

2014 Outback Bowl: LSU teammates ready to rally for Jennings

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

TAMPA, Fla. – There's no bigger storyline at the 2014 Outback Bowl. There just isn't.

When No. 14 LSU takes the field against Iowa on New Year's Day, it's going to be very different for the Tigers. All season long, senior quarterback Zach Mettenberger led the charge. He will not be playing Wednesday after suffering a knee injury in LSU's final regular season game against Arkansas that required surgery.

Why is this a huge deal? Because the minute Cam Cameron came in as LSU's offensive coordinator last offseason, Mettenberger began to thrive. His numbers spiked from 12 touchdowns and seven interceptions in 2012 to 22 touchdowns and eight interceptions this season. He also became more efficient, throwing for more yards on fewer completions and pass attempts in 2013.

With Mettenberger out, LSU's offense will now be engineered Wednesday by a true freshman signal-caller in Anthony Jennings, who stepped in against the Razorbacks and led the Tigers to a game-winning score in the final minutes of that Black Friday contest. The crux of that afternoon in Baton Rouge was this – that game-winning 49-yard touchdown pass Jennings threw to junior wide receiver Jarvis Landry capped a 99-yard drive.

"He made throws and he stepped in like a leader," Landry said.

“He stepped in like a quarterback and I think a lot of young guys in that situation don’t take a team 99 yards to win the game.

“I’m excited to see what he’s going to do in this game.”

That Arkansas game wasn’t the first time Jennings had taken the field for LSU this season, but none of his prior appearances even compare to that, or what he’ll be facing in his first career start against Iowa.

Landry described the last weeks as “a process” with Jennings settling into the starting role. He said it’s more getting the 6-2, 211-pound signal-caller up to speed mentally and him being able to establish a rapport with his weapons in both the backfield and receiving corps.

While his rapport with the skill players might still be a work in progress, another rapport he has developed over the last few weeks has been with his center, junior Elliott Porter. When asked about how Jennings has come along throughout the weeks of practice leading to playing against the Hawkeyes, the word Porter used was “beautiful.”

“Anthony’s going to be all right,” Porter said. “He’ll be a great player. I’m glad he’s getting his reps and everything else.”

One thing both Porter and Landry agree on when it comes to Jennings is his poise. Both believe what he was able to do against Arkansas is a sign of things to come not only when LSU plays Iowa, but when the Tigers transition into 2014.

“He has a real strong confidence in himself, a self-esteem in himself that he can do anything,” junior center Elliott Porter said. “I mean, that’s the way you have to be. You have to feel like you’re the best player on that field when you go out there and that’s what he did.

“That’s what made him have that success that he did.”

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

12/23/2013: Outback Bowl notebook



The backdrop near the entrance to the Coralville Outback Steakhouse during Iowa’s team lunch there on Monday, Dec. 23, 2013. Should Iowa defeat No. 14 LSU in the 2014 Outback Bowl, the restaurant will supply complimentary Coconut Shrimps to all its customers on Jan. 2, 2014.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

CORALVILLE, Iowa – Typically, the rewards of a bowl trip for college football players tend to come upon reaching the final destination. The weeks leading up to departure feature some of the most strenuous work done between the last regular season game and that bowl trip.

Two weeks have passed since the Iowa Hawkeyes learned they would face No. 14 LSU in the 2014 Outback Bowl. Since learning of their opponent, players have described enduring practices they liken to all the work done in the offseason in the months leading up to the season opener.

“Practices have been a lot like camp practices,” junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat said. “We’ve got to get ready for a good opponent in LSU.”

The Hawkeyes leave for Tampa, Fla., on Christmas Eve. But before leaving the comforts of their surroundings, they were treated to a lunch Monday afternoon at Outback Steakhouse, the sponsor of Iowa’s bowl match-up with the Bayou Bengals.

Even though the bowl activities down in Tampa don’t actually begin until Dec. 26, Ferentz said the reason for bringing the team there Tuesday is to get all the players acclimated enough to their surroundings before game preparation begins to ratchet up, as well as enjoy the perks of playing in a game like the Outback Bowl.

After two weeks of practices in Iowa City, Ferentz said concentration has begun to shift towards installing a game plan, which he added hadn’t been finalized yet.

