

Iowa-Nebraska video: Kirk Ferentz

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz addressed the media in a postgame press conference following the Hawkeyes' 38-17 victory over Nebraska on Friday at Memorial Stadium. With the win, Iowa completed Big Ten play 5-3 and takes an 8-4 overall record with it into its upcoming bowl game, which will be announced Dec. 8.

Iowa-Nebraska video: Heroes Trophy postgame celebration

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

LINCOLN, Neb. – Below is video of the Iowa Hawkeyes celebrating with the Heroes Trophy after beating Nebraska 38-17 on Friday at Memorial Stadium:

Iowa at Nebraska (What to expect)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

To get you all ready for Friday's game between Iowa and Nebraska, I put together a list of things you ought to know before these two face off at Memorial Stadium.

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

Iowa Hawkeyes (7-4, 4-3) at Nebraska Cornhuskers (8-3, 5-2)

Memorial Stadium; Lincoln, Neb.

Nov. 29, 2013

11 a.m. Central

TV: ABC (Bob Wischusen, Rod Gilmore, Quint Kessenich)

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

Weather: [33 degrees; sunny skies; winds from S/SE at 9-11 MPH](#)

Brendan's Three Keys to the Game:

1. Establishing the run

If there's one area where Nebraska's defense can be had, it's on the ground. This is something Iowa has struggled to do each of the past two seasons and as a result, it has to only seven points scored on both occasions. This has also resulted in the Cornhuskers being able to control time of possession and wear out the Hawkeye defense. Simply put, Iowa has to improve

significantly on offense if it's going to leave Memorial Stadium with a win. That starts with the Hawkeyes being able to do something in terms of running the ball on this Nebraska defense.

2. Force turnovers

Iowa was very fortunate last week to win despite having a minus-3 turnover margin. Don't expect a similar outcome if Iowa's minus-3 again in turnovers on Friday. Given how well the defense has played of late, plus the fact Nebraska's last loss featured five Cornhusker turnovers, takeaways are going to be critical toward Iowa's success. Whether it's forcing lost fumbles or causing either of Nebraska's quarterbacks on Friday to throw interceptions, the defense needs to do itself a favor and create a couple of turnovers that maybe the Hawkeye offense can capitalize on.

3. Continued growth

Following Iowa's 24-21 win over Michigan last weekend, head coach Kirk Ferentz made a comment about how his team grew up during the domination during a second half consisting of 17 unanswered points. These younger players on both sides of the ball that were alluded to last week need to step up again here Friday. Not only would that give the Hawkeyes a boost entering this regular-season finale, but success both here and in the bowl game later this winter could go a long way toward 2014 being a successful year. If Iowa gets similar contributions for four quarters against Nebraska like it did for two quarters against Michigan, then the Hawkeyes have a real chance of leaving with a win.

Iowa-Iowa State rivalry extended through 2021

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

The Iowa Hawkeyes and Iowa State Cyclones reached a joint agreement Wednesday to extend the annual series in football four years, with the new arrangement now set to go through the 2021 season.

Originally, the deal established between the two schools after Iowa Corn took over as a sponsor was set to expire in 2017. Iowa will continue to play host to Iowa State during even years, with Sept. 8, 2018 and Sept. 12, 2020 being the new dates set for when these teams meet at Kinnick Stadium. The Hawkeyes will travel to Jack Trice Stadium in Ames on Sept. 14, 2019 and Sept. 11, 2021.

The following are statements made via release Wednesday by Iowa athletics director Gary Barta and Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz:

Barta: *"We are pleased to have the contract extended through the 2021 season. In-state rivalries are an exciting part of college athletics and you can feel a different energy across the state during the week of the Hawkeye-Cyclone matchup."*

Ferentz: *"The annual contest with Iowa State is anticipated each year by fans of both programs. With the changing of the conference schedules, we are happy this series will be continued without interruption."*

It should be noted that with a nine-game Big Ten schedule beginning in 2016, this new four-year extension only leaves any remaining schedule openings between 2017-2021 for non-

conference games at Kinnick Stadium.

11/27/2013: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa at Nebraska)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Every Thursday during the 2013 football season, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will feature "Talkin' Hawks," a podcast to get you ready for the Hawkeyes' upcoming game and other college football action. ***(With this Thursday being Thanksgiving, the decision was made to post this week's edition on Wednesday.)***

This week, we preview Iowa's upcoming game against Nebraska, which takes place Nov. 29 at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.

Due to a last-minute development, former Iowa defensive back [Chris Rowell](#) was unable to co-host this week's podcast with me, so I had to go solo here. Rowell should be back for next week's edition. In addition to previewing Friday's game between the Hawkeyes and Cornhuskers, I also share my thoughts on all the games featured in this week's [HawkeyeDrive.com Pick 'Em](#).

