

# Iowa-LSU video: Fourth Quarter touchdowns

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – Below is a video shot from the Iowa sidelines of the two fourth quarter touchdowns scored in the 2014 Outback Bowl played on Wednesday at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla.

The first is a 37-yard touchdown run by LSU running back Jeremy Hill, who was named the game's MVP. The second is a 4-yard touchdown pass from Iowa quarterback C.J. Beathard to wide receiver Kevonte Martin-Manley. The 14th-ranked Tigers defeated the Hawkeyes, 21-14.

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## 1/1/2014: Outback Bowl coverage

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

Below are links to all of *HawkeyeDrive.com's* pregame coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU. Be sure to visit *HawkeyeDrive.com* after the game for complete postgame coverage of the Hawkeyes' match-up with the 14th-ranked Tigers.

**12/29/2013:**

[LSU teammates rally for Jennings](#)

[Outback Bowl notebook](#)

[Iowa coach/player audio](#)

[Alvis back at full strength](#)

**12/30/2013:**

[LSU wideouts pose threat](#)

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[Ferentz, Miles give final thoughts prior to Outback Bowl](#)

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# Ferentz, Miles give final thoughts prior to Outback Bowl



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' match-up with No. 14 LSU in

the final Outback Bowl press conference held Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2013, at the Wyndham Tampa Westshore in Tampa, Fla.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – As Kirk Ferentz and Les Miles spoke for the final time Tuesday morning before Iowa and No. 14 LSU meet in the 2014 Outback Bowl, the mantra of “playing their best football” on New Year’s Day came out of the mouths of both coaches.

From the Hawkeyes’ perspective, it means playing disciplined. Ferentz said with the exception of Iowa’s game against Missouri State back on Sept. 7, he was pleased with his team’s ability throughout the course of the season to limit the number of penalties it got called for. The Hawkeyes enter this game having only been called for 50 penalties all season, the second fewest among all Big Ten teams.

“As it pertains to our season, I think our guys have shown up and played pretty well each and every week with the exception of one week,” Ferentz said. “To me, it all gets down to how you approach the game individually and where your focus is, your mindset.

“You’re going to have penalties, but the dumb ones, the uncontested ones are the ones that just make it kind of tough to win.”

In describing the Hawkeyes, Miles said how they “have earmarks” of most of the teams LSU faced during SEC play. He joked about the word ‘discipline’ being overplayed by coaches, but added it’s a legitimate term to associate with Iowa.

“What we have to do is play a competitive – play after play, every play – game,” Miles said.

### **Rudock vs. LSU defense**

It’s no secret Iowa strives for offensive balance and Ferentz even reiterated his philosophy about having a balanced attack when asked to describe his unit’s identity.

But in order to beat a team like LSU, the Hawkeyes will need a big game from sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock, who will be playing for the first time Wednesday since suffering a knee sprain against Nebraska that Ferentz said was “fully stable.”

Rudock’s numbers entering this contest might not be gaudy, but they didn’t need to be for him to have the success he has had. When asked about Rudock’s resiliency Tuesday, Ferentz made mention of his toughness both physically and mentally that has allowed Rudock to become the leader Iowa wanted him to be once he was named the starter.

“Every game, every series, things are going to happen that don’t go as planned and it’s how you respond, how you react, the toughness you display mentally and physically,” Ferentz said. “He has done all those things. He has had bad moments. Everybody does.

“He just keeps focusing on what he can do to get better moving forward and that’s what you have to do if you’re going to be a good player, especially at that position.”

As far as LSU’s defense is concerned, it’s a group that had to recover from losing a boatload of talent the last several years to the NFL. The Tigers had their issues on defense during the early part of the season, but have shown improvement recently. The eyebrow-raising performance came Nov. 23 when LSU dismantled Texas A&M, who was led by 2012 Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel.

“They’re much more seasoned,” Miles said. “If you look at the guys, I think the defensive front has certainly improved routinely.