“Two things – we just got to keep everybody healthy, that’s first and foremost,” Ferentz said. “Then secondly, we still have to get game ready and that’s a good problem to have.”

Preparing for unexpected

In some ways, there are uncharted waters ahead for the

Hawkeyes. Although Iowa has appeared in three previous Outback Bowls under head coach Kirk Ferentz, this is the first Tampa trip for everyone currently on the roster. In fact, only the fifth-year seniors on the team like right tackle Brett Van Sloten have even experienced traveling to a Florida bowl game of any kind.

With that in mind, Van Sloten said it's up to him and other veteran players on the team to help keep the entirety of the trip in perspective for the rest of their teammates.

"When it's football, you're all football," Van Sloten said. "You can't get distracted by all that's going on there. There's going to be a lot of fun activities and when coaches say, 'O.K., it's time to put your feet up and relax,' you can go out and spend your free time with what you choose to do.

"But when it comes down to football, you've got to be focused and 100 percent in."

This also marks the first time Iowa has been to a bowl game since all the coaching overhaul that began taking place in 2012. That's not to say there isn't bowl game experience among the new assistants – for instance, offensive coordinator Greg Davis and wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy both were part of a national championship team at Texas in 2005. But it marks the first time for everyone together.

Davis said Monday he hasn't noticed any major differences in preparing for a bowl at Iowa versus preparing for one at Texas. If anything, the experience he had on Mack Brown's staff might be of benefit considering his familiarity competing against LSU head coach Les Miles back when he was in charge at Oklahoma State.

"They're not a team that plays a ton of things that you haven't seen or that you would say is 'weird,'" Davis said when speaking of LSU's defense. "They play from a 4-down front, they play under and over, their third-down package is

3-down, they put nickel and dime personnel in with guys that can run and they're not a huge team with blitz.

"They're very sound in what they do and they try not to give up big plays."

Rudock's homecoming (well, sort of)

Although Tampa is not Jake Rudock's hometown, the sophomore quarterback couldn't help but express excitement Monday about the opportunity of playing in his home state of Florida next week.

"It's just nice that my parents don't have to fly," Rudock said. "My parents can just drive there. It's just under a four-hour drive and that's a lot better than a 3-4 hour flight. A lot cheaper, too, so that's a good thing."

The Weston, Fla., native said he had played in Tampa before whenever his high school, St. Thomas Aquinas played against nearby high schools at their home stadiums. But the experience of playing at Raymond James Stadium on New Year's Day will be a first for Rudock.

One of the biggest concerns with Rudock entering this match-up against the Tigers is his health, specifically with both of his knees. He left games against both Wisconsin and Nebraska last month (games that were four weeks apart) with separate knee injuries. The coaching staff has taken caution with Rudock during practices, but the plan remains the same with him returning to the field next week.

"Having some time off definitely helped," Rudock said. "I feel good. I always hate the percentage thing, but I feel good. I feel better than I had after the [Nebraska] game, so I should be good to go."

Stiff test awaits defense

The biggest storyline surrounding Iowa's defense is the matter

of preparing for a second-string quarterback, with Anthony Jennings starting in place of an injured Zach Mettenberger next week.

But looking beyond LSU's quarterback situation, two aspects of the Tiger offense have raised eyebrows among the Hawkeyes' defensive personnel. One aspect is LSU's rushing attack that features a 1-2 punch of Jeremy Hill and Terrance Magee. The two backs combined for 22 touchdowns on the ground during the regular season. Hill, who is listed at 6-2, 235 pounds, drew comparisons Monday to another back Iowa faced this season that is practically the same size – Ohio State's Carlos Hyde.

"They've got the size and speed and can break away," senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens said. "So yeah, a little bit. You know, it will just come down to our basics."

Then there's the other 1-2 punch LSU has in its receiving corps. Defensive coordinator Phil Parker called the Tigers' duo of Odell Beckham, Jr., and Jarvis Landry "the most talented receivers [Parker] had seen in a long time." Both currently possess over 1,000 yards receiving on the season and have combined for 18 touchdown catches.

"Unbelievably athletic," senior free safety Tanner Miller said. "They're both top-notch players. They're the full package. They'll block downfield, run great routes and they don't take plays off.

