

Pair of Hawkeyes go in third round

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

After Iowa had only one player drafted last year, a pair of Hawkeyes taken Friday during the third round of the 2014 NFL Draft.

It started with the very first pick of the third round (65th overall) when the Houston Texans drafted former tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz, who became the first Iowa player to ever be taken by the Texans and the eighth Iowa tight end under Kirk Ferentz to get drafted.

"I've watched the Texans over the past couple of years and I've seen them use their tight ends," Fiedorowicz said during a conference call with Houston media. "It's a big part of their offense. I feel like I can continue that and keep things rolling at the tight end position."

Fiedorowicz said he had discussions at both the Senior Bowl and Combine with the Texans and that he went through a workout at Iowa's football complex for head coach Bill O'Brien, who coached Penn State when the Hawkeyes played the Nittany Lions during Fiedorowicz's junior season in 2012.

"We put him through various drills, really similar drills to what we do with all those type of tight ends. We see him as a Y-tight end," O'Brien said of his new 6-5, 265-pound tight end during a press conference Friday night with Houston media. "He had a good day that day. He was a really good guy to talk to. You could tell he was a team guy. I think anybody who plays for Kirk Ferentz has to be a team guy. He runs that type of program."

"In the meeting room there, he could explain what they were doing at Iowa when we watched film with him and then obviously when we watched tape of him last year, we saw a guy that got better and better as the year went on."

Six picks later, the Cleveland Browns used the 71st overall selection on former linebacker Christian Kirksey, who was the first Hawkeye linebacker drafted since both Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds heard their names called in 2010. Kirksey is also the first Iowa player drafted by Cleveland since its current version of the Browns returned to the NFL in 1999.

"It was mind-blowing," Kirksey said during a conference call with Cleveland media. "I've been playing this game since I was 7 years old. Just to see my name go across the screen and know that I'm going to be an NFL player, I'm just fired up. I'm ready to get down to Cleveland right now and just be a part of that family, be a part of that atmosphere."

Kirksey, who was primarily used as a LEO linebacker during the three seasons he started for the Hawkeyes, said the Browns coaching staff envisions him as an inside linebacker in their scheme. Mike Pettine is entering his first season as Cleveland's head coach after serving as Buffalo's defensive coordinator last year and then before that as the New York Jets' defensive coordinator for four seasons under Rex Ryan. He said Kirksey having "position flexibility" is what piqued his interest in him the most.

"We've always been one in our system to cherish a player that can play multiple spots," Pettine said during a press conference Friday night with Cleveland media. "He can play the MIKE, he can play the WILL, he can play outside on the edge if he had to."

He has some strong safety-type attributes, which I think with today's linebackers, you're looking for given the athletic tight ends and the spread formations you're getting."

The 2014 NFL Draft concludes Saturday with Rounds 4-7. Among the Iowa players still waiting to hear if their names get called include linebackers James Morris and Anthony Hitchens and offensive linemen Conor Boffeli and Brett Van Sloten.

****Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com following the draft Saturday for further coverage of any additional Iowa players getting selected.***