“We’ve kind of mixed and matched a little bit at safety, but our corners are really prepared. I think they have improved routinely and with any quality team, that has to happen.”



LSU head coach Les Miles discusses the 14th-ranked Tigers’ match-up with Iowa in the final Outback Bowl press conference held Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2013, at the Wyndham Tampa Westshore in Tampa, Fla.

### **Mettenberger’s new role**

After having surgery to repair a knee injury suffered in LSU’s final regular season game against Arkansas, Zach Mettenberger’s career will end Wednesday with him watching from the sidelines as the Anthony Jennings era begins.

Despite the injury however, Mettenberger has remained very active with the Tigers’ preparations. Miles said his injured signal-caller is still a team captain and will still take part in the opening coin toss Wednesday.

“He has been in every meeting and the good thing is the playbook hasn’t changed,” Miles said. “So his reference and

his ability to speak to what Anthony's experiencing is really poignant, exactly what should be said. We enjoy his participation in that way."

Over the weekend, both teams took part in a bowl event at Splitsville that featured a bowling contest. Mettenberger participated in the bowling and apparently left his head coach in awe.

"I just happened in late and he had an iced tea in his hand, he had a backpack on, he limped up with a bowling ball in his hand and delivered a strike," Miles said. "I'm sitting there going, 'How in the world does anybody do that with a bad knee?'"

"Just think about your bowling style with a backpack on."

### **Being aware of Beckham**

The third phase could potentially prove pivotal for both teams Wednesday. When he was asked about his special teams unit Tuesday morning, Ferentz listed the accomplishments of players like senior kicker Mike Meyer and long snapper Casey Kreiter. He even mentioned how sophomore punter Connor Kornbrath had shown improvement over the course of the season.

What might be the biggest special teams concern Ferentz has is LSU wideout Odell Beckham, Jr., returning both punts and kickoffs for the Tigers. Beckham, Jr., heads into Wednesday's game leading the entire SEC with 2,222 all-purpose yards. He's third in the league in kickoff return average, fourth in punt return average and he also returned a missed field goal 109 yards for a touchdown during a game against Furman earlier this season.

He did all of that in addition to being one of two 1,000-yard receivers for LSU.

"They've got a great return guy in both phases, so it's going

to be a big, big challenge for us there,” Ferentz said. “We can’t leave any cracks open.”

*\*Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.*

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## Iowa vs. LSU (What to expect)



By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

To get you all ready for Wednesday’s Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU, I put together a list of things you ought to know before these two face off at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla.

At the end, I’ll provide what I think are three keys to an Iowa victory.

*2014 Outback Bowl: Iowa Hawkeyes (8-4) vs. No. 14 LSU Tigers (9-3)*

*Raymond James Stadium; Tampa, Fla.*

*Jan. 1, 2014*

*12 p.m. Central*

*TV: ESPN (Mike Tirico, Jon Gruden, Lisa Salters)*

*Radio: Hawkeye Radio Network (Gary Dolphin, Ed Podolak, Rob Brooks)*

*Weather: [67 degrees; 50 percent chance of rain; winds up to 8 MPH from the E/NE](#)*

### ***Brendan's Three Keys to the Game:***

#### **1. Stop the run**

LSU's run/pass ratio is approximately 60/40 and the Tigers averaged 39 carries per game this season. In all three of its losses this season to Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama, LSU was held under this average. Add in that the Tigers are breaking in a new quarterback that is a true freshman and limiting what LSU does on the ground with running backs such as Jeremy Hill and Terrance Magee is going to be pivotal for the Hawkeyes on New Year's Day. If Iowa gets worn down by LSU's ground game, the Hawkeyes are in trouble.

#### **2. Pressure Jennings**

Although Anthony Jennings is probably a more versatile quarterback than Zach Mettenberger, he's a true freshman making his first career start. Think back to Iowa's victory over Nebraska in the last game of the regular season. It was a similar scenario in that the Cornhuskers broke in a new quarterback and had playmakers around him. But the Hawkeyes had success because they consistently blitzed when the moment called for it and against a team like LSU in this particular instance, the same recipe for success could be there.