Joining as a guest this week in the podcast's middle segment is Brandon Vogel, who covers Nebraska football for [Hail Varsity](#). This week's edition is approximately 47 minutes long, so enjoy:

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Talkin-Hawks-podcast-11272013-Iowa-at-Nebraska.mp3>

Twitter handles:

HawkeyeDrive.com – [@HawkeyeDrive](https://twitter.com/HawkeyeDrive)

Brendan Stiles – [@thebstiles](https://twitter.com/thebstiles)

Chris Rowell – [@Crowell34](https://twitter.com/Crowell34)

Brandon Vogel – [@brandonlvogel](https://twitter.com/brandonlvogel)

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

11/26/2013: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game at Nebraska during his weekly press conference held Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa and Nebraska will meet for the third consecutive Black Friday since the Cornhuskers first joined the Big Ten in 2011 and the two teams are scheduled to continue playing each other on that date up until at least 2019.

This match-up has some of the necessary ingredients in order to be described as a rivalry. It has a set date for when the game is played, the two states represented border one another, there's an annual trophy awarded to the winner and the animosity between the two fan bases is strong.

But is it really a rivalry? Ask Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz or any of his players, and the answer's a resounding, "Not yet." It's not a no and not a yes. Just, not yet.

"I don't think a rivalry is really something you can culture in a lab, you know, bring Nebraska in and just automatically say it's a rivalry," senior linebacker James Morris said. "It has to be a competitive series.

"If we're going to make it a rivalry, then we need to be competitive and we need to start winning."

Since 1979, these teams have played each other eight times. The Hawkeyes' lone victory over the Cornhuskers during this span came in their Rose Bowl season of 1981. Ferentz is currently 0-4 against Nebraska, including each of the past two seasons since it became a Big Ten member.

"It's probably the kind of rivalry they like," Ferentz said Tuesday during his final weekly press conference of the fall. "It's our job to try and do something about that. That's what we've got to do."

Friday's match-up should be the most competitive in this series since it became an annual event two years ago, as both

teams enter off thrilling victories this past weekend. Iowa overcame a 21-7 halftime deficit to score 17 unanswered points and beat Michigan 24-21 to move to 7-4 overall and 4-3 in Big Ten play. Meanwhile, the Cornhuskers enter with marks of 8-3 overall and 5-2 Big Ten after winning three of their last four, the most recent victory being a 23-20 overtime win at Penn State.

If the Hawkeyes are going to make their series with the Cornhuskers more competitive, one area improvement will be needed is offensively. In each of the last two contests between these teams, Iowa only managed to score seven points.

"The biggest thing is always communication for an offense, all 11 guys doing the right thing," sophomore Jake Rudock said in response to being asked what Iowa has to do well Friday. "You know, that's big for every single game. The keys are always kind of the same. You want to run the ball well, you want to pass the ball well."

Developing a short-week routine

Football players and coaches are creatures of habit. Their weeks are scheduled out in such a structure that sticking to routine becomes vital toward success.

For the third year in a row, Iowa and Nebraska meet on Black Friday. From the Cornhuskers' perspective, playing annually on the day after Thanksgiving is nothing new.

But for the Hawkeyes, this is still a relatively new deal. Even though Ferentz is the dean of Big Ten coaches, the shorter week of preparation only got thrown at him and his program once Nebraska joined the conference.

Ferentz reiterated his initial displeasure about not only playing on Black Friday, but during Thanksgiving weekend, but he also acknowledged it was something he had to accept going forward. Not only is Iowa scheduled to play Nebraska on each

of the next six Black Fridays after this year, but continue doing so without the luxury of a full seven-day week to prepare (none of the Hawkeyes' bye weeks between 2014-2019 fall on the weekend before playing the Cornhuskers).

As far as preparation this week is concerned, he believes a routine has been developed that not only he, but his coaches and players also, are all comfortable with.

"I thought last year, our preparation was good. The week was good as far as what we were trying to do," Ferentz said, referencing last year's contest at Kinnick Stadium that Iowa lost 13-7. "We feel comfortable this week. If this was in the first half of the season, first quarter especially, it would be a real challenge. Second half of the season, six days is realistic."

Sophomore center Austin Blythe said not much needs to be altered from the players' perspective, other than pushing its typical Monday off from the practice field back to the weekend after the Hawkeyes return home from Lincoln. Aiding the players this week is the UI taking the entire week off for Thanksgiving. Without needing to commit time to academics, that extra time at their disposal can be spent on extra film study for Friday's game.

"Coach always talks about how you got to take advantage of the short week," senior linebacker Christian Kirksey said. "A lot of times, it can go by so fast that you kind of get out of whack. You got a routine, but you got to make sure you're sound with watching film, you're sound with the extra reps in practice and making sure you're focused because it is a short week.

"Just being a veteran player and being an older player, I kind of can deal with it and work with it because I've been in this kind of situation before."

Defense preparing for two QBs

With Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez unable to play in Friday's contest, the Cornhuskers are likely to continue using two quarterbacks – freshman Tommy Armstrong Jr. and senior Ron Kellogg III – when they face Iowa. Both signal-callers have taken snaps for Nebraska in each of its past four games.

Armstrong Jr., has started each of the seven games the Cornhuskers have played minus Martinez and Nebraska's record in those games is 6-1. But Kellogg III is the quarterback who threw the Hail Mary touchdown pass to defeat Northwestern earlier this month and also played the majority of the Cornhuskers' most recent game at Penn State after Armstrong, Jr., left with an ankle injury leaving him "questionable" for Friday.

