

9/17/2013: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Western Michigan during his weekly press conference held Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – As precipitation began to sprinkle from the sky last Saturday night in Ames, the odds of something raining on the Iowa Hawkeyes' celebration after beating Iowa State 27-21 appeared unlikely.

Unfortunately for nine members of the Iowa football program, they were struck with the disturbing news that [someone had snuck past security into the visitors' locker room at Jack Trice Stadium and ran off with personal items such as cell phones and cash](#). As of Tuesday, only one victim – co-linebackers coach LeVar Woods – [has publicly acknowledged being robbed of personal belongings](#) and the case is still being investigated by Iowa State University police.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz made his first comments on the matter during his weekly press conference Tuesday, one day after Iowa State issued a statement saying its athletics director, Jamie Pollard, had been in touch with both Ferentz and Iowa athletics director Gary Barta and that the nine victims would all be reimbursed should no suspect emerge from the ongoing investigation.

"It sounds like everything is being worked on right now," Ferentz said. "Things will be replaced, but it's just – as you might imagine – a real inconvenience for all of the people involved."

Barta, who occasionally makes appearances at Ferentz's weekly press conferences, wasn't on hand for comment Tuesday at the Hayden Fry Football Complex.

Iowa senior offensive lineman Brett Van Sloten – one of the Hawkeyes' four team captains this season – said he wasn't among those who had personal items stolen, but acknowledged what took place did dampen the mood in the locker room during the team's post-game celebration.

"It definitely brings it down a little bit. That's not a class act," Van Sloten said. "But with that being said, their university is handling it. I don't know all the X's and O's. Nothing of mine was taken."

"But Coach Ferentz, Mr. Barta and the staff over in Ames, they're all working on getting it resolved and I have confidence that they will. I'm sure whoever did it will be punished for it."

Weisman carrying the load

On a more pleasant matter for the Hawkeyes, there's the play of junior running back Mark Weisman. Through three games, Weisman ranks third nationally in rushing yards with 425 yards on the ground. This mark currently leads the Big Ten and he

has rushed for over 100 yards in all three contests, including 145 yards rushing against Iowa State.

What is a bit surprising though is Weisman has done this on 85 carries, the most to date of any player in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). The last two games specifically have shown Weisman getting 30 and 35 carries, respectively, leading to some concern on the outside as to whether he can remain this durable for the Hawkeyes for nine more games (10 more if Iowa reaches a bowl).

“He’s going to get hit and I think he knows that,” Ferentz said. “But I’ll tell you, fortunately for us, he takes really great care of himself and that helps at least.

The one thing Weisman said he attempts to combat more than anything else is muscle soreness upon waking up Sunday mornings. Among the things he’ll do for recovery following games are take a 10-15 minute ice bath and then get stretching in with trainers.

With all those carries, yards and hits endured though has been more of a spotlight. Weisman said he notices his peers taking note of who he is, but also doesn’t seem too phased by the added responsibility of his role both on and off the field.

“You always have to be level-headed no matter what, be humble no matter what,” Weisman said. “That’s what I’ve been taught. Those are the values my parents have taught me and I’ve continued to use them.”

Receiving progress

The only change made to Iowa’s 2-deep this week was a swap of first and second-string receivers between senior Don Shumpert and sophomore Tevaun Smith. Until Monday, Shumpert had been listed first-string and started all three of the Hawkeyes’ games thus far alongside junior wideout Kevonte Martin-Manley.

But Smith now finds himself listed at the top following a game where his lone reception was good for 25 yards.

"He's getting a lot more confident," Martin-Manley said about Smith. "He has a few plays under his belt now and getting used to the game tempo. It's so much different than practice.

"It's different in the games where it's live and it's full speed, so he's getting a lot of confidence now."

Ferentz made mention of how Smith has practiced well lately and that the next big thing he wants to see out of his Canadian wideout is consistency. For Smith, part of that consistency is holding onto the ball whenever it comes his way.

"I think my play has been O.K.," Smith said. "Obviously, I have a lot of stuff to work on. I had a drop last game and I'm going to be working towards not dropping at least one during a game."

Lowery's pick

The play that had everyone talking after Iowa's win over Iowa State was the fourth-quarter interception made by senior cornerback B.J. Lowery. It came shortly after the Cyclones recovered an onside kick that followed them trimming Iowa's lead to 27-14. Lowery leaped in the air, caught the pass thrown by Iowa State quarterback Sam Richardson one-handed, and came down maintaining possession of the football to give it back to the Hawkeye offense.

His highlight pick was good enough to be ranked fourth on ESPN's "SportsCenter's Top 10" over the weekend. Lowery said the only highlights he has seen of his interception have come courtesy of Instagram and YouTube. He also heard back from plenty of friends and family during the team's bus ride home from Ames.

"I was texting the whole way and my phone actually went dead on the bus ride back," Lowery said. "That's how busy it was."

The other interesting comment Lowery made Tuesday was that he didn't really give himself a chance to appreciate what he did, even when the play was shown while the team reviewed game film on Sunday and his teammates were going crazy watching it.

"Of course they liked it. I mean, even during the game when it happened, them guys were more excited about it than I was," Lowery said. "I was still kind of p-ed off about the plays I had given up."

"That's something I expect myself to do. I've done it a couple of times before, but doing that on that big of a stage just kind of brought it to everybody else's attention."

Scouting Western Michigan

The Broncos enter Saturday's contest at Kinnick Stadium with an 0-3 record. But the winless mark isn't what immediately grabbed the Hawkeyes' attention spans as players began watching film on Western Michigan.

Two of those three defeats came on the road to Michigan State and No. 18 Northwestern, both of whom are in the Big Ten's Legends Division along with Iowa. Last weekend against the Wildcats, Western Michigan actually held a 10-7 lead during the second quarter following a 75-yard touchdown reception from true freshman wideout Corey Davis, who had 112 yards receiving on 5 catches and has led the Broncos in receiving during all three of their games.

"Both of those programs are good, especially Northwestern," junior defensive tackle Carl Davis said. "They hung with them. They made some plays out there against them. Western Michigan is impressive."

One weakness Iowa should be able to exploit though if the past

three weeks are any indicator is the Broncos' run defense. Western Michigan has surrendered an average of 245 rushing yards per game, which ranks 105th nationally out of 125 FBS programs. While it held Northwestern under 500 yards of total offense last weekend, Western Michigan also allowed 447 yards of total offense to Nicholls State in a game it lost to the FCS program at home, 27-23, the weekend prior.

"They're going to come in with different wrinkles to try and stop our offense and rightfully so," Van Sloten said. "We're going to come up with different ways to beat their defense. But with that being said, they're going to bring a lot of energy and excitement to Kinnick and we've got to be ready to go. We can't take anyone lightly."