

# COMMENTARY: How open is open?



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses recent coaching changes during a press conference held Friday, Feb. 22, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – For years, Iowa under head coach Kirk Ferentz has developed a reputation of closing itself off. What happened inside the Iowa football complex remained there and it was Ferentz's way or the highway.

Friday afternoon, Ferentz held a press conference to discuss the three coaching changes recently made to his staff. Gone are former assistants Erik Campbell, Darrell Wilson and Lester Erb. In house now are Bobby Kennedy, Jim Reid and Chris White, who was officially named running backs coach/special teams coordinator on Friday.

As Ferentz began to discuss these changes, as well as how things would change with Iowa's recruiting, the underlying theme of openness developed with each word uttered.

Last year, openness was something discussed but never really put to practice by the Hawkeyes and a 4-8 season was the end result. It's one thing to talk about being open. It's another to actually show it.

While Ferentz remained guarded about certain topics that were broached on Friday, to his credit, he was more straightforward about things such as who would coach what position. As far as being more open about things, it's a start.

This isn't to suggest Ferentz has done a complete 180 over the last three months. There are certain aspects of what he does and how he operates that won't ever change. But the vibe given off Friday is that he's at least cognizant of the fact that he has to adapt if Iowa is going to avoid seasons of 4-8 or worse in the short term.

"I don't think we need to throw our whole system out, that's for sure. But fresh ideas are good, certainly, and if there's someone that can do something to supplement what we're already doing, that's a great thing," Ferentz said. "Those are things we talk about in meetings and that's how we grow. Getting people to throw ideas out there is a good and healthy thing."

Whether the topics were about who handled what duties, whether kids from areas not being as heavily emphasized in recruiting (i.e. Florida) anymore would still be targets, or about players maybe changing positions this offseason, Ferentz mentioned being "open to anything."

Some might say he's merely saying this now to appease the fan base, only to then resort back to old ways that might have worked 10 years ago, but aren't working now. This is what ended up happening in 2012 and it backfired.

But that being said, Ferentz has a chance to rectify the things that changed the perception around him among the majority of the fan base and right now at least, he appears willing to take those steps. The stigma of going 4-8 has stuck

with him throughout the offseason and will probably continue to stick with him until Iowa opens its 2013 season six months from now against Northern Illinois.

This is a time where Iowa has to show it can be open to its fans and for Ferentz to show he can be open to anything that could make his program better. Entering his 15th season as the Hawkeyes' head coach, he's now the only constant from Day One to now.

Time will tell as to whether 2013 will be a success for Iowa and whether the remainder of Ferentz's tenure remains an overall success. But it appears the wake-up call was delivered. Now the question becomes just how open will things become in 2013.

"I think everybody has been motivated by the fact that we didn't play as well as we wanted, didn't have the record we wanted, didn't go to a bowl game," Ferentz said. "If there's a positive in that, sometimes it's a good reminder."

### **Coaching duties**

With White's addition to the staff, Ferentz said Friday the staff was set. As far as the changes made are concerned, White would coach running backs, while Kennedy takes over coaching wide receivers and Reid will assist LeVar Woods with coaching linebackers. Defensive coordinator Phil Parker will also handle coaching defensive backs, which was his role on the staff prior to being promoted defensive coordinator last year.

As far as special teams go, White will oversee the unit as a whole while Woods and graduate assistant Kelvin Bell assist, whereas before, Erb and Wilson both oversaw special teams.

"We've had discussion on that and will continue to have discussion," Ferentz said in reference to talks he has had with White. "The other guys have been really good about

chipping in and I think that will remain the same.”

Meanwhile, recruiting is a little more convoluted. Defensive line coach Reese Morgan will continue to recruit the state of Iowa and nearby states, and Eric Johnson will keep his recruiting territories the same. Offensive line coach Brian Ferentz, along with Reid, will both take over Erb’s territory of Chicago and the younger Ferentz will be assisted now with recruiting the state of Ohio by both Reid and Parker.

Parker will also oversee Michigan as he has, while Woods will keep his recruiting areas of Kansas City and Texas and be assisted in Texas by both Davis and Kennedy, both of whom have connections to the state having been Longhorn assistants. White’s duties will mainly consist of the East Coast, which was Wilson’s territory before.

### **Looking ahead to the spring**

Iowa will conduct its annual Pro Day on March 25 and then start spring practices two days later. The team’s open practice at Kinnick Stadium is currently slated for April 27.

Ferentz didn’t mention any specific position changes as far as player personnel goes, but did say the Hawkeyes would be without the services of both junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat and senior offensive lineman Nolan MacMillan this spring. He also said fullback Brad Rogers and linebacker Jim Poggi have taken medical redshirts, marking the end of both players’ careers.

**TRANSCRIPT:** [Kirk Ferentz, Feb. 22, 2013 press conference](#) (Courtesy: UI Sports Info.)