

# 2010 Insight Bowl Media Day notebook



The Insight Bowl trophy and dueling Iowa (right) and Missouri helmets are on display during the bowl's annual Media Day held on Sunday in Scottsdale, Ariz.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – The message around the Iowa football program has been simple: Move on, and keep all attention on Missouri.

But this is obviously easier said than done. In the past month since losing their regular season finale to Minnesota, the Hawkeyes have had to endure attrition between the arrest of Derrell Johnson-Koulianos and the absence of running back Adam Robinson.

Surrounding those moves were rumors that were swirling around Iowa City and other various areas, and while the dealing with it off the field might prove daunting, the Hawkeye players who did make the trip found things haven't been extremely difficult, either.

“It’s probably easier for us than it is for [the media]. You guys have to sort through it all,” said sophomore center James Ferentz, the son of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz. “We really have the easy job with the guys who made the trip and the guys who are here right now. We know we’re focused, and we have one common goal.”

Without Johnson-Koulianos, the Hawkeyes will turn to senior wide receiver Colin Sandeman to step up in a role he has some experience in filling. This season, the Bettendorf product put together 17 receptions for 183 yards and two touchdowns. Sandeman also caught a touchdown in Iowa’s Orange Bowl win last January.

Also being counted on will be the likes of receivers such as sophomore Keenan Davis, and senior Paul Chaney, Jr., who will also be replacing Johnson-Koulianos on kickoff returns in addition to fielding punts for Iowa on Tuesday.

“If you know you’re in the opportunity, that’s when you got to just grow up,” Davis said. “It’s just doing what you got to do as an Iowa football player.”

### **Former teammates meet again**

In 2006, Hazelwood Central High School in St. Louis featured a backfield with a couple of guys playing in Tuesday’s affair.

Four years later, Iowa wide receiver Marvin McNutt and Missouri running back De’Vion Moore will reunite on the gridiron for the first time since high school. Except this time, they will be on opposing sidelines.

Back when the two were high school teammates, McNutt was playing quarterback, and was recruited as such by Iowa. The backfield tandem talked about possibly playing in college together and although it didn’t work out that way, they remain close to this day.

"It was a great relationship," Moore said about their high school days. "We were brothers. Brothers in battle. He was my quarterback, I was the running back. I did everything I could to protect him, and he did everything that he could to make sure that our team won games."

Moore also said something that stuck with McNutt and turned out to be prophetic.

"Me and Devon spoke one day before leaving high school that one day, we were going to play each other in a bowl game," McNutt said. "As soon as we got the message, we immediately called each other."

### **Facing the in-state school**

McNutt, Chaney, Jr., and senior defensive end Adrian Clayborn are three of the five current Hawkeyes who hail from the St. Louis area and will be playing against their in-state school on Tuesday.

But interestingly enough, there are a couple of Tiger players that call the Hawkeye State home.

In fact, Missouri junior offensive tackle Dan Hoch was driving back from seeing his family in Iowa when he got the news that the Tigers and Hawkeyes would be meeting this month at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz.

"It was quite the thing," Hoch said of his experience driving through Iowa as he found out his team was playing the Hawkeyes. "It's just one of those things that you never think will happen until it's there."

Dan Hoch and his younger brother – freshman tight end Matt Hoch – were both raised in Harlan, Iowa, but both elected to join head coach Gary Pinkel down in Columbia, Mo.

For the elder Hoch, the decision came following the 2007 season, one where the Tigers were a win short of playing in

the 2008 BCS National Championship Game.

“It came down to a level of comfort, probably, and Missouri was great at the time,” Hoch said. “We had just came off the Cotton Bowl win, and it was just something I wanted to go and be a part of.”

While he didn’t come out and acknowledge this, some of Hoch’s teammates admitted they have seen a more driven Hoch since the beginning of the month when this Insight Bowl match-up was originally announced.

“He’s excited and ready to play this game, I can say that,” Moore said. “He has had a tremendous couple weeks of practice, and I feel like it’s more personal to him. It shows when we’re practicing, and it shows when he goes in the weight room and works out.

“The day we figured out we were going to play against Iowa, he was ready.”

### **Sash waiting things out**

During Sunday’s Media Day, Iowa junior safety Tyler Sash said that he has filed the necessary paper work with the NFL before he or any other non-senior could elect to forgo their final year of college for the pros.

But with that said, Sash has not yet decided whether he will actually pursue that path.

The Oskaloosa native finished with 73 tackles and two interceptions this season for the Hawkeyes, and said if he had to make the decision now, he would choose to stay at Iowa for his senior season.

“I still have 2-to-3 weeks, and things can happen between that time,” Sash said. “But there’s more time to talk about that. That’s why there’s two-and-a-half weeks after the bowl game to talk about that a little more. Right now, we’re focused on

playing Missouri.”

### **The familiarity game**

With every bowl game every year, the question is asked: Who does your opponent resemble most?

From Missouri’s perspective, Iowa resembles to Tiger players on both offense and defense one (and only one) Big 12 team – Nebraska.

“Their technique is about the same,” Missouri senior center Tim Barnes said about the Hawkeye defense. “They’ll try to get into you, and they’ll kind of read a little bit where you’re going and things like that. Nebraska, I know, plays like that, and that’s about the only other team that reminds me of them.”

Ironically, the Cornhuskers were one of the two teams that managed to beat Missouri in 2010, defeating the Tigers in Lincoln, Neb., 31-17 back on Oct. 30.

Seeing the parallels with Nebraska only has the Missouri players more driven to perform well against the Hawkeyes this week.

“We got a chance to stop it once and didn’t do it then,” Missouri senior cornerback Kevin Rutland said. “I think it says a lot about how we’re going to step up and make changes to our defense that will stop this style of offense.”

As far as Iowa’s concerned, there’s a mixed bag. Clayborn said the Tigers were unique from anyone else the Hawkeyes have seen.

Meanwhile, junior cornerback Shaun Prater echoed comments from defensive coordinator Norm Parker about how Missouri resembled Northwestern, a team that beat Iowa 21-17 back on Nov. 13, and a team that has won five of the last six against the Hawkeyes.

“In our conference, I would say they are probably similar to

Northwestern with the five-wide and shotgun,” Prater said. “But as long as we play our game, we’ll be fine against these games.”

## **Red zone performance**

If there’s one area the Hawkeyes will need to perform well in order to upset Missouri, it will have to be in the red zone.

One doesn’t have to look too far back to recall some of Iowa’s offensive woes inside opposing red zones. Although the Hawkeyes managed to defeat Indiana back on Nov. 6, 18-13, Iowa struggled mightily in the red zone that afternoon.

In contrast, Missouri’s defense is not only the best red zone defense in the Big 12, but it also happens to be one of the best red zone defenses in all of college football.

“I think when we get down there, guys know we don’t want to give up any points now, and guys take that to heart,” Missouri senior safety Jarrell Harrison said. “We feel like we’re one of the best defenses in the Big 12 and in the country. I guess we give up a couple of yards, but once we get in that red zone, there’s no getting in.”

Being able to come away with touchdowns as opposed to field goals or nothing at all won’t be easy, but the Hawkeyes know it has to be done if they’re going to end a disappointing 2010 season on a high note.

“We can’t settle for field goals because they have an extremely talented offense as well,” James Ferentz said. “It’s not like they’re one side of the ball. Their defense, they’re great, but we’re going to have to find a way to score in the red zone when we get in there and try to take some of the pressure off our defense.”

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