The two quarterbacks have combined to throw 12 touchdown passes this season, which some of Iowa's defensive players said was an example of what makes them different from a quarterback like Martinez that was known more for his athleticism.

"Both have got big, strong arms," Morris said. "They both move pretty well. They switch between the two of them. I'm not really sure why. But we've got to be ready for both. Both are going to be challenging."

While quarterback remains an unknown, Nebraska presents one known offensive commodity that might provide one of the toughest challenges yet for Iowa's defense. Junior running back Ameer Abdullah currently leads the Big Ten in rushing with 1,483 yards on a league-high 231 carries. If Abdullah rushes for 100 or more yards Friday against the Hawkeyes, he would be the first Big Ten back to rush for 100-plus yards in every conference game since former Iowa running back Shonn Greene did so during his Doak Walker Award-winning season in 2008.

Over the last four games since Nebraska began utilizing both

Armstrong Jr., and Kellogg III as quarterbacks, Abdullah has rushed for 502 yards on 98 carries. In other words, the Cornhuskers will look to get him around 25 carries on Friday.

"He's a great running back who has speed and likes to bounce it outside and hurt you with his quickness," Kirksey said. "That's something that's a challenge for us and we have to make sure we're sound in tackling."

For all the Bloomin' Onions?

All seven bowl-eligible Big Ten teams (including Iowa) won't know for certain until Dec. 8 what bowl each of them will play in.

However, if the conference does end up getting two teams into BCS bowls, the winner of Friday's game in Lincoln could potentially be looking at a trip to the Outback Bowl, which is played on New Year's Day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla., against an SEC opponent.

Should the Cornhuskers win Friday, the probability of them winding up in Tampa would be extremely high since they've never played in the Outback Bowl. If the Hawkeyes win however, they would have head-to-head victories over all three teams they would be competing with for any bowl after each of Ohio State, Michigan State and Wisconsin gets taken.

An Iowa victory would also draw more parallels between this season and 2008, when the Hawkeyes last won three straight November games to finish 8-4 before beating South Carolina 31-10 in its most recent Outback Bowl appearance in 2009.

Besides the Outback Bowl, there are three other likely bowl scenarios for Iowa, depending on how it fares Friday at Nebraska. The Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl (formerly the Insight Bowl) picks after the Outback. Should the Hawkeyes make a third trip in four years to Tempe, Ariz., they would play a Big 12 opponent on the night of Dec. 28.

If neither Tampa nor Tempe prove to be final destinations for Iowa, the Gator Bowl would pick next, followed by the Texas Bowl, which is the furthest the Hawkeyes could fall if there are two BCS teams from the Big Ten. The Gator Bowl is played in Jacksonville, Fla., on New Year's Day against an opponent from the SEC, while the Texas Bowl is in Houston on Dec. 27 against a Big 12 opponent.

11/26/2013: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

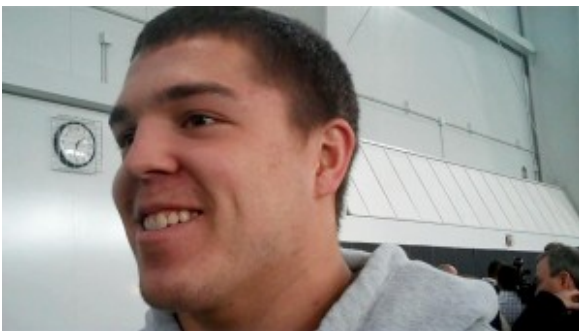
IOWA CITY, Iowa – On Tuesday, nine members of the Iowa football team spoke with the media to discuss the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Nov. 29 against Nebraska at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.

Below is audio from each of the following players – junior running back Mark Weisman, sophomore fullback Adam Cox, senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens, sophomore center Austin Blythe, sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock, senior linebacker James Morris, senior linebacker Christian Kirksey, sophomore defensive end Drew Ott and senior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz:



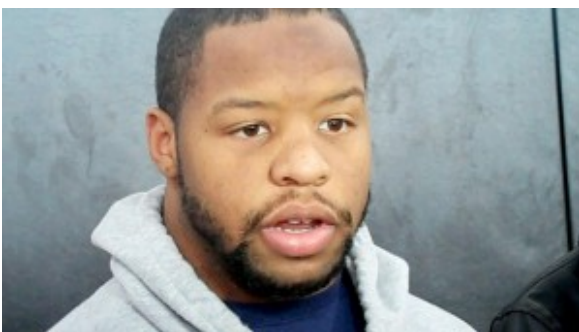
Mark Weisman, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Mark-Weisman-11262013.mp3>



Adam Cox, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Adam-Cox-11262013.mp3>



Anthony Hitchens, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Anthony-Hitchens-11262013.mp3>



