

3/23/2011: Iowa spring football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz held his annual spring football press conference to discuss his 2011 squad, as well as other various topics, on Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – With the Iowa Hawkeyes opening spring practice on Wednesday, plenty has been on the mind of head coach Kirk Ferentz as he embarks on his 13th season in command.

At his annual spring press conference at the Hayden Fry Football Complex, Ferentz got the chance to speak about his 2011 squad, but the majority of the afternoon was spent rehashing the events of last winter when 13 players were hospitalized for Rhabdomyolysis.

On Wednesday, the UI Board of Regents revealed findings from

its own investigation at a meeting in Ames. [This report obtained in its entirety by the Cedar Rapids Gazette cleared Ferentz and all those involved with the Iowa football program of any wrongdoing.](#)

While Ferentz admitted it would have been ideal to find a cause to what took place in January, he said he was glad to know that no player or staff member was found to be at fault.

“Just like I couldn’t a month ago, I can’t tell you why it happened. I still can’t,” Ferentz said. “We’re not going to do the drill again, that’s all I can tell you. I know that much.”

Ferentz also reported that all 13 players who were affected were cleared medically, and that they will be monitored differently during the team’s first four practices in order to ensure they are up to full strength.

“They’ve been held back or at least their tempo has been held back and restricted,” Ferentz said. “They’re all anxious to get back. I think as a group, that’s a fair statement to make.”

Injuries

Although all four players are listed on the 2-deep released Wednesday, Ferentz confirmed that senior wide receiver Marvin McNutt, junior defensive lineman Steve Bigach, sophomore linebacker Shane DiBona, and sophomore safety Tanner Miller will be held out of practices this spring following offseason surgeries.

McNutt, who elected to return for his senior season, was listed first-string at both wide receiver and punt returner, while Miller is currently listed first-string at free safety.

Ferentz also said that no timetable has been set on when sophomore fullback Brad Rogers will return to the field after a heart condition kept Rogers from playing in the Hawkeyes’

27-24 win over Missouri in the 2010 Insight Bowl.

"As you might imagine, we're proceeding cautiously there," Ferentz said. "He's getting great caution, great care."

Areas of interest this spring

The two most intriguing areas to watch this spring will be at wide receiver and in the secondary.

Between McNutt being sidelined because of his shoulder issue and the loss of numerous senior wideouts from 2010, the veteran of the receiving corps this spring will be junior Keenan Davis. Listed behind Davis and McNutt on the 2-deep are sophomore Don Shumpert and redshirt freshman Kevonte Martin-Manley.

"It will be a good chance for those guys to get some good quality work," Ferentz said.

As for the secondary, it returns both corners in senior Shaun Prater, a first-team all-Big Ten cornerback, and junior Micah Hyde, whose 66-yard interception return for a touchdown against Missouri in the 2010 Insight Bowl proved to be the game-winning score. But there are also two bits of intrigue.

One is at the safety spots. In addition to Miller, junior Jack Swanson was listed on the 2-deep at free safety. Then at strong safety, a position that became vacant when Tyler Sash declared for the NFL Draft last January, junior Collin Sleeper has emerged atop the 2-deep with senior Tom Donatell behind him.

"Sleeper is the right name. He has kind of been lurking in the background," Ferentz said. "He has been laboring in anonymity, but he has done a good job."

One name absent from the 2-deep, however, was that of senior defensive back Jordan Bernstine. Ferentz said that Bernstine was healthy and that he is as eager as anyone to see where the

Des Moines native could prove serviceable.

"He's going into his senior year right now," Ferentz said. "When that window gets tight, I think it usually brings the best out of players. He's coming off an injury, I think he's eager to get back on the field."

Running back update

Sophomore Marcus Coker is atop the 2-deep as expected, but behind him is junior Jason White, a guy who had been used in years past as an emergency running back of sorts. Another back who figures to be in the mix this spring will be De'Andre Johnson.

Ferentz was asked about the status of former running back Adam Robinson, who was dismissed from the team in January following an arrest in Des Moines the evening before the Hawkeyes played in the Insight Bowl.

"I spoke with him when we got back from Arizona. I can't give you the exact date. I haven't spoken with him since that time," Ferentz said. "We're supporting him academically right now. My goal is for him to get his degree."

Update on tickets, open practice at Kinnick set

On Wednesday, the UI announced that requests for 2011 season tickets can now be made online, even by those who didn't have season tickets in 2010. New customers can request to purchase up to two season tickets for either general public or UI faculty/staff.

Should tickets remain available after every season-ticket holder from last year who renews is taken care of, the UI will fill remaining requests based on its Priority Point System. Those who become eligible to purchase season tickets will be required to pay a \$10 processing fee.

The deadline for purchasing season tickets is April 29. Costs

are \$374 for the general public and \$304 for UI faculty/staff members.

Meanwhile, the Hawkeyes' final spring practice will be open to the public at Kinnick Stadium on April 16. It is scheduled to start around 12 p.m. Central.

[Kirk Ferentz press conference transcript \(March 23, 2011\)](#)