"They go full [speed] 100 percent of the time."

[*Click here for audio from Kirk Ferentz, Greg Davis, Phil Parker and Hawkeye players from Iowa's event at Outback Steakhouse on Monday.](#)

****HawkeyeDrive.com's coverage from Tampa, Fla., of the 2014 Outback Bowl will begin Sunday, Dec. 29 and run each day through Jan. 1 with complete coverage of Iowa's contest against No. 14 LSU at Raymond James Stadium.***

12/23/2013: Iowa player and coach audio (2014 Outback Bowl)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

CORALVILLE, Iowa – With the Iowa Hawkeyes playing No. 14 LSU in the 2014 Outback Bowl next week, the entire football team was invited to a luncheon at the Outback Steakhouse in Coralville on Monday, one day before the Hawkeyes depart for Tampa, Fla.

Below is audio from the following coaches and players during Monday's event – Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz, offensive coordinator Greg Davis, defensive coordinator Phil Parker, junior running back Mark Weisman, junior left tackle Brandon Scherff, senior free safety Tanner Miller, junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat, senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens, senior right tackle Brett Van Sloten and sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock:



Kirk Ferentz, Dec. 23, 2013

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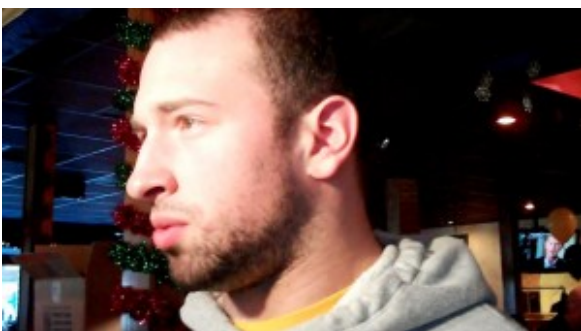
Greg Davis, Dec. 23, 2013

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Phil Parker, Dec. 23, 2013

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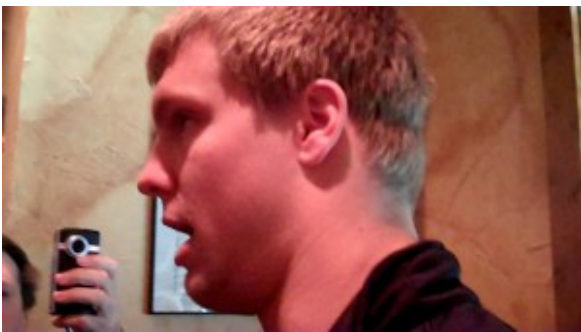
Mark Weisman, Dec. 23, 2013

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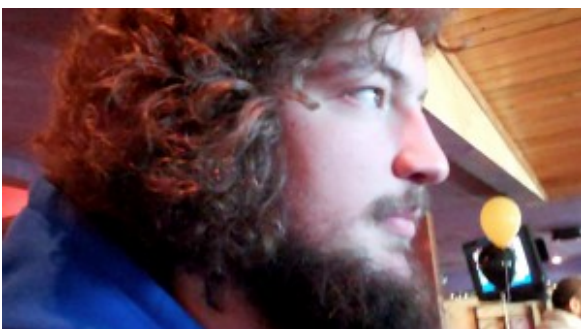
Brandon Scherff, Dec. 23, 2013

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Tanner Miller, Dec. 23, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Tanner-Miller-12232013.mp3>



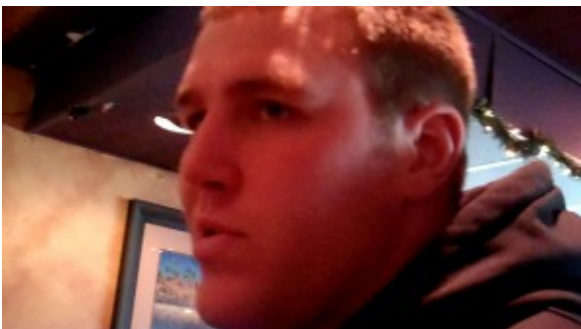
Louis Trinca-Pasat, Dec. 23, 2013

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Anthony Hitchens, Dec. 23, 2013

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Brett Van Sloten, Dec. 23, 2013

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Jake Rudock, Dec. 23, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Jake-Rudock-12232013.mp3>

12/23/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 112 (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. 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

Bowl season has officially begun and once again, the Big Ten has an opportunity to silence its critics.