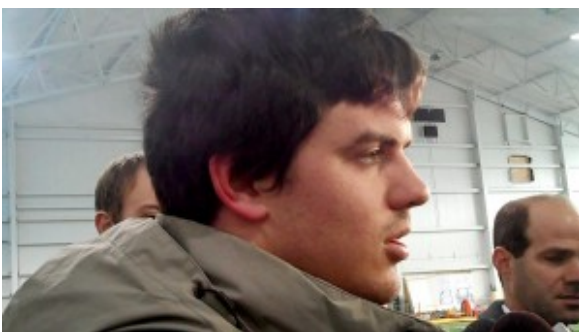
Austin Blythe, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Austin-Blythe-11262013.mp3>



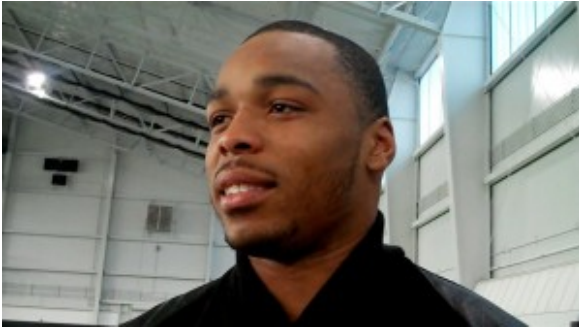
Jake Rudock, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Jake-Rudock-11262013.mp3>



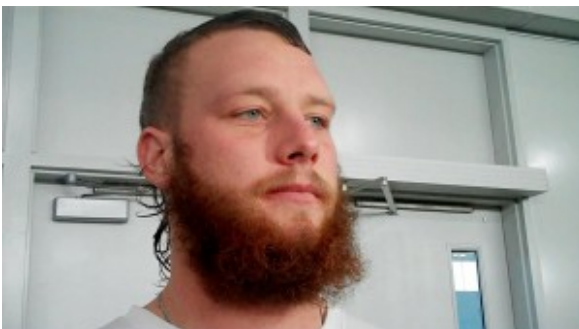
James Morris, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/James-Morris-11262013.mp3>



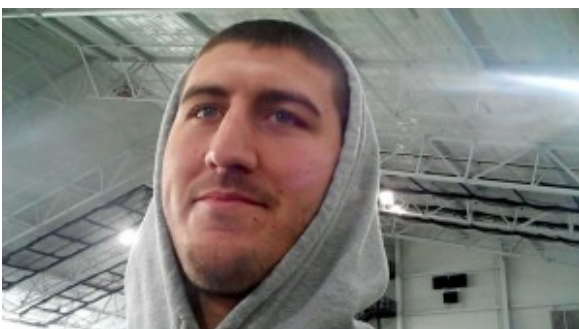
Christian Kirksey, Nov. 26,
2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Christian-Kirksey-11262013.mp3>



Drew Ott, Nov. 26, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Drew-Ott-11262013.mp3>



C.J. Fiedorowicz, Nov. 26,
2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/C.J.-Fiedorowicz-11262013.mp3>

11/26/2013: Kirk Ferentz press conference transcript

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a PDF from the Iowa sports information department featuring the complete transcript from Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's press conference on Tuesday in Iowa City:

[Coach Ferentz – 11 26 13](#)

11/26/2013: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's teleconference on Tuesday with the Big Ten media:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"We're happy to get the win on Saturday, certainly. It was a tough ball game that went the whole distance and a really competitive game both ways. So we just felt fortunate to get

the win and we're on a short week playing on Friday, so you know, we hit the ground running on Sunday and so far have had a good week. We'll need a good week because we have to travel over to Lincoln and play an excellent Nebraska team. So we certainly have our hands full."

On how gratifying it was to see fullback Adam Cox play as well as he did against Michigan:

"You know, we've had, really, one of the best stories on our team I think with our fullbacks – both Adam, and Macon Plewa. Both were scout team guys a year ago and playing on defense, then both of them moved over in the spring. They've done a wonderful job. So you know, you have a lot of other guys that are maybe getting more notoriety and a little bit more fanfare, better known. But certainly for us, you know, fullbacks are very, very important on our football team and have been historically."

"You know, we probably have as good a saddle at fullbacks as we've ever had. But both of those guys work hard, they've done a good job and on top of that, they're just tremendous young guys. You know, Macon couldn't go Saturday, so we were down to Adam and Mark Weisman in the hole. Adam had a nose-bleed that they had to cauterize a little bit before the game, so he wasn't out there for much of pregame. It just keeps it exciting, but he's just a tremendous young guy, as well as being a good football player."

On if having a healthier offensive line as opposed to last season has factored into being more successful on offense this year:

"Uh, yeah. I think that has helped, but I think just overall continuity with the whole system. As you know, we've gone through pretty significant change here over the last two years. We've had six new coaches join the staff, so we're kind of re-tooling here for the second shift, if you will. You

know, it has been a process, certainly, and I think the guys are certainly better-versed in what we're trying to do now. All of us are.

"You know, there was a lot of new stuff we incorporated a year ago in the spring, so it has been a process. But there's no question though that the development of the line has helped an awful lot and you know, last year at this time, we didn't have really have much, you know, depth at all and didn't know much about our running backs. I think we're a little bit healthier at that position and you know, gaining ground certainly at the receiver position, too, compared to last year.

