

# Parker prepares for final hurrah in Insight Bowl



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and defensive coordinator Norm Parker held a press conference to discuss Parker's retirement on Friday, Dec. 16, 2011, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City. Parker's retirement goes into effect after Iowa plays Oklahoma in the 2011 Insight Bowl on Dec. 30.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Prior to announcing his retirement from coaching on Dec. 11, Iowa defensive coordinator Norm Parker was someone that would have coached until the day he died if one let him. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz was never hesitant saying a spot would remain on his staff for Parker as long as he wanted to keep it. He was that vital to the football program.

Parker, who will coach his final game Dec. 30 when the

Hawkeyes play No. 19 Oklahoma in the 2011 Insight Bowl, spoke publicly for the first time Friday afternoon since making the decision to walk away from the game he coached at nine different schools over a 47-year span. He said timing proved to be the biggest factor in his decision to step aside.

"I think you got to be fair to the team, you got to be fair to the program," Parker said. "When it's time to go, it's time to go."

"I have always said I never want to coach just to have a job. When you can't do it and do it right, and do it the way it should be done, then it's time to let somebody else do it."

Parker's ongoing battle with Diabetes is what led to him having his right foot amputated last year and had kept him from coaching the entirety of both the 2009 and 2010 seasons. As the Hawkeyes prepare for their second consecutive Insight Bowl, Parker has managed to coach all 12 games this season from the press box.

With that has come a feeling of accomplishment, as he didn't want his lasting image to be one of an amputation forcing him to move out of his office and on with the rest of his life.

"I think personally it was important just to prove you can do it," Parker said.

In 13 seasons, Parker has coached a plethora of players who have gone on to have success in the NFL. From guys like Bob Sanders and Chad Greenway, to more recently Pat Angerer, who Parker joked doesn't look the part physically of an NFL middle linebacker despite all the success he had at Iowa and is currently having with the Indianapolis Colts.

But it was Parker the person that Ferentz also wanted to stress as having a major role in the program's success since he first took over following the 1998 season and hired Parker to be his defensive coordinator.

"His impact, the effect he had on this football program, goes way beyond the football part of things," Ferentz said. "I don't care if you're talking to our staff, players, support staff. They'd all tell you the same thing. His impact has really gone beyond any defense he may have called or coached during the week.

"That's something we're real appreciative of."

### **No timetable set for finding successor**

Iowa athletics director Gary Barta, who was on hand at the Hayden Fry Football Complex for Parker's press conference Friday, made clear that the decision on Parker's successor would ultimately be made by Ferentz.

He also made clear Friday that no timetable has been set for finding a replacement, as the job has yet to be posted as available by the UI.

"The No. 1 priority is getting ready to beat Oklahoma, or trying to beat Oklahoma, in the bowl game, and then while we're doing that, obviously we have a position to fill," Barta said. "But no absolute deadline – here's when we're going to post it, here's when the position will be hired."

Two names from within that have been heavily speculated as candidates to become the new defensive coordinator are defensive backs coach Phil Parker and linebackers coach Darrell Wilson, both of whom shared defensive coordinator duties in 2010 when Norm was in the hospital recovering from his amputation.

Like Barta, Norm said the decision on a replacement is solely Ferentz's to make and that he would be supportive of whoever took over, whether it be a current assistant or someone on the outside.

As for advice he'd leave his successor, Norm simply said he'd

congratulate him and wish him luck.

"I'd tell them that the guys are going to fight hard," he said. "I'd tell them you got good people, going to work for a good person, work in a good place.

"Don't drive too fast down Melrose [Ave.], you get a parking ticket. That guy out there will get you. Other than that, that's the only hazard – that cop out there on Melrose."

### **Squashing Ferentz rumors**

After briefly commenting on Parker to start Friday's press conference, Ferentz stood off to the side as Parker spoke and left the room before questions could be asked of him about both finding a replacement for Parker and the rumors that continue to swirl about his job status.

Ferentz, who is under contract at Iowa through 2020, was previously linked to the opening at Penn State, and in the last week has been linked to the recent vacancy in Kansas City after the Chiefs let go of head coach Todd Haley on Dec. 12. The Chiefs' general manager is Scott Pioli, who has been a close friend of Ferentz's dating back to their days working together in Cleveland under then-Browns head coach Bill Belichick.

Barta said Friday no one – from either the NFL or from college – has contacted him about Ferentz, who unequivocally said Dec. 4 he intended to coach at Iowa in 2012 and beyond.

"Every year there are rumors, and fortunately every year he's back the next year to coach at Iowa," Barta said. "No change in status, so let's go get ready for the bowl game.

"It's status quo."

### ***HawkeyeDrive.com's* Insight Bowl coverage**

Be sure to check out *HawkeyeDrive.com* between Dec. 26-31 for

complete coverage of the 2011 Insight Bowl between the Hawkeyes and 19th-ranked Sooners from Arizona, featuring interviews from players on both teams and coaches Kirk Ferentz and Bob Stoops, notebooks, and complete game coverage on Dec. 30 when the two teams square off at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz.

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