#### **3. An accurate Rudock**

The offenses that moved the ball effectively on LSU's defense this season featured quarterbacks that threw for high percentages. For instance, Alabama's A.J. McCarron was 14-of-20 passing when the Crimson Tide beat the Tigers back in



November. LSU is going to be keyed in on stopping the run, meaning Jake Rudock is going to have to be accurate with his throws. This doesn't mean he needs to alter his game. It just means that whoever he does decide to throw the ball to in any given situation, Rudock has to show precision. If Iowa moves the ball through the air, it has a real shot at scoring on a relatively young LSU defense.

***\*Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.***

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## **2014 Outback Bowl: One final hurrah for linebacker trio**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – When discussing the turnaround from 4-8 in 2012 to 8-4 in 2013, three names from Iowa almost immediately come to mind – James Morris, Christian Kirksey and Anthony Hitchens.

Morris was the first of the three to see the field, and did so right away. Upon filling in for an injured Jeff Tarpinian during Iowa's game against Penn State in 2010, Morris never looked back and for the majority of his career has been settled in at the MIKE (middle) linebacker spot.

Kirksey became a starter in 2011 when he was a true sophomore and initially started out at the WILL (weak-side) spot before moving over to LEO (strong-side) midway through that season.

Upon switching to LE0, Kirksey has remained there ever since.

Then there's Hitchens, who got his first shot to start as a junior last season at the WILL position. This opportunity came after he initially arrived on campus as a running back. He moved around from running back to safety to linebacker during his freshman campaign.

When the Hawkeyes take the field Wednesday to play No. 14 LSU in the 2014 Outback Bowl, it will be the last time these three linebackers share the field together. All three took different paths upon arriving in Iowa City back in 2010, yet all three arrived at the same point and provided memories for Hawkeye fans along the way.

"When we all got settled into our position, we all just liked competing with each other and trying to push each other to be as best as possible," Kirksey said. "Now to see everything develop the way it has, it's a good feeling.

"We just try to keep striving to get better. Just to see James getting better and myself and Hitch, it's a good feeling."

Together, this linebacking trio has accumulated a combined 297 tackles entering Wednesday's game. Between the three of them, they also have a combined eight sacks, six interceptions, six forced fumbles and four fumble recoveries.

"We came in with three linebackers that we expected to play at a high level," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "They've practiced well and they've really, I think, helped lead our football team."

When studying Iowa's defense on film, LSU head coach Les Miles made note of how all three linebackers play to the scheme put in place by second-year defensive coordinator Phil Parker.

"It's a traditional scheme, but there's nothing traditional about how they play it," Miles said. "Their technique is

excellent. They're on their keys.

"They're always in position, physical and fast."

As for the guys themselves, that moment knowing that they'll be wearing an Iowa uniform one final time together has crept up on them. When Morris was asked what he would remember most about playing alongside Kirksey and Hitchens, he made mention of the moments spent away from the gridiron as well as the ones on it.

"Football is fun, but what's special about it is with all the time we spend together, we're able to sort of become closer and become good friends," Morris said. "I think that we've done that over the years.

"I've enjoyed this season and every season up 'till this year. But that has probably been the most enjoyable part for me, just getting to know those guys and not necessarily the football aspect of it."

*\*Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.*

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## **12/30/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 113 (premium)**

*Every Monday, we will be running a weekly series titled "State of the Big Ten," which will be made available to all members of [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com). This series of columns will focus on one major headline regarding the conference and go in-depth on the subject at hand.*

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

It was never a secret that Bill O'Brien was viewed as a football head coach who would one day have the opportunity to take over a NFL team. After all, his time spent as one of Bill Belichick's assistants with the New England Patriots is what ultimately landed him the opportunity to take over Penn State.

