

2012 NFL Draft: One-on-One with Jordan Bernstine

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

As Jordan Bernstine waits in anticipation to find out if his name will be called during the 2012 NFL Draft this weekend, the former Iowa safety took time recently to talk with *HawkeyeDrive.com* about what his future has in store for him, as well as reflect back on his Hawkeye career.

Below is a complete transcript of *HawkeyeDrive.com's* interview with Bernstine:

HawkeyeDrive.com (HD): Take me through what the last four months have been like for you, from the moment that you left the field following the Insight Bowl against Oklahoma up until now.

Jordan Bernstine: Well, since the Insight Bowl, I was down training in Huntsville, Ala., with Andy McCloy [Body Creations, Inc.]. He's a great trainer and he got me prepared for my Pro Day. I've just been talking with teams, interviewing, and just doing workouts. It has been a different process because I've been kind of flying here and there and moving around a little bit more than I'm used to. But it has been an interesting process and I've been taking it all in stride.

HD: You mentioned meeting with teams and flying around. What has that experience been like in terms of going from one part of the country to talk a team and then suddenly, you're going to the other part of the country?

Bernstine: It's definitely a different experience. Like I

said, I'm not used to it, but I can get used to it. I mean, just flying around, the trips are pretty quick. A day or two turnover. I'm back in Iowa City training now. I mean, it's pretty humbling.

HD: You played in the NFLPA Collegiate Bowl out in California last January. When you were down there for that, how would you describe that experience of playing in a game of that magnitude with guys you aren't familiar with, but are in the same boat as?

Bernstine: Yeah, it was definitely a good experience. I got a chance to be down there with some good players from schools all around the country and just being able to socialize with them, as well as be with them on the field, it was a good experience.

HD: Was there anything from that experience that stood out?

Bernstine: Yeah. Just being around NFL coaches and guys that played in the NFL as far as our coaching staffs. I mean, just being around them, being around an NFL atmosphere. There were a bunch of guys that were talking to us and stuff like that and meetings. Just getting that outlook, it was definitely helpful.

HD: What has been the overall tone of the conversations you've had with the teams you've met?

Bernstine: The feedback that I've gotten is teams like my versatility and explosiveness and just know that I could help out somewhere with special teams immediately. I definitely like that and that's an area where I feel I would be able to help a team out early. They ask about my background. A lot of teams didn't know about me just because I only got that one year of starting at Iowa, but that one year and playing in that system, I felt like it was pretty productive and I just helped myself there.

HD: You mentioned only starting one season and you had to take a medical redshirt in 2009 after injuring your ankle. At that point in time, did you ever think this would be a reality for you? And if so, at what point did you start thinking you had a realistic shot to someday make an NFL roster?

Bernstine: I mean, it has always been a dream of mine to play at the next level. When I injured my ankle, I broke it. It was a setback, you know. I just always have a pretty optimistic outlook on life and I just got to keep going. It was just another bump in the road. I rehabbed hard from that and came back even stronger, I guess you would say. It helped me be able to overcome obstacles and just still stay positive and continue to work hard.

HD: What did it mean for you to get that opportunity last season, to finally be inserted into the starting defensive backfield and getting a chance to play on a regular basis?

Bernstine: It meant a lot. I mean, it was something that I had to work hard for. It definitely was not given to me. Coach [Phil] Parker was our D-Backs coach and he was a great coach. He just made it known that I was going to have to earn it, that I wasn't going to be given a spot. So I went out there and I practiced hard every day and finally earned the starting spot and just tried to go out and perform every day.

HD: This is a two-part question: First, were you disappointed you weren't invited to the NFL Combine? And secondly, was not getting that invite motivation for you as you entered your Pro Day?

Bernstine: I wouldn't say I was disappointed, but I would've liked to have gotten that invite, just to be around the other players at my position and just with all the other players around the country that were performing at a high level. I mean, it was definitely a motivating factor because I knew I could put up these numbers and just go out and kind of show

the teams what I can do.

HD: What went through your mind as you went through your Pro Day and saw all these NFL scouts who congregated down here to Iowa City for it have their eyes on you as you worked out?

Bernstine: I mean, it really wasn't that big of a shock. I knew that's what it was going to be like and it was more of a situation where I knew I had to rise to the occasion. So I just went out there and just tried to give it my best and put up some pretty good numbers.

HD: Funny you say "rise to the occasion," because one number I have to ask you about is your vertical leap, which was 41 inches. Is that the highest you've ever jumped?

Bernstine: Actually, it's not. I've actually jumped a little higher. I mean, I was satisfied with that performance. I just went out and jumped.

HD: You said you've jumped higher. When would that have taken place? During another workout or a pickup basketball game?

