

9/21/2010: Iowa football notebook



Kirk Ferentz,
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IOWA CITY, Iowa – The injury bug hit a few members of the No. 18 Iowa Hawkeyes in a big way after last weekend's 34-27 loss to Arizona.

After only two appearances on the gridiron since returning from an ACL tear in his right knee last year, sophomore running back Jewel Hampton will be missing the remainder of the 2010 season after injuring his left knee against the Wildcats.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz originally said after the Sept. 18 defeat in Tucson, Ariz., that he was "cautiously optimistic" about Hampton's injury. On Tuesday, Ferentz said the injury was severe enough that the Indianapolis native would need surgery in order to make a full recovery.

"He's invested a lot," the 12th-year Iowa coach said of Hampton. "He's one of the most competitive guys on our football team, and it's just really a very disappointing time."

Also suffering from a season-ending knee injury is junior linebacker Bruce Davis, who made one start at middle linebacker for the Hawkeyes in their season opener against Eastern Illinois. Like Hampton, Davis' injury also required some operating on.

The other injury-related news isn't quite as severe, but Ferentz also revealed that senior running back Paki O'Meara would likely miss the Hawkeyes' contest on Sept. 25 due to Ball State. O'Meara, who was listed behind Robinson on the 2-deep released Sept. 20, suffered what appeared to be a concussion during Iowa's game with Arizona last weekend.

With Davis and O'Meara both out, special teams remains a concern, as both have been bright spots throughout their careers in an area that so far this season has been an Achilles' Heel.

"Two things have to happen," Ferentz said. "Either we have to mix in some veteran guys that have done it. That's one option. Another is some guys have to step up and grow up a little bit, and historically, we have had a tradition of that."

More of a workload for Robinson

Between Hampton's season-ending injury, and sophomore Brandon Wegher being MIA since the start of fall camp last August, sophomore running back Adam Robinson will be carrying an enormous weight on his shoulders as the lone featured running back.

Robinson had an evening to forget in Tucson, Ariz., only rushing for five yards in the loss to Arizona after rushing for a combined 265 yards in Iowa's first two contests – wins over Eastern Illinois and Iowa State.

For the Des Moines native, the challenge for him has been and remains mental.

"You just got to have it in your mind that you can do it, that you can persevere through it, and I have that mentality," Robinson said. "I'm ready to take on this role."

While Iowa has been a team that in recent memory has showcased two running backs, Ferentz said he has no problem with relying on Robinson to carry the bulk of the team's carries.

"We plan on him being the primary ball carrier like he was in Week One, and we'll get him in and out of the game when appropriate," Ferentz said. "But it's not an unheard of phenomena for one guy to be the featured ball carrier."

Coker, Johnson to get some time

As for this week's game with Ball State, it's clear that Robinson starts. But with O'Meara now being ruled doubtful and Jason White still recovering from an MCL sprain, the question for this week becomes who backs up Robinson.

The two likely candidates are both true freshmen – Marcus Coker and De'Andre Johnson. Coker returned to practice last week after missing six weeks of practice due to a broken collarbone. Meanwhile, Johnson is someone who saw plenty of action during the Kids' Day scrimmage held by the team on Aug. 14.

Senior offensive lineman Julian Vandervelde said there is a difference in tempo with both Coker and Johnson from what many have become accustomed to with Robinson and Hampton.

"Adam and Jewel are both, I think, a little faster, they're maybe a little bit stronger. That comes from years of being in Coach [Chris] Doyle's strength and conditioning program," Vandervelde said. "But I think both De'Andre and Marcus have great vision. I think they have a tempo to their running that really lends itself well to a zone scheme, so I think it will add another dimension to the offense."

During fall camp, junior offensive lineman Adam Gettis had the opportunity to be roommates with Johnson. Gettis described the Miami native as a goofy kid that comes from a good family and wants to help the team any way he can.

"We worked with him all summer, and he really wants to play," Gettis said of Johnson. "I know he was really willing to get out there and play. You got guys with that kind of attitude, you really want to block for those guys."

Representing the old school Hawkeyes

When the Hawkeyes take the field against the Cardinals, they will be donning throwback uniforms to honor the 1958 team that won the Big Ten, as well as the 1959 Rose Bowl, Iowa's last victory in what is dubbed "The Granddaddy of 'Em All."

The jerseys are still black, but had an old gold color in the numbers as opposed to white on the current uniforms. The pants are more of an old gold, as are the helmets, which won't have the Tigerhawk logo.

There has definitely been an excitement amongst the team about the old-school look that will be on display.

"It's nice to switch it up a little bit, get a chance to wear different uniforms and represent a team that played a while ago," junior safety Tyler Sash said. "We never get to wear black cleats. Everybody's excited about that. I don't know why."

Iowa last wore throwback uniforms in its 2004 season opener against Kent State, where the Hawkeyes honored the 1939 team featuring Heisman Trophy winner Nile Kinnick.

The Hawkeyes' game on Sept. 25 against Ball State is an 11 a.m. kickoff from Kinnick Stadium, and will be televised by the Big Ten Network.