Speculation about O'Brien leaving Penn State now for the NFL has heated up to the point where it's appearing to be a very real possibility that he leaves State College two years into a complete overhaul. Ultimately, it's his decision whether to leave and coach a team like the Houston Texans or stay around at Penn State and if he does depart, no one could fault him.

There's so much of an unknown with Nittany Lion football right now and if O'Brien does bolt to Houston or any other NFL city where there's a vacancy, that unknown only becomes more glaring. Yes, the sanctions that were levied against Penn State by the NCAA in 2012 have been reduced. But the stability that O'Brien presents is something that would be hard to replace.

Here's the other major question if Penn State has another coaching vacancy – Who would even want that job? Who would it pursue? There are already reports that it would strongly consider Greg Schiano, who just got fired by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Monday. Schiano previously coached at Rutgers and before that spent time as an assistant on Joe Paterno's staff at Penn State.

But there's the conundrum. When O'Brien was hired, it came off as a concerted effort to bring in someone who had no prior association to Paterno or anyone else that was around Penn State when atrocities were being committed. Maybe someone like Schiano or other coaches out there with ties to Paterno may prove to be the best fit should O'Brien leave, but it would

also draw a lot of criticism about how much Penn State has really disassociated itself from what all took place on Paterno's watch.

There's nothing that can be guaranteed. Even with a quarterback like Christian Hackenberg in place for at least two (if not three) years, having to bring in an entirely new coaching staff still leaves Penn State in a quandary because stability isn't a guarantee.

If a successor to O'Brien comes in and the Nittany Lions continue to do well like they have the last two seasons, the NFL questions could always return. If that same potential successor doesn't have similar success, Penn State won't be in any type of position anytime soon to just dismiss a coach because of wins and losses.

No matter how this plays out, this is going to be interesting to watch unfold because it will have ramifications on the entire conference. Maybe not in terms of who wins the Big Ten every year, but in terms of how coaches at other schools get measured by their ADs. That's where the unknown becomes a factor beyond Penn State.

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## **2014 Outback Bowl: LSU wideouts pose threat**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – Ask Iowa defensive coordinator Phil Parker and any of his players, and they'll all say their first priority

as a defense is to stop the run. That mantra is no different for the 2014 Outback Bowl when the Hawkeyes play a team in No. 14 LSU that prides itself on running the football.

But there's another challenge regarding the Tiger offense that Iowa has to account for. Actually, make it two challenges. Their names are Jarvis Landry and Odell Beckham, Jr.

This duo of junior wideouts is as good a 1-2 punch of receivers as Iowa has seen in a long time. To put this into perspective, both Landry and Beckham, Jr., rank in the top 25 nationally this season in receiving yards and LSU is the only team in the country who can claim two 1,000-yard receivers of their caliber. Landry has 1,172 receiving yards to his name, while Beckham, Jr., has 1,117.

To date, Iowa has only faced one receiver all season with 1,000-plus receiving yards – Michigan's Jeremy Gallon. Last season, the Hawkeyes didn't face a single wideout that posted as many yards as either LSU wideout and the last time Iowa played a team possessing two 1,000-yard receivers like this was the 2011 Insight Bowl against Oklahoma.

"I think they're probably two first-round draft picks," senior free safety Tanner Miller said Sunday about the LSU duo. "There's different things you can do, whether it's putting multiple guys on them or different types of coverages to be able to slow them down and things like that.

"But we know they're going to make their plays because they're just great athletes."

Both receivers have identical heights and weights. Landry is listed at 6-1, 195 pounds, while Beckham, Jr., is listed at 6-0, 193 pounds. With identical body types and identical numbers, one would think there aren't many differences between the two. But Landry said there's one noticeable difference that he believes allows them to complement each other as well as they have.

"It's speed and his ability to make big plays in chunks. I think that has been his biggest asset," Landry said. "For me, it has just been my quick twitch. You know, my short-area quickness and using my mind to be on the same page with the quarterback."