If it seems like an annual issue, it kind of is. Aside from 2009 when each of the league's top four teams all won bowl games (including two BCS games), the Big Ten has had a horrific bowl record and that ends up being some sort of referendum on the conference as a whole.

Last year, in what was probably the weakest Big Ten in years, there were two bowl victories out of seven games. This year, the conference was better and it's not all that far-fetched to think a winning record can come out of the seven bowl games being played between Dec. 27-Jan. 3. But it's time to deliver.

The buck obviously starts and ends with No. 4 Michigan State and No. 7 Ohio State. Both are playing in BCS games. For the Spartans, they're playing in their first Rose Bowl in 26 years. The Buckeyes on the other hand have to attempt bouncing back from another failure on a big stage earlier this month in Indianapolis.

But that doesn't take the pressure off the other five Big Ten teams playing in bowls, either. Obviously, there are three match-ups between the Big Ten and SEC. At least two of the three among No. 19 Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska probably need to come away with victories despite none of them being favored. The Badgers' date with No. 8 South Carolina in the Capital One Bowl is practically a toss-up, Iowa has a decent shot against a No. 14 LSU squad playing with its second-string quarterback and Nebraska should be familiar with what No. 23 Georgia will want to do given how the Cornhuskers and Bulldogs just met in a bowl last year. It's not the be all, end all, but a strong showing against what still gets considered the nation's best conference when it comes to college football would be a start.

Then there's both Michigan and Minnesota. Both have different circumstances, but similar pressures. In the Golden Gophers' case, they're back in the Texas Bowl once again, but are probably the league's best bet to win a bowl this season facing what appears to be an inferior opponent in Syracuse. For Minnesota, this is an opportunity to have a 9-4 season potentially springboard into bigger things with the Big Ten's divisions realigning geographically next year.

The realignment is also why Saturday's Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl is big for Michigan. If the Wolverines can build off their showing against Ohio State and beat Kansas State this weekend, again, there's some momentum that can be carried over into next season. Lose though, and the questions about whether this team can beat either Ohio State or Michigan State on the road next season will just be asked even more than anticipated.

Bowl season is always a crucial time for any conference, the Big Ten included. But it seems like this year, the spotlight is even bigger. Another bad showing over the next week-and-a-half and the ridicule will only get stronger as the conference expands to 14. A strong showing however – not 7-0 necessarily, but say, 4-3 or better – and the talk about how bad the Big

Ten is will dwindle at least somewhat.

12/18/2013: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa vs. LSU; 2014 Outback Bowl)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

All season long, we have conducted a series of weekly podcasts called "Talkin' Hawks," previewing each upcoming game for the Iowa Hawkeyes throughout the 2013 season.



As the Hawkeyes begin their final preparations for the 2014 Outback Bowl on Jan. 1 against the 14th-ranked LSU Tigers, we present to you a special bowl edition of "Talkin' Hawks." Former Iowa defensive back [Chris Rowell](#) (2005-09) joins me, as he has all season long, to discuss what has taken place over the last couple of weeks with the Hawkeye football program in addition to previewing Iowa's showdown against LSU.

In addition, we also provide our predictions for every Big Ten and BCS bowl game, all of which are featured on our [HawkeyeDrive.com Bowl Pick 'Em](#).

HawkeyeDrive.com will be in Florida providing four days of Outback Bowl coverage, which begins Dec. 29 from Tampa, and concludes with complete coverage of the game between Iowa and LSU at Raymond James Stadium on Jan. 1. Kickoff is scheduled for 12 p.m. Central, and the game will be televised nationally by ESPN.

I'd also like to take this opportunity and thank all of you who have signed up to become a *HawkeyeDrive.com* paid subscriber. Your support is greatly appreciated. [For those interested in becoming a member, we offer a three-day free trial, as well as monthly and yearly subscriptions of either \\$9.99 per month or \\$89.99 per year.](#) By becoming a member, you will have access to every bit of content posted, including anything labeled "premium" in the headlines.

