

11/23/2010: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the 24th-ranked Hawkeyes' regular season finale this weekend at Minnesota with the media during his final weekly press conference of the 2010 season on Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2010 at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Gone are the hopes of winning a Big Ten crown. Gone are the hopes of a second consecutive BCS bowl appearance. But with the No. 24 Iowa Hawkeyes entering their season finale at Minnesota on Nov. 27, plenty remains at stake.

For one thing, a Hawkeye victory over the Golden Gophers would keep “Floyd of Rosedale” residing in the atrium of the Hayden Fry Football Complex for the fourth straight year. It would also be the ninth victory for Iowa over its rival to the North

in the 12 years Kirk Ferentz has been the team's head coach.

Also at stake possibly is a New Year's Day bowl game. Right now, there are three bowls truly in play for the Hawkeyes. The Outback Bowl and Gator Bowl are both played on Jan. 1 in the state of Florida, with the Outback in Tampa and the Gator in Jacksonville. There's also the Insight Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., should both of the aforementioned bowls pass up on Iowa.

This will mark the first time Iowa and Minnesota have met in the Golden Gophers' new home, TCF Bank Stadium, which opened on Minnesota's campus last year after the Golden Gophers spent 27 seasons at the Metrodome. It will also be the last time these two teams meet at the end of the season, as Iowa will begin a Thanksgiving weekend rivalry next year with Big Ten newcomer Nebraska.

"It made sense," Ferentz said about the Hawkeyes having had their game with Minnesota during the month of November from 1983 until now. "But again, with the expansion, a lot of things that made sense aren't necessarily connecting anymore. So it's just part of the deal."

One thing the Hawkeyes are looking to have to their benefit is not having classes due to the UI being on Thanksgiving break. As a result, this gives the players more time to focus on football and preparing for this game.

Senior offensive lineman Julian Vandervelde likened this week to preparing for a bowl game, especially with Minnesota having nothing to lose entering this contest.

"It's the last game for an extended period of time," Vandervelde said. "It's an opponent that you respect and that we have a great history with, but at the same time, you really, really want to beat them."

"Normally, we'd be playing for a bowl trophy. This time, we're playing for Floyd of Rosedale. So not having classes and being

able to focus entirely on Minnesota, you get that sort of bowl atmosphere.”

Adjusting holiday plans

This isn't the first time under Ferentz that the Hawkeyes have played a game over Thanksgiving weekend. This is the first time, however, the plan of playing after the national holiday was premeditated.

Iowa played a game at Iowa State back on Nov. 24, 2001, two days after Thanksgiving that year. But the game was originally scheduled for Sept. 15, 2001, and was pushed back two months due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

As a result of that, the Hawkeyes' practice schedule was altered a bit. The plan for Thanksgiving is to have an early practice, allowing the players to head out around 12:30-12:45 p.m. Ferentz's goal when putting everything for this week and beyond together was to make sure the players had a break from football-related things.

“I think we've got a decent plan in place right now to give them some time away from us,” Ferentz said. “I can't excuse them from school next week, but at least they can have some downtime football-wise.”

Some will be able to be with their families for the holiday, while others will be joining teammates.

Junior safety Tyler Sash said his mother will be coming in from Oskaloosa to feed him and some of his teammates. Among the dishes from his mom that Sash looks most forward to is her pumpkin pie.

“Compared to some other people's, I like her crust better than most everybody else's that I've ever had,” Sash said about his mom's pumpkin pie.

Meanwhile, quarterback Ricky Stanzi and a group of others who

all live together plan to have Thanksgiving dinner with the Sandeman family out in Bettendorf, Iowa. One of Stanzi's roommates is senior wide receiver Colin Sandeman, and needless to say, Stanzi is a fan of Mrs. Sandeman's cooking.

"It's about an hour away, so it's the closest spot that we can go to," Stanzi said. "His family is awesome. His mom is a tremendous cook. It should be a good time to kind of relax for a couple of hours."

Homecoming of sorts

For a couple of Iowa defensive linemen, this weekend will be a Homecoming of sorts. St. Paul native Broderick Binns and Caledonia native Karl Klug will be getting the chance to play this weekend in front of friends and family.

This won't be the first time obviously, as both were on the roster in 2008 when the Hawkeyes won 55-0 in the Metrodome. But it will be Klug's first start against the Golden Gophers in his home state.

It's also a chance for both to play outdoors again, which may or may not impact the amount of people coming out to support them specifically.

"I do got a lot of friends and family just coming out of the woodworks and asking for tickets," Binns said. "But as I told them, it's going to get cold, so if they're not going to stay for the whole game, they're better off just watching it at home."

Being from Minnesota, yet donning black and gold as opposed to maroon and gold, this game means more to these two defensive linemen than just maintaining possession of the bronze pig.

"We take pride in beating the Gophers," Klug said. "The trophy's all nice and dandy, but there's more to it than just the trophy. We just got to beat them."

Preparing for cold weather

Cold weather is commonplace in Iowa when it becomes late November, early December. It's something the Hawkeyes are used to.

In fact, when Stanzi was reflecting on some of the coldest games he had ever played in, three that came to mind were games at Kinnick Stadium against Penn State and Purdue in 2008, and Michigan last year. All three contests were played earlier in the season than now, however, and Minnesota provides a different element of cold.

As of Tuesday, the forecast for this weekend's game at TCF Bank Stadium in Minneapolis calls for temperatures in the low-30s. Guys such as Binns and Klug who are from Minnesota and know what to anticipate have made mention of it to teammates.

"I live with Broderick, and he always tells me it's 10 degrees colder up there than it is down here," senior defensive lineman Christian Ballard said. "It's definitely something we're going to be aware of. The weather is definitely going to play an effect on the game. But we should be ready, and we're excited to play."