The worry Iowa has about Landry and Beckham, Jr. "making their plays" are specifically the big play. For the first two-thirds of the season, the majority of touchdowns given up by the Hawkeye defense came on pass plays covering 20-plus yards. This is an area that has noticeably improved over the course of Iowa's current three-game winning streak.

"At the beginning of the year, I think we struggled a little bit," Parker said of his secondary. "I think they've come together as a group and I just think the guys are committed to preparing for games."

"They're a lot farther ahead than they were last year just as far as what's going on on the field, so it has been fun to coach them."

So how will Iowa go about being able to contain both Landry and Beckham, Jr.? Sophomore linebacker Travis Perry said the biggest key is the ability to consistently jam them both at the line of scrimmage.

"If they get out in space without being touched, they can make great plays," Perry said. "So we've got to make sure we can get our hands on them and try to re-route them to help the safeties out."

***\*Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.***

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# 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](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14***

# 12/29/2013: Iowa player and coach audio (2014 Outback Bowl)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – Iowa defensive coordinator Phil Parker, along with nine of his defensive players met with the media following their practice on Sunday at Jesuit High School.

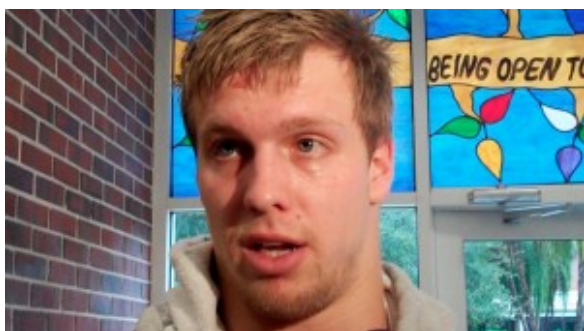
Below is audio from Parker and the following Hawkeye players – senior free safety Tanner Miller, junior strong safety John Lowdermilk, senior linebacker James Morris, junior defensive end Mike Hardy, junior linebacker Quinton Alston, senior linebacker Christian Kirksey, sophomore linebacker Travis Perry, senior defensive end Dominic Alvis and junior defensive tackle Carl Davis:



Phil Parker, Dec. 29, 2013

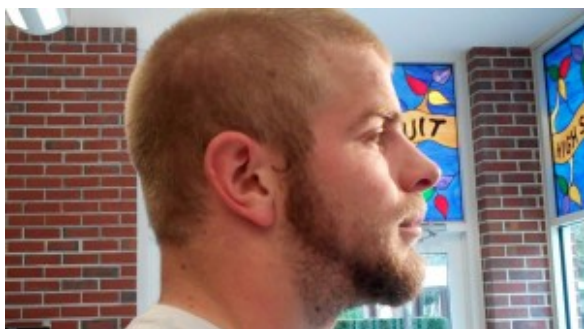
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[-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3](#)



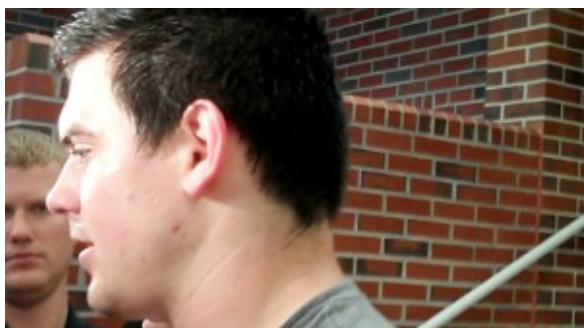
Tanner Miller, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Tanner-Miller-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