Merry Christmas to you all and I hope you enjoy our final edition in 2013 of the "Talkin' Hawks" podcast, exclusively on *HawkeyeDrive.com*:

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Talkin-Hawks-podcast-Iowa-vs.-LSU-2014-Outback-Bowl.mp3>

Twitter handles:

HawkeyeDrive.com – [@HawkeyeDrive](#)

Brendan Stiles – [@thebstiles](#)

Chris Rowell – [@Crowell34](#)

Special thanks to all of the following folks who were guests this season on the "Talkin Hawks" podcast:

Steve Nitz (DeKalb Daily Chronicle), Lyndal Scranton (Springfield News-Leader), Randy Peterson (Des Moines Register), David Drew (Kalamazoo Gazette/MLive.com), Marcus Fuller (St. Paul Pioneer Press), Joe Rexrode (Detroit Free Press), Doug Lesmerises (Cleveland.com), Kevin Trahan (Inside Northwestern), Tom Mulhern (Wisconsin State Journal), Chris

Emma (Boiler Sports Report), Mark Snyder (Detroit Free Press) and Brandon Vogel (Hail Varsity)

**Intro sound byte credit to my former Daily Iowan colleague Ryan Young for putting that together.*

12/16/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 111 (premium)

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By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

For the second straight week, three Big Ten teams are featured in the top five of the AP's top 25 poll. The order remains the same as it was a week ago with undefeated Ohio State (10-0) ranked third, undefeated Wisconsin (12-0) ranked fourth and Michigan State remaining fifth.

One of these three teams warrants some serious discussion right now, and that's the Badgers. Maybe they wind up having another early exit from the NCAA Tournament like last season or just don't wind up going as far as either the Buckeyes or Spartans in the tourney come March. Heck, Wisconsin might not even win the Big Ten this season.

But the 12-0 is hard to ignore right now, especially when the Badgers are off to their best start to a season in nearly 100

years.

Consistency is something that has become synonymous with Wisconsin basketball during this millennium. Every full season that Bo Ryan has been at the helm as head coach, the Badgers have finished no lower than fourth in the Big Ten standings. This is a streak that goes back to the 2001-02 season. This is a program that has consistently reached the NCAA Tournament on a regular basis under Ryan. Sure, there haven't been any Final Fours since 2000 (before Ryan took over), but Wisconsin has been a team one comes to expect being in the conversation every March to at least make a run in the tournament.

And now here are the Badgers off to their best start ever under Ryan. Right now, Wisconsin is ranked fourth in the country and rightfully so. The Badgers have already beaten teams such as St. John's, Florida, Virginia and Marquette. Even mid-majors like UW-Green Bay have proven to be decent victories.

Wisconsin has the best résumé currently of any Big Ten team and quite possibly any team in the country at this point. But here's what will play to the Badgers' advantage going forward – the Big Ten schedule.

Those other two teams currently in the top five along with Wisconsin – Ohio State and Michigan State – both play the Badgers just once and both have to play them at the Kohl Center in Madison. In fact, one could make the case that Wisconsin's toughest road game might not be until Feb. 22 when it plays an Iowa squad currently ranked 25th nationally.

Now the Badgers might not be a team worth banking on to win three straight games in the Big Ten Tournament next March, but they have enough veteran players in place to make a run. This is a team that is slowly becoming the favorite to win the Big Ten, even if it isn't necessarily the most talented or complete team in the conference, mainly because of having such

an advantageous schedule.

In order to win the Big Ten or win the national title, guard play is crucial. Wisconsin has plenty of reliable guards in its backcourt with guys like Ben Brust, Traevon Jackson and Josh Gasser and forward Sam Dekker is in the mold of a wing player. The question surrounding this team coming into the season was inside and to this point, Frank Kaminsky has impressed.

Again, this season could still end on a bitter note for the Badgers. But what they've already accomplished thus far is not only impressive, but also shows what Wisconsin remains capable of because the ingredients are in place for this to be a special season for Ryan and his team.

