

8/6/2012: Iowa Media Day notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz speaks to assembled media during his Media Day press conference held on Monday, Aug. 6, 2012, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Depth. Football teams – heck, any sort of team in the world of athletics – crave it. Depth is what makes the difference in a particular part being viewed as either a strength or weakness. It's what allows teams to handle adversity in a successful manner. It's what football coaches everywhere are looking for right now as the 2012 season looms.

In the case of the Iowa Hawkeyes, depth has slowly and painfully been depleted through the years at the running back position. Just since the Hawkeyes' win over Georgia Tech in the 2010 Orange Bowl, seven running backs have left the program – either by their own accord, or, in the most recent case involving sophomore De'Andre Johnson last week, by being dismissed altogether.

Johnson was initially suspended from all team activities by head coach Kirk Ferentz back on July 29 after compiling two offenses over a three-day course. Three days later came Ferentz's more recent decision to remove Johnson entirely from the roster.

"Nothing has been decided in either case, but it's like every player. Every player has a chart and they're either adding to it or taking away from it," Ferentz said. "I just made the decision that I think was best for all parties."

Ferentz believes he currently has players at running back who are "capable." But to put this conundrum into further perspective, two of the four players currently in contention are true freshmen while the other two both rushed for fewer yards last season than quarterback James Vandenberg.

Currently atop the 2-deep is sophomore Damon Bullock, who spent the majority of last season as a wide receiver before moving back to running back last winter prior to Iowa's 31-14 loss to Oklahoma in the Insight Bowl. Featured right there with Bullock now in light of Johnson's dismissal is junior Brad Rogers, who is also listed as the team's No. 1 fullback. Then there are the two true freshmen – Barkley Hill of Cedar Falls and Greg Garmon, who hails from Erie, Pa.

"We'll just see how it goes, but the guys are working hard out there," Ferentz said. "I think we certainly have enough talent out there and hopefully we can bridge the experience gap as well."

Canzeri not completely ruling out return this season

When spring ball began last March, Jordan Canzeri was poised to become the Hawkeyes' starting running back. As a true freshman last season, he had 114 yards on the ground with 58 of those yards coming against Oklahoma in the Insight Bowl.

However, Canzeri tore his ACL in late March after making a cut

during a non-contact drill. The initial prognosis was a lost season.

"It wasn't really the pain that bugged me. It was just the fact that I knew that it definitely was something that wasn't normal," Canzeri said, reflecting back on how the injury occurred. "It was the first main injury that I ever had and I felt like I was doing really good with the team at that point.

"With injuries, you just have to hold your head up high and just can't look at the negatives."

On Monday, Canzeri said he was told by doctors how his recovery had gone faster than normal, which naturally leads to the question whether his return to the field might still happen this year. While that return shouldn't be expected anytime soon, Canzeri didn't completely dismiss the notion, saying it would be an option barring any future setbacks.

"I'm hoping that I can be able to work my way to that point and I would definitely love to be able to play this year," Canzeri said. "The possibility for it is a 'maybe.' The hope for it is a 'yes.'"

Alvis, Davis return to D-line

Two players who are back and could have an impact on the defensive line in 2012 are junior defensive end Dominic Alvis and sophomore defensive tackle Carl Davis. Both are back on the practice field now after missing all of Iowa's spring practices due to recoveries from knee operations. Alvis tore his ACL during the Hawkeyes' 24-16 win over Michigan last season, while Davis had a procedure done in the offseason shortly after the team returned from the Insight Bowl.

"The first practice, I had a lot of energy and honestly, it just feels really good to be back out here running around," Davis said. "I missed it a lot."

Both players stressed the importance of being able to take mental reps during spring football since neither was able to take part in any practices. Whether the observations they made came during practices or from watching film, the fundamentals being taught by first-year defensive line coach Reese Morgan have been taken to heart.

"There's only so much you can do when you're injured," Alvis said after describing himself as being rusty after the first few practices back on the gridiron. "I did as much as I could. Now it's just actually physically doing the work."

Morgan said he has noticed Davis' hunger for being back on the field, as well as Alvis continuing to re-develop the confidence he played with prior to his knee injury last November.

"I think they're coming along," Morgan said. "Both of them are certainly great young men and they're going to be an important part of our defense."

Sleeper suspended, Getz taking medical redshirt

During his press conference Monday, Ferentz made two announcements in his opening statement regarding player personnel. Senior safety Collin Sleeper will serve what Ferentz said was "a multi-game suspension" stemming from a team rules violation committed last year (Sleeper wasn't on the sidelines with the team during last year's Insight Bowl). Aside from the suspension being a minimum of two games, no timetable was given for when Sleeper could return.

Ferentz also revealed that linebacker Dakota Getz would take a medical redshirt this year. Getz, who would've been a fourth-year junior, injured his knee on the opening kickoff during Iowa's 44-41 loss to Iowa State last season and Ferentz said Getz's recovery hadn't been going according to plan this offseason.

“Our first concern obviously is him graduating,” Ferentz said. “He may come back and help in the program in some phase down the road, but I think he just wanted a little time.”

[Kirk Ferentz, Iowa Media Day press conference transcript \(Aug. 6, 2012\)](#)