

# Coker provides security in Hawkeye backfield

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TEMPE, Ariz. – Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz always felt Marcus Coker could contribute.

He admitted at a press conference prior to Tuesday's Insight Bowl against Missouri that he "felt a bad vibe" when the true freshman running back missed the early portion of fall camp last August due to a broken collarbone. At that time, no one could have envisioned Coker playing a prominent role in the Hawkeye backfield this season.

Now the 2010 season has come and gone, and here is Coker walking away as the Offensive MVP of the 2010 Insight Bowl, a game in which the Hawkeyes upset No. 14 Missouri, 27-24.

"Tonight was certainly his best outing, his best performance, and he's a tremendous young man," Ferentz said in his postgame press conference. "We are really proud of what Marcus did tonight, and it was a big part of the win. We felt like we needed him to run the ball for us to have a chance in this one."

The 6-0 running back ended up getting 33 carries on Tuesday, and he took full advantage. With touchdown runs of one yard and 62 yards, respectively, as well as a new Iowa bowl record of 219 yards on the ground, Coker put on a performance that hasn't been witnessed by any Hawkeye faithful since 2008, when Shonn Greene rushed for a minimum of 100 yards in every single game and went on to win the Doak Walker Award.

To put this into perspective, Coker had 52 carries, 289 yards

rushing, and one rushing touchdown combined in the three previous starts he had this season.

"We've been grinding every day, finishing 30-40 yards down field every time I ran the ball," Coker said about his preparation (as well as the team's) going into this game.

With the future of running back Adam Robinson uncertain at this moment following his arrest on Dec. 27 in Polk County, Iowa, the odds of Coker being that "running back of the future" now look better and better.

He still has a few things he could work on though, says one teammate that will now be a former teammate.

"Seriously, he has got to run with his pads down. He's going to break his freaking ribs," senior offensive lineman Julian Vandervelde said. "That's the only thing. He runs as hard as any guy I have ever seen."

Nevertheless, Coker has now established himself as a force to be reckoned with for teams that play Iowa in 2011 and beyond.

"He's got the speed, he's got the talented ability ... he runs Iowa football-style," Vandervelde said. "He runs downhill, he trucks people, and I love it."