

# Ferentz, Stoops express final thoughts before meeting in Insight Bowl



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz (left) and Oklahoma head coach Bob Stoops stand side-to-side behind the trophy for the 2011 Insight Bowl in between final pregame press conferences on Thursday, Dec. 29, 2011 in Scottsdale, Ariz.

By Brendan Stiles

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SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — As Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and Oklahoma head coach Bob Stoops both spoke publicly for the final time before their teams meet in the 2011 Insight Bowl on Friday, very little has changed as far as major headlines are concerned.

While Ferentz hasn't officially named a starter at running back to replace the suspended Marcus Coker, he did reveal that four players — sophomore fullback Brad Rogers, freshmen running backs Jordan Canzeri and Damon Bullock and senior

running back Jason White – will all play roles offensively for the Hawkeyes in Friday's contest.

"It will be a committee effort," Ferentz said. "I think I envision all four of those guys playing.

"They will do a good job. As long as we get the young guys out of the locker room and get them started, they will be fine."

Ferentz has said on multiple occasions, including during his press conference Thursday, how he believes his squad might have a psychological edge due to Oklahoma not being as familiar with anyone from that quartet of backs. Naturally, Stoops expressed disagreement in those remarks.

"I don't believe they are going to change offenses," Stoops said. "So I think what you still prepare for are the formations and the plays that they are used to running.

"I'm sure they will find guys that if they have space, they will be able to jump in and make something happen."

### **Stoops, the Disciplinarian**

Oklahoma enters this contest with a 9-3 record after entering this season ranked as the preseason No. 1 team in the land. Attrition due to injuries, suspensions and other issues have played roles in the Sooners being in this game, and being in this game short-handed.

Stoops was asked about some of the decisions he had to make earlier this season regarding the players who have been either suspended or removed from the team altogether. He didn't mention specific names, but he also held nothing back.

"I think some of that is just more recognized because we've lost a few games," Stoops said. "Some of them have been told they need to transfer because I'm not renewing their scholarship. You are here to go to school and to be a heck of a football player, or at least try to be. And if you are not

doing ... living up to those obligations, you are not earning your way and you are bringing the team down.

Stoops also added that practices have been easier for him as a coach over the past few weeks.

"You know why? Because that two percent of my team isn't eating up 90 percent of my time all of a sudden," Stoops said. "It's pretty simple. You feel a lot better, that's for sure."

### **Iowa injuries**

As for Iowa, Ferentz said Thursday the Hawkeyes will be without the services of three players, all of whom are dealing with injuries – senior tight end Brad Herman, freshman tight end Ray Hamilton and freshman linebacker Quinton Alston.

Herman and Alston were listed on Iowa's original 2-deep for this game prior to the announcement of Coker's suspension.

"[Herman] had a bad foot sprain that didn't require surgery, but hasn't responded. He won't play," Ferentz said. "Ray Hamilton has a little bit of a knee issue that hasn't responded, so I don't think he will play. Quinton Alston will be held out medically, too."

"I think those three guys are the only three that are out of the game at this stage."

Ferentz also said senior offensive tackle Markus Zusevics had been dealing with a flu bug, but still expects him to be ready Friday.

### **Sooners remain a heavy favorite**

As of Thursday, Oklahoma was tabbed as a 13.5-point favorite. With that comes the sort of high expectations Stoops said he and his program deal with routinely.

"It doesn't matter," Stoops said. "We are supposed to win all

the time, and when we do, a lot of times it's ho-hum. This is no different."

Meanwhile, Ferentz has accepted the notion of his team being tabbed an underdog, saying the Hawkeyes don't deserve to be favored in this game after finishing 7-5 in the regular season for the second straight year.

"It's certainly good that our players understand we're hardly a favorite and shouldn't be," Ferentz said. "We will have to play our absolute best to make this a really good game."