"So I think all in all, we're improved in all areas, and then our young quarterback, who nobody really knew about coming into the year how he was going to play, he has done a great job this year also, so you know, a lot of positives and certainly more than a year ago."

On the type of patience it takes as a first-year head coach to develop a struggling program a la Darrell Hazell currently at Purdue:

"Well you know, the first thing, I mean, when you take over a program, you never know what it's going to be like. Darrell came from a Mid-American school. I was never a head coach, you know, in Division-I, so you know, typically in those circumstances, you know, there was going to be some work to be done and we were 1-10 in our first year.

"You know, probably a lot of that was coaching, probably a lot of that was we just weren't good enough at that point, so you know, whatever you walk into, that's what you walk into and you try to do your best each and every day. As far as timelines go, you know, I never really thought much about that other than, you know, you just try to maximize every day and try to get your players and staff to do the same thing and you know, every situation's different.

"There's no, I don't think, set time. The only thing I'd say as a general thought based on that, I don't think you can evaluate anything program-wise in less than five years. I think, you know, you have to let people get their programs established and their thoughts established and then give them a chance to implement those things and you know, if you look historically, there have been a lot of pretty good coaches that might not have survived. I mean right now, we kind of live in a quick-trigger society. You think of a guy like John Wooden, he wouldn't have survived."

"You just got to give things time and really evaluate it and it goes the other way, too. Sometimes, some people come out of the gate real fast and lose steam after a couple of years, so it's just ... you know, I think when you evaluate anything, you got to give it some time and look at it in a broad base, not just you know, five days, five weeks or five months."

On if it's as simple as starting with recruiting players that buy into your program:

"Well, recruiting is very important. But you know, I'll go back to when I was here. Some of our best players were already on the roster and two guys come to mind right away that were walk-ons. Dallas Clark, you're probably familiar with him, he was a walk-on here and was an outside linebacker, a third-team outside linebacker."

"Then you think about a guy like Bruce Nelson who was about a fourth- or fifth-team tight end, a redshirt freshman when we got here. We moved him to offensive tackle right away and he was under-sized, but you know, started every game for four years. Got banged around for a year or two, then those next two years, he banged a lot of people around."

"You know, Bob Sanders was recruited by one MAC school. So, you know, a lot of it is good fortune. But you just try to get the best out of the people you're around and you recruit to"

what it is you think is important to your school. Just like no situation is the same, I think that's the same thing about recruiting and you know, what you deem important. You just try to identify that in people and then try to get people to join you."

On if he sees benefits now after two years about playing Nebraska on Black Friday:

"Well, I warmed to it mainly because I don't have a choice in the matter. It's just the reality, so hey, embrace it. Personally, I still think it used to be nice when the kids had a week to go home and get away from football, get away from coaches and get away from everything school. But that has changed.

"We have gas-powered cars now and we're not driving the horse and buggies, so it's just not going to go back. So you embrace it. This year has been great because we've had two bye weeks, so we had two opportunities for our players to get off campus a little bit for a couple of days.

"I just think it's healthy that somehow, someway, guys just need to get away from things and you know, this isn't the NFL. We don't play a 16- or 20-game season and it's important for guys to have a chance to breathe a little bit and maybe spend some time on their classwork or with their girlfriends or whatever they want to do besides football. Somehow, I think you just got to fit that into the schedule."

On if Jake Rudock's second half performance can help elevate him or if too much is made of things like that:

"Well you know, I think not only quarterbacks, but teams. You know, it's all part of a process and until you've done something and experienced it and mentally gone through it, then you can talk about those things and cite illustrations. But it's good for players to go through everything. Sometimes losing and experiencing hardship can be of benefit, too.

"So it was certainly a positive and the game couldn't have started any worse. I mean, they had a perfect call against our call and had a touchdown in, you know, less than five seconds. So, the game couldn't have started any worse for us. But the one thing about Jake all season long, no matter what happens, he seems to be resilient to it and you know, we played a pretty significant wind the last time out before this game."

"On Saturday, it was, I think I read, the coldest game in Kinnick history and Jake's from Southern Florida, you know, so you'd never know it. He just seems to handle whatever comes his way, including his third Organic Chemistry test last Wednesday. You know, it just doesn't seem to affect him, which is a really good trade."

On Nebraska being the annual Black Friday opponent and that being the start of a rivalry:

"Yeah, I mean, hopefully we can make it one. We haven't beaten them in a while. I mean, like, decades. So you know, I think it's probably good. We used to play Minnesota at the end of the year. Now it's tiered this way. I'm not a fan of the short week, other than I would say, you know, when you get into Week 10, 11, 12, then I'm all for it. Things happen a lot faster, so it's great."

"After the game, our guys will be free to go home for a couple of days, too. So I think that's a benefit and you know, they just happen to be the 12th game. But to play them, it's always a great challenge and one we're going to have to get ready for."

11/26/2013: Big Ten bowl projections

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

(Back in August, I made [a list of preseason bowl projections](#) that not only focused on the Big Ten, but projected all 35 bowl games for the 2013-14 season. With the Iowa Hawkeyes now bowl-eligible, I figured it'd be worth re-visiting this matter and providing new projections based off what has actually taken place this season.)

