

10/19/2010: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses No. 13 Iowa's upcoming showdown at Kinnick Stadium on Oct. 23 against No. 10 Wisconsin during his weekly press conference on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2010, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – What has been the worst kept secret all year about the No. 13 Iowa Hawkeyes' home schedule is slowly becoming the focal point of this 2010 season.

Three home games remaining, all of which are against teams currently ranked higher than Iowa in both the AP poll and the BCS standings, which were released for the first time all season on Oct. 17, with the Hawkeyes coming in at No. 15.

The first of these monumental clashes inside Kinnick Stadium takes place on Oct. 23 when the 10th-ranked Wisconsin Badgers come to town. Wisconsin comes into this game on an emotional high after upsetting then-No. 1 Ohio State last weekend at home.

One aspect of the Badgers' game that stands out to Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz is the size of Wisconsin's offensive line, which on average is 6-6, 320 pounds. The combination and size and experience left the former offensive line coach impressed.

"Good offensive line play is cohesion, and just being able to react together," Ferentz said. "These guys do a very nice job. They certainly have a good understanding of what they are being asked to do."

Given how big the Badger offensive line is, and the dynamic 1-2 punch Wisconsin has in running backs John Clay and James White, defensive players fully expect a challenge from this ground attack.

"You just got to follow what the coaches say," senior defensive tackle Karl Klug said. "They're going to have a different game plan for us this week, and we just got to believe the game plan and do what we're told."

"Wisconsin is probably going to be looking to run between the tackles more than Michigan."

One thing that has gotten a lot of play is the similarities

between these two teams. A lot of it stems from who the Badgers have in place.

Former Iowa defensive lineman Bret Bielema enters his fifth season as Wisconsin's head coach after initially being chosen as the successor to Barry Alvarez, a former Hawkeye assistant under Hayden Fry.

With that in mind, a lot of what the Badgers want to do is similar to what has gone on at Iowa under Ferentz, who had Bielema on board as an assistant during the early part of his head-coaching tenure with the Hawkeyes.

Knowing that Wisconsin is similar makes preparation seem a little easier. But preparation and actually facing an opponent on a Saturday in front of 70,000-plus is a little different.

"They're like us in a mental way," sophomore wide receiver Keenan Davis said. "They go out there and they're tough-nosed. They hit you. Those are the similarities between Iowa and Wisconsin.

"It's kind of comfortable playing a team like that because we've been going against the same kind of people and scrimmaging against them. It's going to make it interesting."

Stanzi continues to shine

On Monday, Iowa quarterback Ricky Stanzi was selected as the conference's Offensive Player of the Week. He completed 17-of-24 passes against Michigan and wound up throwing for 248 yards and three touchdowns, all of which went the direction of senior wideout Derrell Johnson-Koulianos.

But when asked about the honor, Stanzi admitted that another Hawkeye player probably should have received the honor.

"Personally, I think A-Rob [running back Adam Robinson] deserved it more, or Derrell for his performance," Stanzi said. "I think a lot of guys on our offense last week could

have gotten that award.”

In addition to the three touchdown catches, Johnson-Koulianos had four receptions for 70 yards. But that was enough to become Iowa’s all-time leading receiver last weekend, as he now has 2,275 career receiving yards to his name.

Robinson, meanwhile, had 143 yards on the ground, and 61 receiving yards on four catches for the Hawkeyes in their 38-28 victory at “The Big House.”

“Adam is very versatile,” said redshirt freshman running back Brad Rogers, who actually started at fullback for Iowa last weekend against Michigan. “He can catch, run. He can do it all. I think that’s a credit to him and the coaches for how they teach us around here.”

Another weapon in the arsenal

When the Hawkeyes and Badgers square off inside Kinnick Stadium, the Iowa offense will have something at its disposal that wasn’t there when the two met in Madison, Wis., last season.

Dealing with the combination of a thumb injury and serious illness – most of the team was sick at this time – wide receiver Marvin McNutt was not available for the Hawkeyes in their 20-10 win last year. As it turned out, fellow wideout Derrell Johnson-Koulianos had his best game as a Hawkeye statistically speaking with eight receptions for 113 yards.

With Johnson-Koulianos now coming off a game where he caught three touchdown passes from Stanzi, one would think opportunities would be available to McNutt this week when Iowa does elect to go with its aerial attack.

“I think it’s just nice to have all your guys there. I think that’s the main thing,” Stanzi said. “When we have everyone healthy and we’ve got a lot of depth out there on the field on

offense, that can only help us with what we're trying to do. It can only help us open up the playbook and execute better.

"I think it would be helpful having everybody out there obviously, and if we didn't, we'd have to play the game anyway."

Looking to extend tenure of rivalry trophy

This year's game takes on a little bit of extra significance.

Barring meetings in either of the first two Big Ten Championship Games in 2011 or 2012, this is the last time Iowa and Wisconsin will meet on the gridiron until 2013 at least.

At stake is the Heartland Trophy, which the Hawkeyes and Badgers have played for each of the past six seasons now.

For some of the younger players, losing this game will result in coming to the Hayden Fry Football Complex every day and no longer seeing a full atrium of rivalry trophies there throughout the rest of their careers.

"We've won a lot of trophy games over the years, and that's definitely a testament to our work ethic, and our coaches and things like that," Robinson said. "Keeping trophies over here at Kinnick and things like that is definitely a goal that we want to keep. It's a tradition we want to keep going around here.

"I think it adds to the prestige of the game and things like that. It makes it more fun."