Kirksey accepts Senior Bowl invite

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa senior linebacker Christian Kirksey [has accepted an invitation to play in the 2014 Senior Bowl](#). He is the second Hawkeye player to receive and accept an invite to the all-star game, as Kirksey will join senior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz down in Mobile, Ala., next month.

Entering Iowa's match-up with No. 14 LSU in the 2014 Outback Bowl, Kirksey has 97 tackles on the season. He also possesses a team-high seven quarterback hurries, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries, one of which he returned for a

touchdown in the Hawkeyes' season-opener against Northern Illinois on Aug. 31. Following Iowa's most recent victory – a 38-17 win at Nebraska on Nov. 29 – Kirksey was named both the Walter Camp National Defensive Player of the Week and the Big Ten's Defensive Player of the Week.

The 2014 Senior Bowl is scheduled to take place on Jan. 25 at 3 p.m. Central inside Ladd-Pebbles Stadium and it will be televised nationally on NFL Network.

Scherff returning for senior year

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa junior left tackle Brandon Scherff revealed Monday that he will return for his senior season in 2014. Scherff originally made the announcement during a radio interview Monday with KDSN-AM in his hometown of Denison, Iowa, and the UI sent out a statement from Scherff hours later confirming what he originally said about coming back.

Scherff has started at left tackle for each of the past two seasons and last week was named first-team all-Big Ten by the league's coaches. With his return, Iowa will have three starters on its offensive line returning next season with him, center Austin Blythe and right guard Jordan Walsh.

"I am excited to say that I will be staying at the University of Iowa for my senior season in 2014," Scherff said in the statement. "I am looking forward to the 2014 Outback Bowl and

playing an outstanding opponent in LSU and then working as hard as possible with my teammates to prepare for my senior year as a Hawkeye.”

12/9/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 110 (premium)

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This might sound a bit bizarre, but the Big Ten is going to benefit long-term from what took place in Indianapolis over the weekend.

Michigan State put the finishing touches on a surreal season last Saturday, defeating Ohio State 34-24 in the Big Ten Championship Game. This is the first time since the 1987 season that the Spartans will be playing in the Rose Bowl, where Stanford awaits them.

Some might argue this hurt the perception surrounding the conference currently, and for the time being, maybe it has. Losing that game cost the Buckeyes a chance at not only playing for the national title, but preventing the SEC from being able to attempt landing its eight consecutive crystal ball on Jan. 6. Ohio State instead is playing in the Orange

Bowl against Clemson, which isn't a terrible consolation prize, yet also not what Urban Meyer and his team had in mind this season.

Folks in the South are probably boasting over the fact that Auburn was able to get into the national title game against Florida State following an entire week of debate about whether a 1-loss SEC team should jump an undefeated Big Ten team like Ohio State. For those in Big Ten country, let them.

Michigan State winning Saturday is beneficial for the future of the Big Ten. It really is. Because now it's no longer "Ohio State and everybody else." That perception is gone at a critical time with Maryland and Rutgers joining the Big Ten next year and the league realigning its divisions East and West.

This game that happened Saturday won't be a future Big Ten title game. The Spartans and Buckeyes are going to share the same division and probably continue butting heads for the foreseeable future unless Michigan's able to flex its muscles like it traditionally has. Ohio State might still play in each of the next five Big Ten title games, but now there's more thought given to the idea that maybe Mark Dantonio is building something in East Lansing that's worth following on a national level.

That in essence is also going to create opportunities for whoever emerges in that West Division, because teams like Wisconsin and Iowa and even Minnesota all had decent 2013 seasons.

And let's say Michigan State beats Stanford on New Year's Day. Sure, it's not beating a SEC team. But the Pac-12 was considered for most of the season to be as good (if not better) than the SEC and to have the Big Ten's best team be able to beat what the Pac-12 offers will help create a different perception surrounding the conference. Teams like

Ohio State and Wisconsin have had chances in recent seasons to become the face of the Big Ten over recent years, but aside from one Rose Bowl win by the Buckeyes in 2010 haven't been able to deliver.

Jim Delany might not see one of his teams come away with that crystal ball next month. But the sentiment about the Big Ten now has a chance to be altered in a more positive light over time and it's going to be intriguing to see whether Michigan State's present success ends up being a sign of things to come.