More shake-up has taken place since my most recent [bowl projections back on Nov. 19](#). As a result, I've made some revisions to my projections for this week.

The following are adjustments made from then to now and other points of note:

1) Big Ten gets two BCS teams

Not only do I think the Big Ten ends up with two BCS teams, but I'm even more confident about this now than I was last week. At this time last week, I posed the question what would happen if Baylor lost to Oklahoma State and became an at-large candidate? Well, that happened. Combined that with the fact that Wisconsin recently moved up to No. 15 in the latest BCS standings, and I'm pretty confident in saying the Big Ten gets two BCS teams as long as the Badgers, along with Ohio State and Michigan State, all win their respective games this coming Saturday.

2) Officially seven bowl-eligible teams from Big Ten

Michigan State and Ohio State both not only secured their spots in next week's Big Ten Championship Game over the

weekend, but both also guaranteed the conference will only have seven bowl-eligible teams this year with Northwestern and Indiana both being handed their seventh defeats of the season. As mentioned last week, the Big Ten having two BCS teams means there are two vacancies in the league's allotment – The Heart of Dallas Bowl and the Little Caesars Bowl. Beyond the top three, there are a few changes made to this week's projections from last week.

3) The formula behind putting this all together

Right now, there are already 70 bowl-eligible teams, which means all 35 bowl games will be filled without any unusual circumstances. I now have a total of 75 teams in total being bowl-eligible, meaning five teams are going to be left home for the holidays despite reaching that six-win plateau. After having seven vacancies last week, I now have eight of them this week with the Mountain West now unlikely to fill its total allotment if Fresno State gets a BCS at-large. This week's pool has a total of 13 teams to fill those eight spots. Teams no longer in the pool from last week are Syracuse and ULM, and assuming San Jose State loses to Fresno State this week, there's where that new vacancy comes into play. I also moved UTSA and Arizona both up into bowls with conference tie-ins and Tulane and Oregon State both down into this week's pool.

– The following eight bowls have vacancies – the AdvoCare V100 Bowl (SEC tie-in), the BBVA Compass Bowl (SEC tie-in), the Little Caesars Bowl (Big Ten tie-in), the Beef O'Brady's Bowl (AAC tie-in), the Poinsettia Bowl (Army is no longer bowl-eligible), the Pinstripe Bowl (Big 12 tie-in), the Heart of Dallas Bowl (Big Ten tie-in) and the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl (MWC tie-in)

– The following 13 teams were among those considered for the eight vacancies – (8-4): Bowling Green, Notre Dame, Toledo; (7-5): Maryland, Ohio, Tulane, Western Kentucky; (6-6):

Florida Atlantic, Central Michigan, Oregon State, Washington State, Troy and Texas State.

Seeing how I had seven teams projected as finishing 7-5 or better, it was pretty easy this week to fill seven of the eight vacant spots. This left one spot for 6-6 teams and six of these teams to choose from. At 6-6, Oregon State will have lost five straight games. However, it did beat Washington State head-to-head this season (on the road and in convincing fashion, no less). This is why for now, I have the Beavers taking that spot in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl instead of the Cougars, even though Washington State would probably be more thrilled about a trip to Boise.

Washington State and San Jose State were two teams I had bowling last week, but now see staying home for the holidays. Arizona and UTSA were teams I didn't have bowling last week, but do now. I also factored in bowl pay-out when filling the eight vacant spots.

Below are my projections as of Nov. 26, 2013 (the next list of bowl projections will take place Dec. 3):

BIG TEN BOWLS:

Rose Bowl – Ohio State vs. Stanford

– Last week, I replaced Stanford with Oregon. This week, Stanford returns to represent the Pac-12 in Pasadena thanks to Oregon losing at Arizona over the weekend. Even if the Cardinal have to play at Arizona State next week for the Pac-12 title, I believe Stanford wins. As for Ohio State, I have them beating Michigan State, but not moving up. If the Buckeyes do end up playing for the national championship though, I believe the Rose Bowl would opt to replace Ohio State with the Spartans as opposed to bringing back Wisconsin for the fourth consecutive year.

Orange Bowl – Wisconsin vs. Clemson

– No changes here from last week. Clemson remains the team I have replacing Florida State here, even if the Tigers lose to South Carolina this weekend. As long as Ohio State is the Big Ten's representative in the Rose Bowl, I believe Wisconsin gets the second BCS at-large. If the Buckeyes play for the national title or lose the Big Ten Championship to Michigan State, then the Badgers would drop to the Capital One Bowl. Either way, Wisconsin fans ought to start looking into traveling down to Florida this New Year's.

Capital One Bowl – Michigan State vs. South Carolina

– Again, nothing different here. If the Spartans don't reach the Rose Bowl either by beating Ohio State next week or by virtue of the Rose replacing the Buckeyes if Ohio State plays for the national title, this is where they're going to end up. As long as South Carolina wins the SEC East, the Gamecocks are who I have representing that league in this game. If Missouri beats Texas A&M on Saturday, however, then it becomes a real possibility that the Tigers end up in Orlando instead.

