

11/16/2010: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the 21st-ranked Hawkeyes' final home game of the season this weekend against No. 8 Ohio State at his weekly press conference on Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2010, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – “Flush it” is a term used by the Iowa football program after games are played. To the players, it’s their indicator to forget about whatever happened the previous weekend and look ahead to the next challenge ahead.

Being able to move on from a loss is obviously more challenging than a win. This proved somewhat evident following the Hawkeyes’ 21-17 loss to Northwestern last weekend in Evanston, Ill. The defeat dropped Iowa to 7-3 overall and 4-2 in conference play, and the Hawkeyes are now ranked 21st in the latest AP poll heading into its home finale on Nov. 20 against No. 8 Ohio State (9-1, 5-1).

Some of the players were refusing to discuss anything related to what occurred at Ryan Field last weekend.

“I really don’t want to talk about last week,” junior safety Tyler Sash said on at least two occasions to the media Tuesday.

But the questions about Iowa losing to Northwestern for the fifth time in six years continued to be aimed at the direction of head coach Kirk Ferentz, especially with the Hawkeyes’ chances of winning the Big Ten being crippled as a result of last weekend’s loss to the Wildcats.

One topic Ferentz did address at his weekly press conference on Tuesday was that of external expectations, the thoughts that fans have going into the season.

“My expectations, I wouldn’t describe them as lofty. I would say they’ve been the same every year, almost every year,” Ferentz said. “You can’t control what other people’s expectations are.

“We still have three games to play. That’s all we need to worry about now, is doing the best with what’s in front of us.”

As for the repercussions of the loss to Northwestern, senior defensive tackle Karl Klug said he tends to notice the criticism more after losses, and that last weekend's defeat was no exception.

"I do an independent study on Mondays, and the people that I work with there, they kind of show their frustration, too, and disappointment," Klug said. "But we can't control that now. All we can do is just move on and focus on Ohio State."

Senior class prepares for final game at Kinnick

Every year, college football teams go through the emotional process of "Senior Day." They all strive to make it a day to remember for those who have been committed to their programs for 4-5 years.

This part of it won't be any different this weekend when the Hawkeyes play their final home game and honor their seniors. But the Iowa senior class of 26 consists of many noteworthy names – both this season and throughout their careers.

Perhaps the most recognizable name from this group is quarterback Ricky Stanzi, who has been a starter for nearly three seasons now. While he wasn't quick to reflect back on his entire career at Iowa – he still has three games left – he did reflect back on when he first came to Iowa.

"I just wanted to know where my classes were, how to get around, where do you buy a moped at, where are the good places to eat," Stanzi said. "I was just trying to figure all that stuff out. I was worried about my math homework, I'm really bad at math. All the things that a normal freshman would think about, and then you pile football on top of that.

"I can't really remember what the expectations were, or what I might have wrote down, but as a senior class, we've done some good things."

For other seniors like offensive lineman Julian Vandervelde, the time has flown, but not before he managed to gain some real perspective on how things have gone for him.

“Football has essentially been my life for five years now,” Vandervelde said. “Outside of school, football, and family, there really hasn’t been much else. When you put that much into something, it means the world to you. As far as what I’ve taken out of it, just the experiences, the memories, the life skills.

“Under this coaching staff, I’ve been able to grow not just as a football player, but as a person, as a young man.”

Most of the members of this class showed up in 2006, right around the point in time where Iowa football was struggling to say the least. The early seasons for these players consisted of 6-7 and 6-6 marks, and in 2008, the Hawkeyes were at one point 3-3 before winning six of their final seven.

While the odds of winning the Big Ten appear bleak, Ferentz said he won’t assess how successful this season has been until it’s over, and that for these players especially, the chance to end on a high note is still attainable.

“The big thing is all of these guys have been committed,” Ferentz said about his senior class. “I’ve got tremendous respect for all of the guys that are going to be out there on Saturday.”

The Ohio connection

For players like Stanzi and wide receiver Derrell Johnson-Koulianos, it might only seem fitting that their Senior Day at Iowa is coming against Ohio State, as both are natives of the Buckeye State.

Stanzi, who is a native of Mentor, Ohio, admitted he didn’t grow up a diehard fan of the Buckeyes, as he described himself

as “a fair-weather fan” as a kid when it came to college football teams.

He added that going to Ohio State wasn’t something he strongly considered, especially once Ferentz made the pitch to Stanzi about Iowa.

“Coach Ferentz was the one who was at my house and wanted me to play football for him, so I didn’t stop to think about what coaches didn’t want me to play for them,” Stanzi said. “I haven’t thought about that or looked back on it. I just kind of worried about what I can do for Iowa once I get here.”

Then there are players like redshirt freshman running back Brad Rogers, who is a native of Toledo, Ohio. Rogers said he grew up a huge Buckeye fan, and that while not getting an opportunity to wear scarlet and gray was difficult at first, the disappointment disappeared when he got the offer from Iowa.

Rogers added that getting the chance to play against the team he once cheered for on a regular basis had made this entire week a little more intense.

“I really want to beat these guys,” he said, adding that Saturday’s game will be heavily discussed regardless of the outcome when he does get the chance to return to Ohio. “Going into any game is special, but this one’s a little bit more special just because I’m from there.”

Given the history he and others on the team have with the state, Rogers admitted the excitement level tends to go up, especially when the teams actually take the field on Saturday.

“This game is different for us because it’s our home state,” Rogers said. “We put in, not an extra effort, but you always want to look good against a rival or somewhere where you came from.”