

8/4/2014: Iowa Media Day notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz addresses the media during his press conference at Iowa's Media Day on Monday, Aug. 4, 2014, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City. Ferentz is entering his 16th season as the Hawkeyes' head coach.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Every time Iowa conducts its annual Media Day, there's a common vibe among players and coaches about fall camp arriving and being able to finally get work done on the practice field.

It's not that Monday was an exception, because it wasn't. The team was conducting its first practice Monday night and everyone donning black and gold looked eager to get going. It's that this annual vibe was stronger than ever before.

"There has been an awful lot of talk," Iowa head coach Kirk

Ferentz said. "This is, I would say, a record year for it and we keep expanding our opportunities to talk. It's going to be fun to actually see what's going on and what we can do."

When Ferentz took to the podium Monday afternoon inside the Feller Club Room at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the first thing out of his mouth was about Media Day being his fourth-related media obligation in eight days. The players have been asked questions left and right – not just Monday, but all offseason – about this upcoming fall.

The collective looks of relief were evident.

"We're just ready to get out here and perform," senior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat said. "Practice, get better. That's pretty much it."

As far as camp itself, Ferentz mentioned having a few concerns. One is the health of the linebackers. Despite losing a trio of seniors from last season that are all currently on NFL rosters, he likes the make-up of his current corps but has a fear of 2010 being repeated. Back then, Iowa had to fill the voids of Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds and ended up getting decimated by injuries at that position.

Ferentz also has concerns right now about his special teams unit. While Marshall Koehn appears to be the likely replacement for Mike Meyer with placekicking duties, Ferentz hasn't put anything in stone. He also said they're open to changes in terms of who handles returning duties on both punts and kickoffs.

"Hopefully we'll know a little bit more here in a couple of weeks," Ferentz said.

Powell anticipates quick return

One week after Ferentz revealed senior wide receiver Damond Powell had surgery this summer for a hernia injury, Powell

spoke about the issue for the first time publicly Monday.

Powell is currently being held out of practice now, but he said he intends to be on the field for the Hawkeyes when they open their season against Northern Iowa on Aug. 30.

"I'm actually going through therapy right now and just getting my body prepared for this first game," Powell said.

He voiced frustration about his injury preventing him from fully participating in summer workouts, but Powell also mentioned how he has worked on keeping himself mentally prepared while going through rehab. He also mentioned teammates' support as something that has encouraged him as he goes through recovery.

Last season, Powell's role was limited. He did have one touchdown reception that came in a 23-7 win over Minnesota, but he also had to overcome being a late arrival to fall camp last year after transferring from Snow Community College. He's best known for his speed, but made clear he wants to be a more complete receiver in 2014.

"It's a learning process, but I'm familiar with everything now and I know the system," Powell said. "Things will be better for me."

Players discuss unlimited meals

On Aug. 1, a new policy implemented by the NCAA went into effect that allowed student-athletes to have access to an unlimited number of meals. Prior to this change that initially received approval last April, student-athletes were limited to having three meals per day or receiving a food stipend.

Both entering their fifth years as members of the Iowa football program, senior wide receiver Kevonte Martin-Manley and defensive tackle Carl Davis both welcomed the policy change.

“It saves us a lot of money, first of all, and it saves us a lot of time as well,” Martin-Manley said. “It’s just good that we’re able to eat with the team, we’re able to eat together. That builds more camaraderie, so overall, I think it’s good for everybody.”

Davis joked about not being an under weight player – he’s listed as weighing 315 pounds in Iowa’s media guide – but that it could be something of benefit for players who would be considered underweight at their positions.

“I think it’s great,” Davis said. “The NCAA, they’re doing a good job of pushing it forward and aiding the student-athletes a little bit more. So I’m happy with any progress we have.”

Nelson receives ANF honor

Former Iowa center Bruce Nelson will become the third inductee onto Kinnick Stadium’s ANF Wall of Honor later this fall, the UI announced Monday. Nelson played during Ferentz’s first four seasons at Iowa and as a senior, was the starting center on the 2002 squad that appeared in the Orange Bowl against USC. He was also a second-round draft choice of the Carolina Panthers, where he played for two seasons.

Nelson joins former Hawkeyes Casey Weigmann and Jared DeVries on the ANF Wall of Honor, which was first put into place in 2012.

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