

2014 Outback Bowl: Alvis back at full strength

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

TAMPA, Fla. – The most newsworthy item to come out of Jesuit High School following the Hawkeyes' Sunday practice was Iowa defensive coordinator Phil Parker saying that senior defensive end Dominic Alvis will start in the 2014 Outback Bowl against No. 14 LSU.

Shortly after Parker spoke, Alvis met with reporters and confirmed he was back at full strength after a back injury suffered against Michigan State on Oct. 5 forced him to only play sparingly in three of Iowa's last seven Big Ten games. He played in the Hawkeyes' last two contests against Michigan and Nebraska, but was severely limited in both games due to the injury.

"There was a noticeable difference coming back from the injury, just kind of lagging a little bit," Alvis said. "But I feel like my old self again."

Alvis described the month of rehabilitation he had to endure as "tough," especially from the mental perspective of wanting to be out on the field with this being his senior season.

"You practice 365 days out of the year, you're training and then something like that throws you a road block," Alvis said. "There's a time where you get a little depressed, you get down on yourself and I went through that."

"But you got to just work through that and work through that and just pray for the best. Fortunately, I've been able to make a little recovery and feel like myself again and I'm very

fortunate to do that. Some people don't."

The last few weeks have aided Alvis well, as he was able to get some additional rest following the Hawkeyes' regular season finale at Nebraska. Parker said it will remain a rotation of sorts with Alvis, sophomore Drew Ott and junior Mike Hardy receiving the bulk of the reps at the two defensive end spots against the Tigers.

"It gives us a little bit more depth up there, especially with this big offensive line," Parker said. "I mean, these guys are big up front and they can wear you out."

But there's more to Alvis being at full strength than simply being another body along the Iowa front four. He's also regarded as one of the leaders of that group and is held in a similar light to that of the Hawkeyes' trio of senior linebackers.

"He's a smart guy," junior defensive tackle Carl Davis said. "He's talented and he's very cognizant of everything. You know, he watches me. He watches the defense. He lets me know what I'm doing in one-on-ones."

"That small detail I just can't get through, he helps me get through that."

Being plagued with injury wasn't what Alvis had in mind for his senior year, but the opportunity to get one last-go and have it being as close to 100 percent as he has been all year is something he isn't taking for granted.

"Just to finish my career playing a team like LSU, you can't ask for much more than that," Alvis said.

****Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.***