

12/27/2011: Insight Bowl notebook

By Brendan Stiles

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SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – The 2011 Insight Bowl marks the final time Iowa defensive coordinator Norm Parker will coach a football game. But if the demeanor shown by him and his players during [Tuesday's practice at Chaparral High School](#) was any indication, the spotlight on Parker is his coaching farewell appears minimal.

Which is exactly how Parker wants it to be.

“The game has nothing to do with me,” Parker said. “The game’s about the players. I’m just along for the ride. It has been a nice ride, but the game’s about the players. It’s not about the coaches.”

The players who spoke Tuesday acknowledged that a “Win one for Norm” mindset exists, but they’ve also taken to heart what Parker has told them about not letting that be *the* motivation for facing the Sooners.

“We’re out here as a team, and we’re trying to get a ‘W.’ It’s a huge game for us,” said junior cornerback Micah Hyde, who scored the game-winning touchdown in last year’s Insight Bowl on a 72-yard interception return. “If he leaves with a ‘W,’ that would make it that much sweeter.”

As for this being Parker’s last hurrah with the program, it hasn’t added to or diminished the admiration his players have for him.

“He has done a lot for this program,” senior linebacker Tyler Nielsen said. “He’s deserving of going out right.”

Transitioning from Kaczenski to Woods

Defensive tackle Mike Daniels called it “hard to swallow” at first upon hearing that former defensive line coach Rick Kaczenski was leaving to ultimately take a similar position at Nebraska. Kaczenski spent two seasons as a graduate assistant at Iowa before being promoted in 2007 to replace Ron Aiken, who took a job as the Arizona Cardinals’ defensive line coach that he still holds now.

Daniels was a true freshman when Kaczenski took over that role and over those five years, they built what Daniels called “a great relationship.” With Kaczenski no longer in the picture, Daniels said his motivation in dealing with the coaching change comes from former teammates along the defensive line such as Mitch King and Matt Kroul, who went through the process back in 2007 when Kaczenski took over for Aiken.

“[Kaczenski] taught me everything I know,” Daniels said. “But I watched how those guys persevered when Coach Aiken left, and I just learned to take it from them.”

Filling in for Kaczenski as Iowa’s interim defensive line coach for the Insight Bowl is former linebacker LeVar Woods, who has served as the team’s Administrative Assistant and actually filled in on the staff during the 2010 season when Parker was hospitalized following his foot amputation.

In a week’s worth of time, Woods has left an impression that linemen like Daniels have viewed as a pleasant surprise.

“He’s a defensive-minded guy,” Daniels said. “He knows leverage, hand placement, things like that. He knows a lot more about defensive line than I thought he did, so LeVar’s doing a heck of a job. He’s working with us, we’re working with him, and we’re just moving on.”

Dealing with Jones

With the Iowa defense being emphasized at post-practice interviews Tuesday, a lot of talk swirled around Oklahoma quarterback Landry Jones, who enters the Insight Bowl with 4,302 yards passing and 28 touchdowns this season. However, Jones has struggled as of late, having thrown seven of his 14 interceptions this season over the past three-and-a-half games since an ACL injury ended wide receiver Ryan Broyles' season.

But for Jones' recent struggles, his presence on the Sooners has caught the attention of Parker, who likened him Tuesday to New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady.

"When he's hot, he's hot," Parker said. "You just hope that you can defend him. He's terrific when he's hot.

"He's probably one of the better guys in the country."

Watching Jones on tape also caught the attention of players like Nielsen, who described him as a great passer.

"He's smooth, he can throw it a long way and can throw it hard," Nielsen said. "He has got some receivers that can catch the ball, so it's going to be a challenge for us."

Considine on hand at practice

The Hawkeyes received a visit from former free safety Sean Considine during their practice Tuesday. Considine is currently playing for the nearby Arizona Cardinals in what is his seventh season in the NFL.

Considine was among the former players Parker spoke in high regard of during his retirement press conference back in Iowa City on Dec. 16, adding that the free safety spot was one that would be of importance for the Hawkeyes in their contest against Oklahoma later this week.

"He'd like to know that on game day, there's going to be a guy that goes out there and takes charge and gets lined up," Considine said. "Oklahoma's a good football team. They're

going to make plays, but you don't want them to make plays because you're not lined up and guys aren't doing what they're supposed to do."

Considine was a welcomed sight by head coach Kirk Ferentz and players like Hyde, who originally began this season at free safety before switching back to cornerback prior to Iowa's contest against Pittsburgh last September.

"They're role models to all of us out here," Hyde said of Considine and other former players who take time to visit the team during practices. "You see them doing great things, and then they're coming back, showing us this is the right program to be at. It really makes you look forward to your future and knowing you're in the right place and you're doing good things."