Outback Bowl – Nebraska vs. Texas A&M

– Assuming the Big Ten has two BCS teams, Iowa and Nebraska are playing for all the Bloomin' Onions on Friday in Lincoln. If the Cornhuskers win, it's practically a lock they play in this game. If the Hawkeyes win, it's not as much of a lock only because Nebraska has never played in the Outback Bowl, but Iowa would also have wins over all three remaining options from the Big Ten.

Typically, the Outback usually takes an SEC East team and if Missouri wins Saturday night, then this is where I would have South Carolina ending up. However, if Texas A&M beats Missouri on Saturday, the likelihood of the Outback inviting the Aggies becomes more likely, especially when you factor in Johnny Manziel. Not to mention if Nebraska is the Big Ten team, it'd still be a battle of former Big 12 teams.

Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl – Michigan vs. Texas

– There are two reasons I don't have Iowa ending up here: 1. The Hawkeyes have been to this game twice in recent memory – 2010 and 2011 when it was still called the Insight Bowl; 2. This is the final year that the Big Ten has a tie-in with this game. This is why I think it would still opt for Michigan instead, even though Iowa won head-to-head this past weekend. As for the Big 12, I now have Texas ending up in this game instead of Oklahoma, despite the fact that the Longhorns beat the Sooners head-to-head last month in Dallas.

Gator Bowl – Iowa vs. Georgia

– This is where I have the Hawkeyes, for now. As I said earlier, win at Nebraska on Friday, and I then believe Iowa has a very real shot at the Outback Bowl. But assuming this is the scenario, I now believe the Gator Bowl takes Iowa over Minnesota here since both teams would have identical Big Ten records and the Hawkeyes won head-to-head. As for the SEC, LSU played itself out of this game by beating Texas A&M last weekend, so it's basically between Georgia and Mississippi here.

A couple of things to keep in mind: First, Georgia does play at Jacksonville's EverBank Field annually when it plays Florida in what used to be known as "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party." There are a lot of Bulldog fans down there, so they would be well-represented. That being said, Georgia also just lost its quarterback Aaron Murray for the rest of the season with a knee injury. He would've been the face of this bowl had Georgia ended up here. Without him, there's a chance the Gator Bowl opts for Ole Miss instead, assuming the Rebels win their Egg Bowl game on Thanksgiving against Mississippi State. If Ole Miss loses that game, Georgia might be a lock regardless of how it fares against Georgia Tech on Saturday without Murray. Either way, those are two games Hawkeye fans might want to keep close eyes on,

especially if Iowa is unable to beat Nebraska on Friday.

Texas Bowl – Minnesota vs. Texas Tech

– Minnesota will likely be 8-4 and have better records than both Iowa and Michigan. Except the Golden Gophers lost to both teams earlier in the season and both are going to travel better than Minnesota to any bowl game. So yeah, this would be a rematch of last year's game, back when it was called the Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas. If the Red Raiders lose at Texas on Thanksgiving, they're practically a lock to return to this game from the Big 12 side of things. This might ultimately boil down to how much influence Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany has on where Big Ten teams end up this bowl season. At least this is something Minnesota fans might want to hope happens now.

THE OTHER BCS BOWLS:

BCS National Championship Game – Alabama vs. Florida State

– Still no changes here and this is pretty self-explanatory.

Sugar Bowl – Auburn vs. UCF

– Even if Auburn loses to Alabama on Saturday, they're probably going to be the second-highest rated SEC team in the BCS standings. Add in Texas A&M losing to LSU over the weekend and I believe it's a safe bet the Tigers are the team picked to replace the Crimson Tide in this game. I still have UCF winning the AAC and with it being between the Golden Knights and either Fresno State or Northern Illinois, I still believe UCF gets chosen here. The only potential wrinkle would be if South Carolina plays in and wins the SEC title game next week because those teams already played each other season (actually, that's UCF's lone defeat).

Fiesta Bowl – Oklahoma State vs. Fresno State

– I projected this last week and I'm not changing it, even

though Northern Illinois just jumped Fresno State in the most recent BCS Standings. My thinking is Fresno State is going to end up ahead in the computers again next week after it plays San Jose State and Northern Illinois plays a 1-10 Western Michigan squad. One thing to keep in mind – if Northern Illinois does remain ahead in the final BCS standings, then the MWC will fill its entire allotment once again and one less MAC team would have to worry about being in an at-large pool for any remaining vacancies. As for Oklahoma State, I expect the Cowboys to win Bedlam next week, thus winning the Big 12.