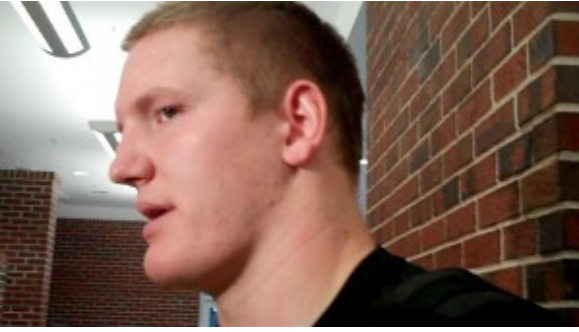
John Lowdermilk, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/John-Lowdermilk-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



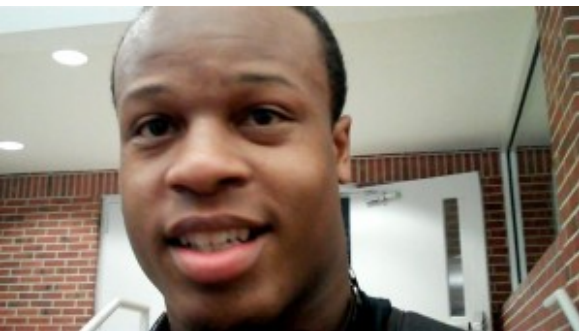
James Morris, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/James-Morris-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



Mike Hardy, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Mike-Hardy-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



Quinton Alston, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Quinton-Alston-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



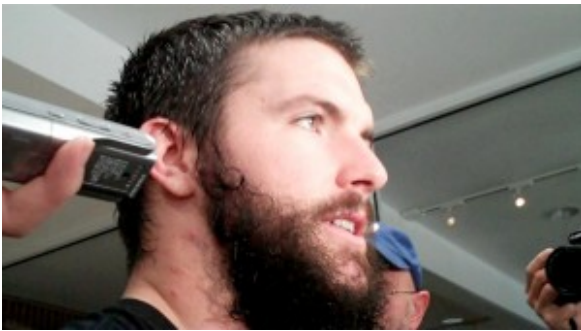
Christian Kirksey, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Christian-Kirksey-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



Travis Perry, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Travis-Perry-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



Dominic Alvis, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dominic-Alvis-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>



Carl Davis, Dec. 29, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Carl-Davis-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>

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# 12/29/2013: Outback Bowl notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and LSU head coach Les Miles take part in a joint Outback Bowl press conference held Sunday, Dec. 29, 2013, at the Wyndham Tampa Westshore in Tampa, Fla.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

TAMPA, Fla. – One conference is nationally viewed as the standard in college football. The other gets viewed in a more maligned manner.

Once again, the 2014 Outback Bowl features Big Ten vs. SEC. Once again, the SEC is favored with LSU (9-3) coming in ranked 14th in the AP poll while Iowa (8-4) is unranked.

But with this match-up between the Hawkeyes and Tigers comes intrigue. For Iowa, this is its fourth trip to the Outback Bowl and the Hawkeyes possess a 2-1 record in those three

previous contests. Iowa has also beaten LSU in the Capital One Bowl and Missouri (before it became a member of the SEC in 2012) in the Insight Bowl under head coach Kirk Ferentz.

While bowl games provide the only true glimpse he gets into the SEC, Ferentz is fully aware of what his team's facing and what's being said on the outside.

"You'd have to be blind to college football to not recognize the level of talent and level of coaching in the conference," Ferentz said during a joint press conference with LSU head coach Les Miles on Sunday at the Wyndham Tampa Westshore. "[LSU] has got outstanding players and they're very well-coached and I think there's a lot of that going on in the league."

Then there's LSU. Since Miles – a former Michigan player and assistant under Bo Schembechler – took over in 2005, the Tigers have played Big Ten teams twice in bowls. They beat Ohio State to win the 2007 BCS National Championship and lost the 2010 Capital One Bowl to Penn State. LSU has also lost each of its last two bowl games and three of its last four when including that Penn State loss.

Hearing what Ferentz said about the SEC, Miles immediately chimed in with his thoughts on the conference he once associated with.

