

# 4/24/2013: Iowa spring football notebook

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – In years past, the Iowa Hawkeyes have concluded their spring football period by conducting their final practice at Kinnick Stadium and making it open to the public. This essentially became an alternative to Iowa having an actual spring game like most schools have.

On Wednesday, the Hawkeyes made a tweak to their itinerary and appear to be inching closer to the spring game concept. Fans who gather at Kinnick Stadium on April 27 will be treated to what is being called "[a controlled scrimmage](#)" that will feature four 15-minute quarters, as well as scoring that can be done by both the offensive and defensive sides of the football.

"We're excited about that," junior wide receiver Kevonte Martin-Manley said. "You know, we watch other teams around the country, around the Big Ten. They're having games and we always pushed for that. We always wanted a game as well."

"It just brings a little more excitement, a little more reality, to the field."

The players seem enthusiastic about the change of pace, but they also realize that what will be expected of them won't be too different, thus their demeanor can't be completely different either.

"I don't think it changes my approach," senior linebacker James Morris said. "When I'm going out there, I'm going out there to get better and work and improve. Whether it's a game

format or a traditional practice format, it doesn't really change much for me."



Iowa offensive coordinator Greg Davis discusses the end of spring practices during his press conference held Wednesday, April 24, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

### **Quarterbacks "owning drives"**

When Iowa offensive coordinator Greg Davis took the dais Wednesday, he first explained the scoring for Saturday's scrimmage, then immediately said the coaches still "have no idea" who will end up being the starter at quarterback this season.

Much like head coach Kirk Ferentz has throughout the spring, Davis said the 3-way battle between sophomore Jake Rudock, junior Cody Sokol and redshirt freshman C.J. Beathard remains heated and that no separation has occurred yet. But after spending the majority of the spring rotating the three QBs every two snaps, separation might start happening here soon.

The quarterbacks have recently started practicing what Davis called, "owning drives." In other words, instead of rotating after every two snaps, the three signal-callers are now rotating after every offensive series. Davis said this type of rotation will be on full display Saturday afternoon during the

team's scrimmage, meaning not all three signal-callers are going to take the same number of snaps.

At the top of Davis' criteria for who ultimately wins the starting job are three things – making plays off schedule, not turning the football over and creating big plays. With that in mind, how a quarterback “owns” a drive could play a heavy emphasis in what happens.

“The quarterback is busy taking his team from here to there. That will be a big part of it,” Davis said. “But also taking care of the ball, getting us in the right plays and creating explosive plays. That has been a big emphasis in evaluating those guys. If they’ve had an opportunity, did they create that play?”

Meanwhile, the criteria isn't nearly as complex from other offensive skill players. Among the things they're looking for in who emerges as quarterback are leadership skills, intelligence, and smooth delivery throwing the football.

And then there's the emphasis again on explosive plays.

“Our goal every week going into the game is make nine explosive plays – five in the run, four in the pass,” senior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz said. “You do that, you get a good chance to win the game.”



Iowa defensive coordinator Phil Parker discusses the end of spring practices

during his press conference held Wednesday, April 24, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

### **Parker returning to secondary**

One possibly overlooked part of the coaching shuffle made by Ferentz this offseason was the decision to have defensive coordinator Phil Parker hold two job titles – his current one and his former one.

A year after being promoted to defensive coordinator, Parker came to what he said Wednesday was “a mutual decision” between him and Ferentz to also work specifically with the secondary again after last season’s secondary coach, Darrell Wilson, left to take an assistant coaching role at Rutgers. Parker served as Iowa’s defensive backs coach during the first 13 seasons of Ferentz’s Iowa tenure.

“I didn’t really give it a lot of thought,” Parker said about taking over coaching the secondary again. “I was doing it for such a long time. The year before when we went through and I wasn’t actually in meetings, I kind of missed it.

“I was looking for the opportunity to come back, so I was pleased to get back there.”

One thing Parker does remain hesitant on right now though is where he’ll coach from during games this fall. When he previously served as Iowa’s defensive backs coach, Parker coached from the sidelines. Last season when he took over as defensive coordinator, he moved up to the press box and coached from there.

Nevertheless, he finds himself enthused to work with the secondary again and the players in that group have also taken notice of that enthusiasm.

"I think it makes a difference," junior strong safety John Lowdermilk said. "He's a great coach. He obviously played, so he knows everything that's going on. He's a really good teacher. He points little things out on film. If you take one wrong step, he's correcting you right away.

"He jokes around and says he misses us and I think he's excited to be back."

### **Canzeri reflects back on ACL injury**

The journey back to the gridiron was a little longer than expected for Jordan Canzeri. An ACL tear last spring ultimately led to the running back redshirting as a true sophomore. Now fully healthy, Canzeri returns for the first of three remaining seasons of eligibility he has left as a Hawkeye.

On Wednesday, Canzeri was a bit more forthcoming about the injury and what ultimately led to him being redshirted. He said he felt ready to return before Iowa's season opener against Northern Illinois last season, but the coaches elected to remain cautious with him.

"I was just really head-strong and really focused to come back, to get my knee 100 percent and get back on the field with everybody," Canzeri said. "Right before the beginning of the season, I felt like I was ready to go, but I understood the coaches' decision to hold me unless I needed to play."

Canzeri said it was a few weeks into last season when the possibility of him redshirting altogether first dawned on him, yet he continued to practice in the event he might end up being called upon due to injuries.

He also revealed the redshirt nearly got burned during Iowa's 24-21 loss to Indiana back on Nov. 3. Mark Weisman was already sidelined due to injury and there was a point in that game where Damon Bullock got hurt, only to continue playing through

the pain.

"I was actually told to get ready and get warmed up," Canzeri said. "But it was good to see Damon get back up and he was fine the next couple of plays. It was so hard to be able to be so close to playing, but I understood why I wasn't, so it was fine."

### **Fiedorowicz looking to be more effective**

A year older and now with a new position coach who has more familiarity working with tight ends, Fiedorowicz has noticed himself becoming a different player this spring. Not just in terms of maturity – which one would expect with someone entering his senior season – but also in terms of play-making ability.

Iowa's tight end group is now coached by graduate assistant D.J. Hernandez, who joined Ferentz's staff this past winter after previously working as a GA at Miami (Fla.) under Al Golden. Hernandez's brother, Aaron, is entering his fourth season playing for the NFL's New England Patriots, where he and fellow tight end Rob Gronkowski are changing the way tight end is being played.

Fiedorowicz said D.J. Hernandez has already had an enormous impact on him, from showing him and the rest of Iowa's tight ends cut-ups of his brother and other NFL tight ends, to giving him new pointers in his game to allow him to get open more frequently in passing situations.

"I've learned a lot of things that I didn't even know," Fiedorowicz said in reference to little things in route-running he has picked up on from Hernandez. "Grinding on a defender, getting on their toes, just how important the head in the route is, getting out of your break fast. Just a lot of things that I never really thought of."

This newfound knowledge of the position he plays has made

enough of a difference during spring practices that Fiedorowicz feels he's becoming better at route-running and getting open downfield, which in effect could create more of those explosive plays he and everyone else feels were lacking a year ago.

"I've had trouble with my release at the line when there's a D-End head up on me," Fiedorowicz said. "He has given me a move so I can avoid kind of getting bumped, so I'm still running my route. That's the biggest thing – just getting out fast and getting into the route."

[4/24/2013: Greg Davis/Phil Parker press conference transcripts](#)