

Former Hawkeyes, Cyclones relive rivalry

By Brendan Stiles

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CORALVILLE, Iowa – When the Iowa Hawkeyes and Iowa State Cyclones face each other Saturday afternoon, it will mark the 36th consecutive meeting between the two schools since the in-state rivalry was resumed on an annual basis in 1977.

With the fourth annual FryFest being centered around the rivalry between the Hawkeyes and Cyclones, a discussion panel was held during the event Friday afternoon at the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. Various players to play for both schools were on hand to take part in the panel and relive their playing experiences against the opposing team.

Among the former Hawkeyes on hand was defensive tackle John Harty, who was a member of the 1977 Iowa squad that defeated Iowa State 7-6 in the first game after the rivalry resumed. With former Cyclones such as wide receivers Jim Solus and Thomas Buck and quarterback John Quinn also on hand, the four players recounted playing in that first contest.

It was the first of four straight games that were played at Kinnick Stadium as part of the original agreement to bring back the rivalry. The Cyclones also famously wore jerseys that said “Beat Iowa” on the front for that first contest 35 years ago.

“We came out with the ‘Beat Iowa’ jerseys on, which was pretty bold and that’s how Earle was,” Solus said, referencing then-Iowa State head coach Earle Bruce. “The thing to do is to win the game and we lost. That jersey now lives in infamy.”

From 1982-1997, Iowa won 16 straight games over Iowa State. Three members of the 1985 Rose Bowl team – quarterback Chuck Long, linebacker Larry Station and kicker Rob Houghtlin – were all part of the panel. Station recalled losing the first Iowa-Iowa State game he was a part of, and how then-assistant coach Dan McCarney – who would later go on to become Iowa State's head coach – was “the ringleader” among the coaches letting the players have it the following week.

“He used to talk about Iowa State so bad,” Station said. “So I learned the lesson that after we lost to Iowa State that first time, we should never lose to them again.

“There was more importance on that game than almost any game of the year that I can remember.”

Iowa State defeated Iowa 27-9 in 1998, ending its 16-year drought against the Hawkeyes. Former Iowa linebacker Matt Hughes was a captain on the 1998 squad and expressed how the loss still stings him to this day.

“I’ll never forget that feeling of walking back to the dorms and how disgusted we were that we lost to the Cyclones,” Hughes said. “It was just one of those things that was engrained into us by our coaching staff all those years. You win that game, no matter what. That was a tough one to take.”

Former Iowa wide receiver Warren Holloway was on hand and mentioned a story from the 2001 game between the two teams at Jack Trice Stadium, one that was won by Iowa State, but played in November due to the game being postponed by the 9/11 attacks. While the Hawkeyes lost the game, what happened sent the message to him about the rivalry's importance.

Holloway said on the team bus, the highlight tape they watched on bus trips wasn't working, which prompted then-offensive coordinator Ken O'Keefe to smash the tape in front of the team and say how they didn't need a tape to prepare them to go and win.

“For all of us that know Coach O’Keefe, that was very much out of his character,” Holloway said. “All of us were just sitting there and looking at him and we didn’t know how to respond. It was at that moment that I realized how important the rivalry was from the coaching standpoint.

“It wasn’t just about going to a better bowl game. It was Iowa State.”

Representing the most recent group of Hawkeye and Cyclone players present were four guys who all played in the 2007 meeting won by Iowa State, 15-13. One of the former Cyclones was the player who scored all of Iowa State’s points that afternoon – kicker Brett Culbertson. Joining him was former Cyclone quarterback Bret Meyer, former Iowa linebacker Mike Humpal and former Iowa wideout Andy Brodell.

“That game, just knowing what that meant to the state of Iowa and everything, it really just helped me focus,” Culbertson said. “Focus on what you have to do and just forget about everything else.”

Towards the end, a question directed at both Brodell and Humpal was asked from the audience about how much of an emphasis current Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz placed on the rivalry when they played. Brodell was quick to say rivalry games, in his opinion, hinge squarely on the players.

“I think, quite honestly, he just expected us to approach the game differently,” Brodell said. “When you play in a rivalry game, and it certainly has been a rivalry game the past 10 years, you know you better show up to play. At that point, I don’t think the coaches need to say anything.

“If we lose the game, it’s either we didn’t do something right or Iowa State played exceptionally well. It doesn’t have anything to do with what he’s doing to motivate us.”