"That conference is a tremendously competitive and very capable football conference," Miles said about the Big Ten. "The more you study it and the the teams that [the Hawkeyes] have played and have exceeded in beating, the Big Ten is every bit as capable as any conference in America."

### **The coaches' take on Jennings**

A topic that has, still is and will probably continue being discussed between now and New Year's Day is that of LSU true freshman quarterback Anthony Jennings taking over as the

starter following a season-ending knee injury to starter Zach Mettenberger.

[Much like his players who spoke to HawkeyeDrive.com on Saturday](#), Miles described Jennings' poise as being his biggest attribution to the Tiger offense and how he (at least to this point) doesn't seem phased by the limelight he's experiencing.

Miles also mentioned how during practice, he and offensive coordinator Cam Cameron have gone about placing greater expectations upon Jennings when it comes to team-oriented drills.

"We've put a little bit more of a burden on him in terms of preparing to handle the huddle, handle the play call," Miles said. "That, besides the physical execution of the play, is maybe a little bit more of a burden."

When Ferentz was asked about Jennings on Sunday, he referred to him as "the wild card" because the amount of film to study of him is limited. The comparison to Jennings and former Indiana quarterback Antwaan Randle El (also coached by Cameron) was made during the press conference and with that, Ferentz was asked if any similarities between the two might lead to wrinkles in LSU's play-calling.

"I wish it was three days of preparation, not three weeks," Ferentz said. "We have to be ready for anything, but I don't expect a wholesale change. We might see a wrinkle or two. But I think philosophically, what they try to do, we expect to see that."

### **Familiar names among offensive coordinators**

There's Cameron, in his first season as LSU's offensive coordinator. As mentioned, he was the head coach at Indiana when Ferentz first took over Iowa. He also has ties to Michigan – much like Miles, so there's a sense of familiarity there.



Then there's Iowa offensive coordinator Greg Davis, who is about to complete his second season in that occupation. Before Miles became LSU's head coach in 2005, he was the head coach at Oklahoma State for four seasons and faced Davis four times back when the latter was Texas' offensive coordinator during that same timeframe (2001-04). Davis and the Longhorns won all four meetings against the Cowboys.

"I think any offensive coordinator does what he thinks speaks to the talent set that he has," Miles said. "I think what he has done is a real quality footprint, if you will, on [Iowa's] success.

"You can see what they're doing. The challenge is stopping it and I think he's a very talented coach. He calls the game with experience and understanding and he's a very capable play-caller."

### **Juniors dealing with NFL decisions**

Both head coaches were asked Sunday about the matter of junior players facing decisions about either leaving early for the NFL or returning for their senior season. [Miles reportedly has a handful of players on his roster](#) in the process of deciding one way or the other following this week's game and this comes after he lost 11 juniors to the NFL after last season.

"I think the key piece when you lose 11 juniors to the NFL a year ago, what you're really talking about is how do you shape leadership," Miles said. "We've tried to do that with those guys who are pointed out by their peers as the best leaders, the capable leaders and grow them and grow your team that way.

"In terms to talking to juniors and them making decisions about those things, I consistently say I'm going to change my approach because the approaches I've used have not been really successful. But it's really their decision."

Meanwhile, Ferentz doesn't have the same dilemma facing Miles

after the Outback Bowl about juniors declaring early for the NFL. The only one being discussed was junior left tackle Brandon Scherff, who announced his intentions to return for his senior year back on Dec. 9.

Ferentz echoed Miles' sentiments about the decision being ultimately up to the player involved and also made mention of how it's more challenging now to convince juniors to come back as opposed to his earlier seasons as Iowa's head coach.

"There are a lot of people on the outside working proactively and creatively in some cases to endear themselves with prospects, without really any stake in the game," Ferentz said. "It's a cold call. You try to invest in a good racehorse, then move on.

"The big thing I want to do is make sure our guys have a good, realistic view of what's going to happen and what it might entail, that type of thing."

***\*Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl between Iowa and No. 14 LSU.***