Ferentz, Miles prepare for the unfamiliar

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

The courtesy was on display from the get-go. Just as Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz called into the Outback Bowl's joint coaches teleconference Monday morning, there was his 2014 Outback Bowl counterpart – LSU head coach Les Miles – already on the line and immediately extending an olive branch.

“I just want to greet ya and say I look forward to competing against ya. You've always run a quality program,” Miles said directly to Ferentz before answering the first question asked by a reporter. “We know each other in passing as you know, and again, I look forward to seeing you in Tampa.”

For all the friendly banter exchanged between the two coaches though, the theme of Monday's teleconference turned out to be

unfamiliarity. That first question asked to both Miles and Ferentz was about who the other's team reminded them of in their respective conferences. He didn't give a specific SEC team, but Miles said Iowa reminded him of the ones that are balanced and are talented top to bottom. Ferentz didn't even attempt to compare LSU, who is currently ranked 14th in the AP poll and 16th in the last ever BCS standings released Sunday night, to a Big Ten team. He did say from watching glimpses of them in years past that weaknesses are hard to find.

"We know they're going to be talented, we know they're going to be very well-coached," Ferentz said. "They've done a great job in the SEC and if you just look at their results this year, the fact they're the only team to beat Auburn, that probably starts and ends the discussion right there."

Two other components add to the current state of unfamiliarity. One such component is that Miles wasn't LSU's head coach the only other the Hawkeyes and Tigers have met on the gridiron. In fact, Miles took over for Nick Saban shortly after Iowa defeated LSU 30-25 in the 2005 Capital One Bowl. In the nine years he has coached the Tigers, they've won the SEC twice and have made two appearances in the BCS National Championship Game, with one of those resulting in a 38-24 win over Ohio State in Miles' third season at the helm.

Miles does have a Big Ten background having played at Michigan in the 1970s for Bo Schembechler and then later serving as an assistant on his staff during the final years of his Michigan tenure. When asked about the perception of the Big Ten in contrast to the SEC, Miles said "the Big Ten can compete with any league."

"We recognize that quality teams in the Big Ten can play with any team," Miles said. "We played Ohio State in the national championship, we lost to a Joe Paterno-coached Penn State team. We understand that this is going to be a very competitive game against a very quality league."

The second component of this unfamiliarity will slowly evaporate over time as the two coaches are able to study their opposition in the coming days and weeks leading up to their New Year's Day clash at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla. Neither Miles nor Ferentz have had much time since Sunday's announcement to study the other and in Ferentz's case, it will be more of a challenge with LSU starting true freshman quarterback Anthony Jennings in place of an injured Zach Mettenberger, who recently had surgery done on his injured knee suffered in the Tigers' most recent contest against Arkansas.

Jennings entered that game in the fourth quarter and engineered a game-winning drive that spanned the length of the field. The series was capped with a 49-yard touchdown pass with 1:15 remaining that gave LSU a 31-27 advantage it would hold onto against Arkansas.

"The good news is he comes in on the last drive of the regular season and starts on the minus 1-yard line and was really efficient, does what he's supposed to do, shows poise," Miles said of Jennings. "I think his start and I think with what [offensive coordinator Cam Cameron] has done with him all year long, I think we're looking for a real quality performance from him in the bowl."

Meanwhile, Ferentz was asked about his signal-caller, Jake Rudock, and said he expects him to start for Iowa in the Outback Bowl despite leaving the Hawkeyes' most recent game – a 38-17 win over Nebraska – with a knee injury during the third quarter.

"He should be absolutely fine," Ferentz said. "We don't anticipate any issues there. He could've gone back into the Nebraska game, but we just didn't see any merit in it and we'll continue to work C.J. [Beathard] like we have.

"Both those guys have improved a great deal and we expect Jake

to be the starter. Hopefully, C.J. continues to improve as this month rolls along.”

Now come the next three weeks, in which Ferentz and Miles can become more acquainted with one another, as well as with what both can expect when they bring their teams to Tampa later this month.

“I recognize it’s a destination in and of itself,” Miles said. “It’s sunny. There’s so much to do. I think the Louisiana faithful enjoy that. I think they’re very comfortable in a sun-drenched environment and a bowl-festive city.”