in his safeties:

“Not any of the characteristics I had, that’s for sure. I think awareness. Football is a game of great awareness and intelligence. I think safeties have to be guys that really understand the game well, I think have to be smart players. But now they have to have such great speed and versatility, they’re like big corners back there. We look for guys that are rangy and can run, but they still have to be knowledgeable about the game. Finding all of those unique characteristics are hard to find, and you have to be a great tackler on top of all of that. Those are some of the things we try to look for.”

On whether he wanted to be a safety when he played at Iowa:

"Well, it was either that, or sitting on the bench or not playing. That was the only position I had a chance to play."

On if he studies Iowa's current safeties, Tyler Sash and Brett Greenwood:

"They do such a great job up front, they let those guys roam in coverage, and they're good at it. That's what they do. They ball hawk, and they do a great job of putting those guys in position to make plays."

On wide receiver Juron Criner's playmaking abilities:

"I think Juron is a guy that is just coming into his own as a player. He was just a true sophomore last year, so [the game at Iowa] was maybe his 13th or 14th game. That's still a relatively young player in our estimation, and I think he grew through last year to become a better player, what he is right now. He's a guy that knows he has to be a factor in our schemes. We need to get him involved and get him as many touches as we can. He's just developed in all aspects of his game."

On quarterback Nick Foles' emergence as a team leader since getting playing time against Iowa last year:

"I think there's probably a lot of similarities to Stanzi there at Iowa. I think quarterback is obviously the most difficult position on the field to play. He has to make a lot of decisions in a very short period of time, and I just think with experience, there's no substitute for experience. That certainly is the case with Nick. He grows every time he steps on the field. He still has a ways to go, but he's a very accurate quarterback. His decision-making continually improves. Those are the things that you hope, and Nick has shown, and Matt [Scott] to that case, have shown significant improvement in the ability to make better decisions."

On the relationship developed with the safety lined up next to you:

“Well, Bob [Stoops], I learned a great deal from because he was in front of me and played that position, so I probably had the best relationship with him throughout my time there. We were friends.

“I think the whole secondary, to me, has to work in a group and the safeties have to certainly be working in sync for your defense to work. Again, I’m sure their whole group probably spends a lot of time together.”