

Ferentz, Barta address drug testing, other football inquiries



Iowa athletics director Gary Barta (left) and head coach Kirk Ferentz address the media in a joint press conference held on Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2010 at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Over the past 48 hours, rumors circulating around the Iowa football program became rampant. Kirk Ferentz and Gary Barta both realized what was being said in the public domain, as they received phone calls from parents of their student-athletes.

Those phone calls triggered what transpired Tuesday morning at the Hayden Fry Football Complex, as the two sat side-to-side and faced a litany of questions about what had been going on over the past week.

The series of events began on Dec. 7 when wide receiver Derrell Johnson-Koulianos was arrested on multiple drug charges, prompting Ferentz to dismiss him from the team before it heads to Tempe, Ariz., for the 2010 Insight Bowl on Dec. 28.

On Dec. 13, it was announced via press release that running back Jewel Hampton would be transferring from the team and that running back Adam Robinson would not be accompanying the Hawkeyes down to the desert for the bowl game.

Despite what has been slung out there publicly, Ferentz said at this time everyone else on the team would be ready to go in two weeks. It was something he actually said on multiple occasions during Tuesday's joint press conference.

He also stressed how all three of these events are isolated and not in correlation with one another.

"I want everybody to be careful not to lump this all together, which I get the sense that's going on right now," Ferentz said. "I think every story is a little bit different."

As far as these three situations are concerned, Ferentz said Johnson-Koulianos is no longer a member of the team, that the decision regarding Hampton was mutual, and he reiterated what he said in the press release about Robinson having the option to return to the team next month.

"Adam Robinson is a good guy. He just has not been taking care of business the way I expect him to. It's a simple equation," Ferentz said. "It's not a matter of eligibility. It's a matter of him following up the way I feel he should."

As far as the drug testing is concerned, Barta went over the basic procedure for how positive tests are dealt with. Both Barta and Ferentz said that any refusal to take a drug test is an automatic positive test.

From there, Iowa associate athletics director Fred Mims laid down the ground work for how the athletics department responds. He said for first-time offenders that aren't being charged with drinking underage, assessments are done, as is 20 hours of community service. Mims added the head coach of that student-athlete's team has the option of providing a different punishment based on team rules.

Second offenses result in automatic suspensions, which Mims said typically consist of 10 percent of the remaining season for the student-athlete's team. And then the third offense results in dismissal.

Random drug tests were administered to 10 members of the football team on Dec. 7. In fact, Ferentz said the testing was taking place when police came and informed him of Johnson-Koulianos' arrest.

Barta said of the three types of drug testing that takes place with student-athletes, the ones administered by both the NCAA and the Big Ten test solely for performance-enhancing drugs, whereas Iowa's testing examines alcohol and usage of other recreational drugs.

He added that what would be ideal now is for the school to tighten its drug testing to ensure that student-athletes are less likely to cheat.

"We didn't catch anyone," Barta said. "But we have just enough information we need to tighten down everything we're doing."

Ferentz was asked about the living situation that Johnson-Koulianos had, and said that background checks on roommates who aren't team members isn't a common occurrence. He also added that he wasn't aware of Johnson-Koulianos' roommate, who was identified as Bradley Johnson, being a drug dealer.

Right now, the team's policy is that all players live in UI dormitories their first year on campus. This was a change

Ferentz said was made two years ago, as the previous stance was two years before being allowed to move off campus.

“As long as they’re doing well socially and academically, we’ll let them move off campus,” Ferentz said regarding his players once they have completed their time living in the dorms. “It has been my experience to now that has been fairly healthy.

“It has been a long-standing policy. It worked better last year. It’s not working as well this year. Maybe it needs to be evaluated.”

Also coming into question during the press conference was the role of Chigozie Ejiasi on Ferentz’s staff. Ejiasi is the team’s Director of Player Development, a position created by Ferentz in 2008 where Ejiasi works with incoming freshmen and helps them get through the early transition into college and playing FBS football.

Barta said in hindsight that the decision to bring Ejiasi aboard is one he is glad was done.

“We can’t monitor all our student-athletes, it would just be impossible,” Barta said. “At the same time, when we go through a stretch where our level of incidents has been reduced for a couple of years, he has been a contributing factor, but it’s much broader with that as well.

“I’m pleased with the hire and look forward to him working with our young student-athletes.”

Both Ferentz and Barta were asked about whether the rumors that spread about the football program did damage to its reputation. Ferentz brought up the negative attention as being just that, but also made clear that he also has seen plenty of positive from his players.

Barta ended the press conference by making clear why he wanted

to be open about how the department is handling the drug testing he said it is not mandated to do, but chooses to do.

“Our goal is to get ahead of the game,” he said. “We invest a lot of time and resources. I want to make sure my investment in that \$70,000 a year is producing results that help us.”

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT:

[Kirk Ferentz/Gary Barta press conference \(12/14/2010\)](#)

ADDITIONAL AUDIO:

[Fred Mims, Iowa associate athletics director](#)

[Del Miller, UI Professor of Psychiatry](#)