ALL OF THE REST:

New Mexico Bowl – Arizona vs. Colorado State

**Previously had Oregon State representing the Pac-12*

Las Vegas Bowl – Utah State vs. UCLA

**Previously had Boise State vs. USC*

Idaho Potato Bowl – Buffalo vs. Oregon State*

**Previously had UNLV representing the MWC*

New Orleans Bowl – UTSA vs. UL-Lafayette

**Previously had Tulane representing C-USA*

Beef O'Brady's Bowl – North Texas vs. Western Kentucky*

**Previously had Middle Tennessee representing C-USA*

Hawaii Bowl – East Carolina vs. UNLV

**Previously had San Jose State representing the MWC*

Little Caesars Bowl – Ball State vs. Maryland*

(I'll reiterate this point from last week once again: The ACC is now able to fill its entire allotment, even with two BCS teams, and will have at least one team (two if Syracuse beats

Boston College on Saturday) left over. Maryland is leaving for the Big Ten next year and the divorce remains messy. So again, the Terrapins might be more deserving of one of the ACC bowls than either North Carolina or Pitt, but I have a hard time not seeing the ACC deliver the Terrapins a final parting shot, if you will. As long as Maryland beats N.C. State on Saturday, it should end up somewhere with a 7-5 record.)

Poinsettia Bowl – Ohio* vs. San Diego State

*Previously had Washington State filling the Army vacancy and Utah State representing the MWC

Military Bowl – Middle Tennessee vs. Pittsburgh

*Previously had Rice representing C-USA

Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl – BYU vs. Washington

*BYU is locked into this bowl game

Pinstripe Bowl – Houston vs. Notre Dame*

*Previously had Cincinnati representing the AAC

Belk Bowl – Cincinnati vs. Georgia Tech

*Previously had Houston representing the AAC

Russell Athletic Bowl – Miami (Fla.) vs. Louisville

Armed Forces Bowl – Boise State vs. Navy

*Previously had San Diego State representing the MWC; Navy is locked into this bowl game

Music City Bowl – Mississippi vs. Boston College

Alamo Bowl – Oregon vs. Oklahoma

*Previously had Stanford vs. Texas

Holiday Bowl – USC vs. Kansas State

**Previously had Arizona State representing the Pac-12*

AdvoCare V100 Bowl – North Carolina vs. Tulane*

**Previously had Ohio filling the SEC vacancy*

Sun Bowl – Virginia Tech vs. Arizona State

**Previously had UCLA representing the Pac-12*

Liberty Bowl – Marshall vs. Vanderbilt

Chick-Fil-A Bowl – Duke vs. Missouri

**Previously had Georgia representing the SEC*

Heart of Dallas Bowl – Rice vs. Bowling Green*

**Previously had North Texas representing C-USA*

Cotton Bowl – Baylor vs. LSU

**Previously had Texas A&M representing the SEC*

BBVA Compass Bowl – Toledo* vs. Rutgers

GoDaddy Bowl – Arkansas State vs. Northern Illinois

WHAT I'M KEEPING AN EYE ON FOR NEXT WEEK'S PROJECTIONS:

– **Big Ten games:** Iowa at Nebraska, Ohio State at Michigan, Minnesota at Michigan State and Penn State at Wisconsin

– **Games involving potential bowl opponents for Iowa:** Outback – Arkansas at LSU, Texas A&M at Missouri, Clemson at South Carolina; Buffalo Wild Wings – Texas Tech at Texas; Gator – Ole Miss at Mississippi State, Georgia at Georgia Tech; Texas – Texas Tech at Texas, Kansas State at Kansas

– **Teams that can become bowl-eligible this week:** SMU, Central Michigan, Troy, Florida Atlantic, San Jose State, Rutgers,

Colorado State, Wyoming, Syracuse, ULM

- SMU at Houston: SMU win makes Mustangs bowl-eligible and would eliminate current AAC vacancy in Beef O'Brady's Bowl.
- Texas State at Troy: Texas State win removes Troy from pool of at-large teams and at 7-5, the Bobcats would get more serious consideration for a bowl.
- Fresno State at San Jose State: Fresno State win keeps the Bulldogs in position to play in the Fiesta Bowl and would make San Jose State ineligible. San Jose State win makes the Spartans eligible and not only opens the door for Northern Illinois to return to a BCS bowl, but it would guarantee the MWC with more bowl-eligible teams than available allotments since that Famous Idaho Potato Bowl vacancy would get filled.
- Duke at North Carolina: Duke wins the ACC Coastal Division outright and would play Florida State in the ACC Championship Game, so as long as the Blue Devils win Saturday, they'll remain an option for the Chick-Fil-A Bowl. If the Tar Heels win however, there will be at least three teams and as many as five teams who tie for first place in the Coastal, which would create a little chaos in projecting ACC teams for bowls.
- Wyoming at Utah State: If Utah State wins, it will play Fresno State in the MWC Championship Game. If Wyoming wins, the Cowboys become bowl-eligible at 6-6 and the MWC would either fill out its allotment if Fresno State remains a BCS team or have two teams left over for the at-large pool.
- Alabama at Auburn: If everything stands pat among the Big Ten's top three teams this week, the Iron Bowl might play an enormous factor in which two Big Ten teams reach BCS bowls. Wisconsin fans will probably want Alabama to win because the Badgers' ticket to the Orange Bowl is Ohio State winning the Big Ten, but having to settle for the Rose Bowl. Michigan State fans will probably want Auburn to win because the Buckeyes (assuming they beat Michigan on Saturday) would

then move up to the BCS National Championship Game and the Spartans might then find themselves in a position next week where they end up in the Rose Bowl regardless of how they fare against Ohio State.