Bernstine: It was during workouts over the years. But that was the highest that I've jumped using the system that we used on Pro Day, which is just the things that you jump up and touch. At Iowa, we usually test the vertical on the pad. But I think the one we used on Pro Day was a little more accurate.

HD: Well, the reason I asked is because I looked at some of the vertical numbers from the NFL Combine and none of the DBs that were there had a 41 jump like you had at your Pro Day.

Bernstine: Oh yeah. I would've loved to be at the Combine and just perform there. But it didn't work out that way, so I got a chance at Pro Day to show that.

HD: As you've gone through the process, have you found yourself liking certain teams more than others and hoping that one of the teams who left a good impression on you ends up

taking you if they have the chance?

Bernstine: Um, yeah. I have some teams that I've kept in contact with a little more than others. Those teams, they just explained to me that they like me a lot. They don't know where they'd take me or how I'd get to the camp, but they just explained that they would love to have me in camp, however it is that I get there, whether they draft me or what. But I'm just looking forward to the opportunity and just wait to get a shot.

HD: Who is your agent right now, if you don't mind me asking?

Bernstine: My agent is James Martin from OTG Sports.

HD: The other thing I want to clear up quickly: You mentioned training in Huntsville. How have you been able to divide up the time between there and Iowa City?

Bernstine: Yes, that's where I did my Pro Day preparation. So leading up until Pro Day, that's where I was at working out. Since then, I've been back in Iowa City with Coach [Chris] Doyle and been working with the Iowa staff.

HD: I saw that your uncle, Rod, played in the NFL. Has he given you any advice along the way as you prepare for your opportunity?

Bernstine: Yeah. I talk with my uncle all the time. He has just kind of telling me to keep an open mind. Like, don't try to project myself at a position in the draft. Don't get down on myself if I'm not drafted here or there. I just have to try to keep an open mind and just wait to get that shot. Once I get that opportunity, I feel like I'm going to perform at a high level and just try to do whatever I can do to help the team.

HD: Have you found yourself talking to any former teammates lately, maybe someone like an Adrian Clayborn or Tyler Sash

who just went through this last year?

Bernstine: I talk to those guys a little bit. I talk to Adrian sometimes. I talked with Sash a few weeks ago. They've just been brief conversations, just catching up and seeing how they're doing, while at the same time learning a little more about the process.

HD: What have they told you about the process? I would imagine it's completely different now as opposed to when your uncle played.

Bernstine: Yeah, it's a lot different than when my uncle played and I think he was just in a totally different situation. He was a first-round draft pick. They've just told me that I've done all that I can do, as far as putting myself in a good position. I mean, I performed well at Pro Day, I've done interviews, all this stuff. So now it's just kind of a waiting game.

HD: What are your plans this weekend while the draft is going on? Are you going to be watching every minute of it, or is it something you're just trying to completely avoid watching altogether until you get a call?

Bernstine: I haven't decided exactly. I don't think it'll be something that I'll be watching every minute of. I might glance here or there. For the most part, I'm just going to relax, probably be around family, have a few friends there and just kind of relax like it's a normal weekend.

HD: You talked earlier about scenarios that teams laid out for you. Have you been able to plan out scenarios on your end yet as far as what happens if you get drafted, or what happens if a team decides to bring you on board as a free agent?

Bernstine: No, I haven't necessarily figured that out yet. I've talked about it a little bit with my family and agent and stuff like that, but it's just something that you've got to

play by ear and just cross the bridge when you get to it.

HD: Why do you believe you'll be a productive player in the NFL?

Bernstine: I feel like I'll be a productive player in the NFL for the fact that I feel like my best football is ahead of me. Like I said, I only had one year of starting at safety. I've only played safety for one season, a few months. I'm still learning the position, so once I get into a system and get more reps at safety, I feel like I'll be able to perform better. Also, I feel like I have that versatility where I can help out on special teams immediately and go do whatever I can there. I'm hungry, so I'm just going to go out and give it my all. I mean, you only get one shot.

HD: You mentioned playing safety. Have teams discussed having you maybe play corner at all, or are they all pretty much on board with you as a safety since that's what you played at Iowa last year?

Bernstine: I think safety is the mindset that they have, but they've also told me they like the fact that I can play corner. I played corner at Iowa for three years, so they like that I can play corner. That's in my bag. Also nickel-back, and I can cover. A lot of teams know that I like to hit, but one thing I think that some teams don't know is that I can go out there and cover if I'm on an island and I have the ability to do that.

HD: Last question – When you look back on your time at Iowa, what are you going to remember the most about playing for the Hawkeyes?

Bernstine: One thing that I'll remember most is just meeting these guys I've built these relationships with. Guys like Marvin McNutt, Shaun Prater, guys like that. They're some of my best friends to the day. I mean, that's something that you don't really think about when you think about your time at

Iowa. You think about a big hit or a big play here. I like those relationships and things that I'm going to have, even after football.